



**SAN JOAQUIN**  
— COUNTY —  
*Greatness grows here.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **San Joaquin County Sues Department of Water Resources to Protect Groundwater and Wildlife**

San Joaquin County recently filed a lawsuit in the San Joaquin County Superior Court requiring the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to abide by local drilling permit requirements to protect wildlife and water quality in accordance with California state law.

Starting in June, DWR began geotechnical well drilling in San Joaquin and Sacramento counties to collect data DWR says it needs for a proposed Delta tunnel project. The highly controversial tunnel project would carry water diverted from the Sacramento River to the existing State and Federal water pumps in the South Delta for export to points south.

“DWR commenced this work despite the lack of a defined project and despite the Governor’s actions to develop a “Portfolio” approach to water supplies,” said San Joaquin County Supervisor Chuck Winn. “Although the Governor directed State agencies to engage Delta communities and other stakeholders in the tunnel and Portfolio planning processes, DWR ignored the local well permit requirements that apply to all drilling including state agencies.”

The County’s permitting requirements for well-drilling activities protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring that any wells or other borings in contact with groundwater are properly mapped and closed after the investigation is complete. For similar reasons, Sacramento County has also sued DWR for drilling without a permit.

In at least one instance, DWR commenced well-drilling activities without complying with its own mitigation measures designed to protect nesting birds. This failure violated the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, according to the County’s lawsuit.

San Joaquin County Supervisor Kathy Miller said: “It is ironic that DWR won’t follow basic safety requirements for its own wells when DWR oversees local agencies who are responsible for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act for protection of groundwater resources. All we are requesting is that DWR follow the law.”

Going forward, the County urges a fresh look at available solutions to better manage Delta water supplies and the ecosystem while supporting communities around the State. At a minimum, DWR must follow basic well permit and other requirements before undertaking any more well-drilling activities. Should DWR attempt to recommence well drilling without County permits, the County is prepared to seek injunctive relief to protect groundwater and public health.

The County anticipates that DWR will act to combine the County’s lawsuit with an existing lawsuit that allowed DWR to conduct the drilling over the objections of the landowners. The County will respond appropriately to any such action.

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