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"An Advocate for Fisheries, Habitat and Water Quality"

Myths and Facts About the 2010 Water Supply on the West Side of the San Joaquin Valley

Myth: Water deliveries to Westlands Water District have been significantly below average for 2010.

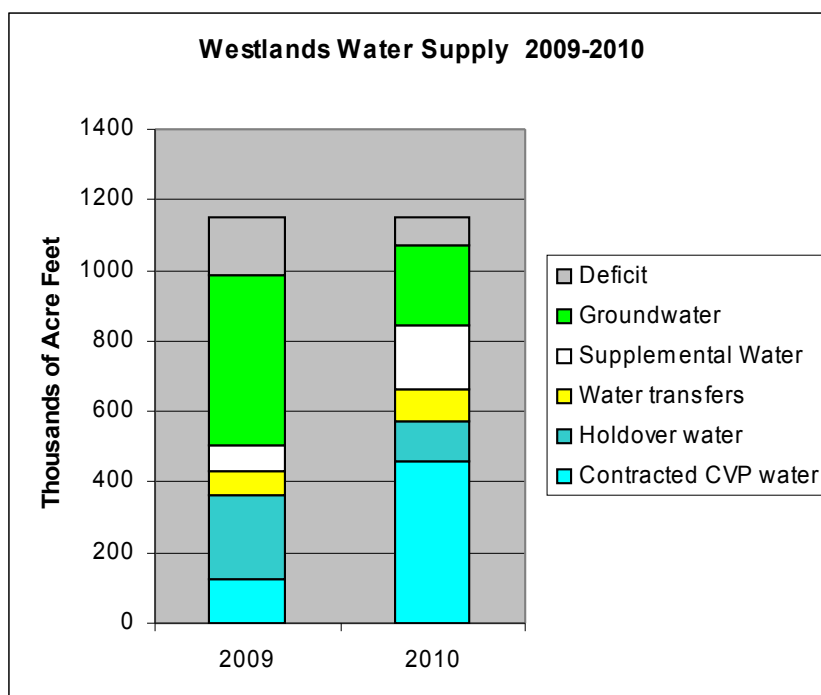
Fact: Contracted water deliveries to Westside growers have been restored to 40% of maximum allocations, almost two thirds of the normal average. With holdover water and water transfers,¹ as well as supplemental water arranged by Congress,² the district is currently projecting that it will have 885,000 acre feet of surface water available in 2010.³ With expected pumping of 225,000 acre feet of groundwater,⁴ the district has a supply of 97% of its maximum contract of 1.15 million acre feet of water this year.

¹ In January, Westlands had 115,000 acre feet of holdover water from 2009 in San Luis Reservoir, as well as 155,000 a.f. of water transferred from other districts. See "Westlands Water District Responds to Secretary Salazar's Statement Regarding Assistance for Central Valley Project Water Users," Jan 26, 2010. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/25914830/Westlands-Water-Districts-Response-to-Secretary-Salazar>

² An additional 8-10% of Westlands' allocation was made available in February at the request of Senator Feinstein. See Department of Interior, "Interior Hopeful on Central Valley Water Outlook," Feb 26, 2010 http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/2010_02_26_release.cfm

³ Westlands Water District, May 2, 2010 Notice, p 1 <http://www.westlandswater.org/short/201005/notice305.pdf?title=05/20/2010>

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Westlands Total Water Supply⁵

Myth: Cutbacks in Delta pumping required by the Endangered Species Act have done little to restore Central Valley salmon runs, once the most abundant on the West Coast.

Fact: It will take three generations of salmon to rebuild the damage done to Central Valley salmon by the overpumping of Delta water between 2000 and 2005. The biological opinion was released in 2009.

Myth: Manipulating the implementation of the biological opinion protecting Central Valley salmon runs will lead to a huge increase in irrigated acreage on the West side of the San Joaquin Valley, and a corresponding increase in farm worker jobs.

Fact: Implementation of the Biological Opinions for both Central Valley salmon and Delta smelt has resulted in an estimated cutback of about 5-7% of total contracted water deliveries.⁶ Westlands' Board has discussed using extra water from the Delta simply to replace more expensive water transfers and increase the bottom line of farmers.⁷

⁵Groundwater, supplemental, and actual transferred water from Westlands Water District, Annual Water Use & Supply, CVP deliveries from Bureau of Reclamation. Holdover water from letter from Lester Snow to Dianne Feinstein, May 15, 2009
http://www.pacinst.org/publications/essays_and_opinion/DWR_letter_5_15_09.pdf

⁶ The Water Agency Inc. 2009 Water Supply Outlook
http://www.calasfmra.com/db_meetings/Brian%20Hauss%20-%20Water%20Supply%20Outlook.pdf

⁷ David Zetland, "Water is Money is Politics," March 9, 2010
<http://aguanomics.com/2010/03/water-is-money-is-politics.html>

Myths and Facts About Land Fallowing on the West Side

Myth: 250,000 acres of land were fallowed on the West side of the San Joaquin Valley in 2009, due to the Delta pumping cutbacks

Fact: Forty percent of these lands are fallowed due to soil salinity, not lack of water.

Westlands Water District listed 156,000 acres of fallowed land on their 2009 crop report.⁸ Of that 156,000 acres, at least 53,000 had been fallowed internally due to land impairment.⁹ On their “Annual Water Supply Report.” Westlands claims 242,000 fallowed acres for 2009. That number includes another 44,000 acres that have been bought by the federal government (taxpayers) and had their water contracts transferred to other lands. In total, 97,000 of the claimed 242,000 fallowed acres have been retired from production and cannot grow crops regardless of the availability of water.

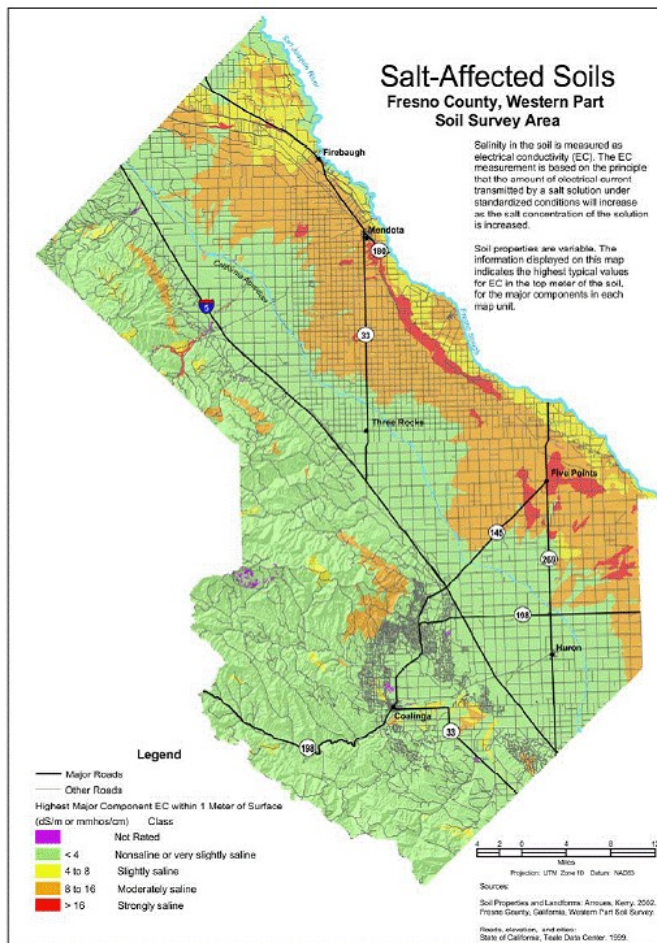


Figure 30.—Salt-affected soils in the western part of Fresno County.

⁸ Westlands Water District, 2009 Crop Acreage Report.
http://www.westlandswater.org/wwd/crop_reports/2009/croprpt.pdf?title=2009

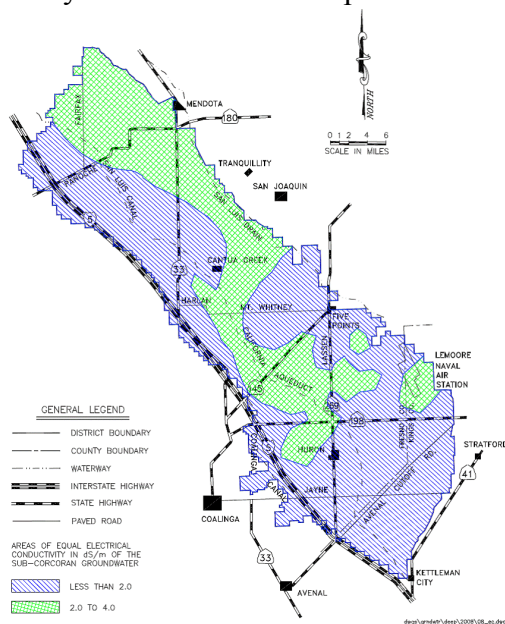
⁹ U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, San Luis Drain Feature Re-evaluation, Section Two
http://www.usbr.gov/mp/sccaosld/docs/sld_pfr_addendum/04_sec02_study_area.pdf

Myth: The West side of the San Joaquin Valley has some of the most fertile and productive agricultural land in the nation.

Fact: A USDA survey found that approximately 50% of the land on the West side of Fresno County is saline-sodic, and is significantly impaired in the crops it can grow, up from 33% in 1980.¹⁰ Almost 100,000 of the 600,000 acres in Westlands have been retired, and at least another 100,000 acres is expected to go out of production over the next decade.¹¹

Myth: The drought year water supply for the West side of the San Joaquin Valley has been severely curtailed by Delta pumping cutbacks.

Fact: Westlands' 600 operators have junior water contracts, and have needed to rely on groundwater to carry them over in dry years. But increasingly large areas of the district have deep aquifers contaminated by salts and boron, naturally present in Westside soils. The 2009 Deep Groundwater survey showed approximately 35% of the land has deep aquifers so contaminated with salts (TDS) that there is no groundwater fit for drinking or irrigation.^{12,13} (See green area on map below.) The severe contamination of groundwater likely contributed to an unprecedented 41,000 acres of non-harvested crops in 2009.¹⁴



¹⁰ US Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey of Fresno County, Western Part
<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/Manuscripts/CA653/0/fresno.pdf>

¹¹ US Bureau of Reclamation, San Luis Drain Feature Re-Evaluation Record of Decision, March 2007
http://www.usbr.gov/mp/sccao/sld/docs/sld_feature_reeval_rod.pdf

¹² Westlands Water District, Deep Groundwater Conditions Report, 2009
<http://www.westlandswater.org/short%5C200904%5C525r08.pdf>

¹³ Troy Bauder et al., Water Quality for Irrigated Agriculture, Salinity / Sodicity Focus, Colorado State University and NRCS, <http://wsprod.colostate.edu/cwis435/WQ/documents/irrigationwaterquality.pdf>

¹⁴ 2009 Crop Report. Adam Satariano, "Drought in California forces farmers to spend on 'Fire Water'"
<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=aQHnfaaeWKC&refer=exclusive>