

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 17, 2014

Contact: Lisa Page, 916-288-2208, lisa.page@edelman.com

Opinion Poll: Californians Overwhelmingly Back Groundwater Protection, More Support For Locals

Groundwater Voices Coalition Calls for Action on Groundwater Management

SACRAMENTO – California's record drought is prompting overwhelming support for immediate action to protect California's groundwater supplies, according to a [new poll](#) conducted for the [California Water Foundation](#) and released today by the [Groundwater Voices Coalition](#). The survey – the first major statewide poll of its kind – shows strong backing for a package of proposals pending before the Legislature that include expanded local authority to manage groundwater supplies, backed by statewide standards.

In a rare show of agreement among voters throughout the state, 89 percent of the respondents view groundwater as "very important" to California's water supply, and more than 78 percent support "major changes" in groundwater management. Nearly the same number said the state and local communities should manage groundwater supplies carefully to ensure the groundwater is available when it is needed most. Ninety-one percent of voters also support storing more water underground during wet years so it will be available during dry years.

Republicans and Democrats largely agreed on the crisis and need for major changes. For example, 80 percent of Republicans and 80 percent of Democrats surveyed agreed that "allow(ing) anyone to take water from wells without considering impacts on others" was a cause of the groundwater problem. And 81 percent of Democrats and 79 percent of Republicans support "giving local communities increased ability to manage their local groundwater." Amongst Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander voters that support was even higher at 87 percent of Latinos and 89 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders saying they support "giving local communities increased ability to manage their local groundwater," compared with 78 percent of white voters.

Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander voters were also more likely than white voters to support "major changes now in the way we manage groundwater supplies." According to the survey, 85 percent of Latino voters supported "major changes," compared with 79 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders and 76 percent of whites.

"These results should help reinforce and expedite current legislative efforts to provide a statewide framework to better manage and protect our critical groundwater resources." said California Water Foundation Executive Director Lester Snow. "California's future is increasingly dependent on effective management of our groundwater supplies. The drought underscores the urgent need to provide local communities with the tools they need to effectively manage their groundwater."

Groundwater is a critical part of California's water supply, used to meet approximately 40 percent of the state's water demands in an average year and up to 60 percent or more during droughts. In some regions, groundwater provides 100 percent of the local water supply. Yet, California is the only state without comprehensive statewide groundwater management programs.

The Groundwater Voices Coalition, which launched its [new website](#) today, is an effort sponsored by the California Water Foundation aimed at uniting people from every corner of the state and every segment of the political spectrum to educate decision makers about the need for more effective and sustainable groundwater management.

“The time to act is now,” said Craig McNamara, president of Sierra Orchards. “We are coming together with a united voice to say that we need a policy framework that will protect our farms and our cities and make sure we meet the water needs of current and future generations.”

The new Groundwater Voices Coalition website features statements by the following supporters:

- Ashley Boren, executive director, Sustainable Conservation
- Cannon Michael, president, Bowles Farming Co.
- Craig McNamara, president, Sierra Orchards, and president of the California State Food and Agriculture Board*
- Curtis Knight, conservation director, California Trout
- Dave Orth, general manager, Kings River Conservation District
- Eric Averett, general manager, Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District
- Grant Davis, general manager, Sonoma County Water Agency
- Jim Wunderman, president & CEO, Bay Area Council
- John Sweigard, general manager, Merced Irrigation District
- Laurel Firestone, co-founder, Community Water Center
- Mike Chrisman, former secretary, Natural Resources Agency (2003-2010)
- Paul Gosselin, director, Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation
- Ron Gastelum, principal, Water Conservation Partners and member, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors*
- Thad Bettner, general manager, Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
- Tim Quinn, executive director, Association of California Water Agencies

*For identification purposes only.

A memo outlining the poll’s key findings is available [here](#).

Last week, the California Water Foundation (CWF) released a [report](#) on groundwater management that showed that management of California’s groundwater basins is fragmented, and many groundwater management plans are outdated and leave significant room for improvement. In May, CWF also released a [report](#) of findings and recommendations to achieve sustainable groundwater management in California. Learn more at: <http://www.californiawaterfoundation.org>.

###

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R). From July 6-9, 2014, they conducted 1,201 telephone interviews with California voters likely to cast ballots in November 2014, on both landline and wireless phones. The survey included 800 interviews with a random statewide sample of voters, and an oversample of 400 voters in the Central Valley; all responses have been statistically weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of likely voters through the state. The margin of sampling error for the

survey is +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Some percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

About the California Water Foundation

The California Water Foundation's (CWF) vision is to sustainably meet the water needs of California's farms, cities, and environment today and into the future. CWF supports innovative projects and policies and brings together experts, stakeholders, and the public to achieve 21st century solutions. For more information, please visit CaliforniaWaterFoundation.org.