

# Changing alliances in California water issues

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## ***Agricultural and conservation interests split radically between two recent water issue elections***

In 1982, two important propositions affecting California's water resources were placed before the state's voters. Despite their differences, the Peripheral Canal referendum (Proposition 9), which would have allowed major water development projects to proceed, and the Water Resources Initiative Statute (Proposition 13), which would have introduced many restrictions on water use, including groundwater management, were each soundly defeated. In this article, we examine the alliances between interest groups that supported or opposed each of these issues. The changes in alliances that occurred between the Peripheral Canal referendum and the later water resources initiative may provide clues to the future struggles over water allocation in California.

The Peripheral Canal initiative on the June 8, 1982, ballot proposed construction of various water facilities including a canal, which would have diverted water from northern California rivers around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta into the California State Water Project feeding southern California. Its implementation would have been a crucial link in completing the original California Water Plan. Although originally predicted to pass easily in the June referendum, its defeat makes the plan for building this particular canal politically unfeasible in the foreseeable future.

In the January-February 1983 issue of *California Agriculture*, we described the powerful pro- and anti-canal alliances that developed in the battle over the Peripheral Canal campaign. The agricultural community was split between Kern County and northern California farming interests. Kern County farmers, donating about 18 percent of the \$2.6 million in campaign funds for the canal (table 1) wanted northern water to supplement a decreasing groundwater sup-

ply and to develop new farmlands. A coalition of agricultural interests opposed the canal. These included some of the state's largest growers, such as the J. G. Boswell Company and the Salyer Land Company, who felt environmental controls attached to the proposition were too restrictive. Delta and northern California farmers feared the loss of control over water. Of the \$2.9 million donated to defeat Proposition 9, the agricultural sector contributed about 93 percent, almost half of which came from the two large farming firms.

In the end, a combination of factors, including more effective use of mass media by canal opponents, the grass-roots work of environmentalists, traditional northern hostility to southern interests, the tendency of persons to vote against issues they either don't understand or don't care about, and probably most important, the well-publicized costs of the project package in a time of high unemployment, contributed to the overwhelming defeat of Proposition 9.

The water resources initiative (Proposition 13) on the November 1982 ballot would have added new sections to the State Water Code. It would have revised laws by requiring a water conservation program to be in place in overdrafted natural watershed basins before new or increased basin transfers of more than 20,000 acre-feet per year could be approved.

The California Constitution authorizes state agencies to prevent waste or misuse of water resources. Proposition 13 would have provided guidelines for the enforcement of water conservation. Historically, water conservation has never been a popular issue with the state legislature, and agriculture and commerce have formed powerful lobbies to protect their water interests.

This may account for the confusing

array of issues in Proposition 13 — water conservation, groundwater management, instream flow protection, and the filling of the New Melones Dam. It was, in a sense, a collection of reform proposals that had been avoided by legislators over the past few years. Preconditions for the filling of New Melones Dam that were attached to this proposition attracted the grass-roots work of rafting interests that made it possible for the initiative to qualify for the ballot. In the long run, however, concern other groups voiced over economic losses resulting from not making full use of a completed dam played a part in defeating the initiative.

## **Changing alliances**

The primary sources of data on both Propositions 9 and 13 were reports of contributions filed within specific time intervals before the election with the Division of Political Reform Office of the Secretary of State of California. In addition to a search of five newspaper clipping files, we used an annotated key-sort bibliography of over 1,000 articles on the social aspects of water development. Key informants were also interviewed.

These measures and their supporters had significant similarities as well as differences. Both propositions were complex, with multiple issues, which expanded the range of interest groups benefiting from or losing through their passage. Participants in the campaigns included agricultural, manufacturing, real estate, utilities, food processing, retail, entertainment, financial, and oil interests. The most important opponent of both propositions was agriculture. In both campaigns, strategic planning and the use of advertising were important in shaping public opinion to the point where major shifts occurred, as indicated in Melvin Field polls.

For a better understanding of the relative importance different economic sectors played in the campaigns, we examined the number and types of businesses that made contributions for or against the propositions, the total amounts given, and the percentages and the numbers of donors by size of contribution (tables 1 and 2).

Unlike the Peripheral Canal campaign, environmental groups were opposed by most sectors of the economy in the conflict over the water resources initiative (table 1). This accounts for the fact that the total contribution of funds used against the water resources initiative was almost 10 times as great as the funding given in its support.

Proponents of the water resources initiative donated \$742,000 (including loans and services as well as cash gifts),

of which about a third, or \$234,000, was in the \$500-or-more category. These amounts differ greatly from the over \$2 million donated to the campaign against

the measure, of which 98 percent consisted of individual contributions of \$500 or more.

In contrast, each side in the hotly

contested battle over the Peripheral Canal had approximately equal funding: those opposing the canal donated only about \$360,000 more than the \$2.6 million donated by supporters. The closeness of the two totals was in large part due to the financial support of large farming interests such as the J. G. Boswell Company and the Salyer Land Company, which were surprisingly aligned in this campaign with environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the Mono Lake Committee, and the Environmental Defense Fund.

Groups for the water resources initiative collected most of their campaign funds from large numbers of middle-class small donors, a fact reflected in rapid decline in number of donors once the contribution size exceeds \$500 (table 2). In addition, of the larger donations in the "for" group, about half were from environmental associations that, in turn, had received their donations from many small contributors.

The largest single contribution supporting the water conservation initiative was \$40,000 from the past president of the Apple Computer Company. Seven contributors against the initiative gave over \$60,000 each: \$269,000 (including a \$100,000 no-interest loan) from Tenneco West, \$165,000 from J. G. Boswell Company, \$100,000 from the past chairman of Superior Oil, \$85,000 from the Prudential Insurance Company, \$85,000 from the Salyer Land Company, \$75,000 from Standard Oil of California, and \$66,300 from the California Farm Bureau.

The farming sector, which was solidly opposed to the water resources initiative, contributed nearly half (47 percent) of the funds opposing it.

Oil companies were again major contributors in the second campaign. These included, in addition to those previously mentioned, Union Oil, Getty Oil, Shell, Atlantic Richfield, and Pauley Petroleum.

Although some major corporations such as Rockwell International, Hughes Aircraft, Baker International, and Republic worked against the water resources initiative, the manufacturing sector seemed much less interested in groundwater management than it had been in the movement of water south, as suggested by their greater participation in the Peripheral Canal campaign. However, the canal campaign demonstrates the potential of this sector as a force in future battles over water. Real estate interests also were significantly less involved in the second campaign.

Support from both financial institutions and utilities remained fairly consistent in each of the two elections.

**TABLE 1. Contributions of \$500 or more by interest group for or against the Peripheral Canal initiative (Proposition 9) and the water resources initiative (Proposition 13)\***

Interest group	Peripheral Canal†				Water resources†			
	For		Against		For		Against	
	Donors	Donated	Donors	Donated	Donors	Donated	Donors	Donated
Agriculture	23.9% (78)	18.1% (468)	63.0% (136)	92.9% (2,738)	4.5% (3)	0.9% (2)	62.0% (209)	47.0% (992)
Manufacturing/ industrial	32.7 (107)	15.1 (391)	1.4 (3)	0.5 (14)	1.5 (1)	17.1 (40)	3.6 (12)	1.8 (37)
Land development/ real estate	13.1 (43)	19.5 (504)	12.5 (27)	2.5 (75)	1.5 (1)	1.3 (3)	4.7 (16)	3.6 (73)
Oil/natural resources	4.3 (14)	34.5 (891)	0	0	0	0	2.4 (8)	25.6 (540)
Utilities	4.0 (13)	5.1 (133)	1.4 (3)	0.1 (4)	0	0	5.0 (17)	4.5 (96)
Banks/financial institutions	7.3 (24)	2.8 (73)	6.5 (14)	2.7 (80)	1.5 (1)	0.4 (1)	3.9 (13)	7.1 (149)
Food processing	3.1 (10)	1.8 (47)	0	0	1.5 (1)	0.4 (1)	11.3 (38)	4.5 (94)
Retail	8.3 (27)	2.0 (51)	6.0 (13)	0.3 (9)	13.6 (9)	5.1 (12)	5.3 (18)	5.8 (122)
Entertainment	3.4 (11)	1.0 (26)	2.3 (5)	0.1 (3)	48.5 (32)	32.1 (75)	1.8 (6)	0.4 (9)
Environmental associations (nonprofit)	0	0	6.9 (15)	0.8 (23)	27.3 (18)	42.7 (100)	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.1% (327)</b>	<b>99.9% (2,584)</b>	<b>100.0% (216)</b>	<b>99.9% (2,946)</b>	<b>99.9% (66)</b>	<b>100.0% (234)</b>	<b>100.0% (337)</b>	<b>100.2% (2,112)</b>

\* Compiled from reports filed with the Division of Political Reform, Office of the Secretary of State of the State of California. Contributions of \$500 or more were counted to estimate the relative importance of each sector in this campaign. Total percentages do not always equal exactly 100 percent because of rounding.

† Beneath each percentage, the number of donors or amount of money spent (in thousands of dollars) is given in raw numbers as shown within parentheses.

**TABLE 2. Donors by size of contribution for and against the Peripheral Canal initiative (Proposition 9) and the water resources initiative (Proposition 13)\***

Size of contributions†	Percentage (and number) of donors			
	Peripheral Canal		Water resources	
	For	Against	For	Against
\$				
100 - 500	67.5% (492)	80.9% (1,014)	82.9% (745)	67.4% (538)
501 - 1,000	11.0 (80)	10.4 (131)	9.9 (89)	12.8 (102)
1,001 - 5,000	12.9 (94)	7.4 (93)	5.5 (49)	12.8 (102)
5,001 - 10,000	2.9 (21)	0.6 (7)	1.2 (11)	3.6 (29)
10,001 - 20,000	2.3 (17)	0.2 (2)	0.3 (3)	1.6 (13)
20,001 - 30,000	1.4 (10)	0.2 (2)	0.1 (1)	0.5 (4)
30,001 - 40,000	0.7 (5)	0.1 (1)	0	0.3 (2)
40,001 - 50,000	0.4 (3)	0	0.1 (1)	0.1 (1)
Over 50,000	1.0 (7)	0.3 (4)	0	0.9 (7)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.1% (729)</b>	<b>100.1% (1,254)</b>	<b>100% (899)</b>	<b>100% (798)</b>

\* Information was taken from records on political action committees and major donors by the Division of Political Reform in the Office of the Secretary of State, State of California. Figures were corrected for inflation due to cross-contributions between political action committees. Nonmonetary contributions were also added according to their estimated value in dollars.

† Only contributions over \$100 are reported, since the Political Reform Act of 1974 does not require smaller amounts to be itemized.

Major financial institutions such as Prudential Insurance, Bank of America, Crocker National Corporation, Wells Fargo Bank, and First Interstate Bank gave a total of about \$149,000 to defeat the water resources initiative. Utilities, including Pacific Gas and Electric, Pacific Lighting Corporation, Southern California Edison, and the California Water Association, provided an additional \$95,500 to oppose the measure.

Safeway, Del Monte, Carnation, Coca Cola, and 7-Up were among members of the food industry that worked against the water resources initiative. Raising over \$94,000, processors seemed more concerned about the negative impact this measure might have on their industry than they had been interested in the benefits they might have derived from additional water sent south through the Peripheral Canal.

The entertainment sector was much more important in the water resources campaign than in the canal campaign, primarily because of contributions from a wide variety of businesses that depend on rafting, fishing, and other outdoor sports. These proved to be the only businesses that aligned themselves with environmental groups in support of the water resources initiative.

The entertainment groups opposing the conservation initiative were of an entirely different nature. They included the Hilton Hotels Corporation and coun-

try clubs such as the Ironwood Country Club, Los Angeles Turf Club, Oak Tree Racing Association, and the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Seven of the ten major interest groupings examined supported the Peripheral Canal initiative. In contrast, the agricultural sector and environmental associations were decisive factors in the defeat of the Peripheral Canal referendum through the grass-roots campaigning of environmentalists and big campaign contributions from large agribusiness.

Of the seven that supported the Peripheral Canal initiative, only four (oil, utilities, food processing, and retail) played a significant role in working to defeat the water resources initiative, although the financial sector also united in working against this initiative. Environmental associations increased their campaign contributions almost five-fold in support of the water resources initiative over the relatively small amount of \$23,000 they spent in the campaign against the Peripheral Canal. However, these associations proved no match for a united agricultural sector, which outspent them at a ratio of almost ten to one.

There are two lessons to be learned from the study of these recent political battles over water. First, no single, monolithic group controls the development of water policy in California. While some powerful interests such as

oil and utilities remained united on the same side in each election, others became substantially less or more involved depending on what was at stake for them. Agriculture and conservation proved the two interests that split most radically between the two elections.

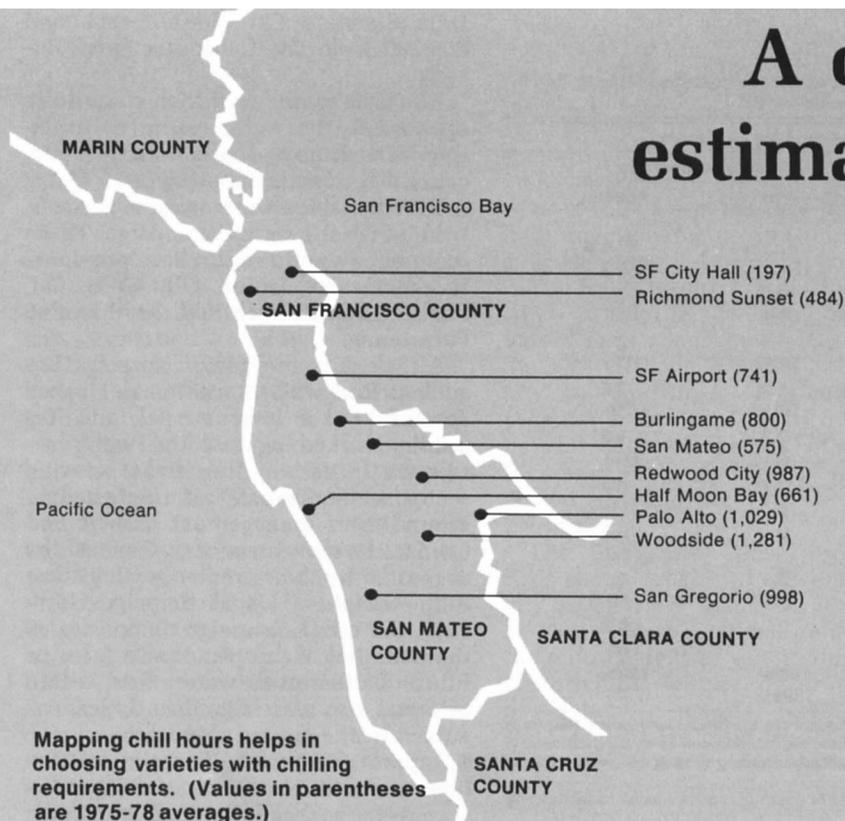
Second, this study suggests that the coalition most likely to win in a political conflict over water will be the one that is able and willing to spend the most money on the campaign, regardless of the number of donors involved. In the water resources campaign there were many more small donors supporting the referendum than opposing it. However, the superior ability of the opposition to finance a campaign against it assured the defeat of this initiative.

In the Peripheral Canal campaign 40.9 percent, and in the water resource campaign 51.6 percent of the total contributions came from sectors of the economy other than agriculture or food processing. As water becomes a more critical factor for their development, it is likely that these sectors will be willing to spend increasingly greater amounts of money to protect their own interests in the exploitation of this vital resource.

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## A quick method of estimating chill hours

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**M**ost deciduous fruit and nut trees require a period of cold temperature below 45°F during the winter to induce dormancy and promote satisfactory fruit and shoot development in the spring. The length of cold period required, or chill requirement, has been established for most commercial fruit and nut varieties; values vary considerably among species. For example, most apple varieties require more than 1,000 chill hours; almonds generally need only 200 to 500.

Chill hours can be measured continuously throughout the day with a thermograph, which records air temperature, or with a hygrothermograph, which records temperature and relative humidity. The number of hours the temperature remains below 45°F can be