

Supervisors Set Hearing to Consider Assigning Santa Barbara County State Water Contract to CCWA

The move would not change the State Water contract, the way water is delivered, or the way deliveries are paid for

By Giana Magnoli, Noozhawk Managing Editor | [@magnoli](#)
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The State Water Project contract and distribution system is a major source of water for Santa Barbara County, and next week the [county Board of Supervisors](#) will consider assigning the contract to the [Central Coast Water Authority](#).

The CCWA was created in 1991 to build, manage and operate State Water Project infrastructure for Santa Barbara County; it coordinates treating and distributing the deliveries.

The pipeline system has also been used to deliver thousands of acre-feet of purchased supplemental water during the drought.

Representatives from its voting members make up the board: the cities of Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Guadalupe and Buellton; the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1; the Goleta Water District; the Montecito Water District; and Carpinteria Valley Water District.

As CCWA Executive Director Ray Stokes explains in a September letter to the county, CCWA wants the State Water contract assigned to CCWA, rather than the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

CCWA is financially responsible for the contract, and wants to be assigned the contract so it is “fully and solely responsible for the State Water Contract,” he said in the letter.

All the member agencies approved the move in 2017, and the Department of Water Resources said it would approve the assignment as well, according to an email provided to the county. The Board of Supervisors also needs to sign off on the assignment to make it happen.

The supervisors on Tuesday approved setting a Feb. 5 hearing to discuss the issue, and may also talk about the question of extending the State Water contract beyond 2038, according to a staff report.

In summarizing the history of the State Water Project in Santa Barbara County, Stokes said in his letter that the effort to assign the contract to CCWA has been happening for a long time, but it wasn't clear until 2015 whether a joint powers agency such as CCWA had taxing authority.

Assigning the contract to CCWA means the agency will not need to get approval for State Water contractual issues from the county.

Stokes said reassigning the contract will not change the State Water contract, the way water is delivered, or the way deliveries are paid for (by ratepayers, through their water purveyors).

On Friday, the Department of Water Resources increased the State Water Project allocations for 2019 to 15 percent, after deciding on a 10-percent number in December. The allocations could change depending on the amount of rain and snow dropped this winter.

San Luis Reservoir, where many Santa Barbara County agencies store State Water allocations, was reported at 85-percent capacity Tuesday.

Local reservoirs have benefitted from recent rain as well, with Santa Barbara's Gibraltar Reservoir spilling two weeks ago and Lake Cachuma at 36.4-percent capacity as of Tuesday.

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