

**2004-2005
FRESNO COUNTY GRAND JURY**



**INTERIM REPORT
#3**

FRESNO COUNTY COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The County Committee of the 2004/2005 Fresno County Grand Jury considered several areas of concern in the course of its investigation.

The County committee is charged with overseeing governmental agencies within the cities of Fresno County, the prison system, including the Fresno County Jail and problems that have a direct impact on the citizens of Fresno County. Concerns were expressed by members of the media, County staff, various citizens and correspondence received from individuals incarcerated in the Fresno County Jail and the state prison system.

The following areas were reviewed:

- County Plaza security issues
- Fresno County water issues
- Fresno County jails and prisons
- Thefts of agricultural equipment and graffiti damage
- Fresno County Records Management Program
- Fresno County workforce

Some of the concerns were being resolved as the investigation began and were not pursued further, and some areas were beyond our purview and were referred to the proper authorities.

Concerns relating to the causes of double-digit unemployment in Fresno County were shared by the County, City and Education committees, which resulted in issuing a joint report on the Fresno County Workforce.

In the course of its investigation, the committee interviewed:

- officials from surrounding cities
- County Supervisors
- members of the media
- Fresno County department heads and officials
- experts in areas related to the investigations.

The committee toured several facilities related to its investigations and chose to study and report on the following areas:

- present and future Fresno County water shortage problems
- compliance with Fresno County Records Management Program
- Fresno County Workforce.

FRESNO COUNTY WATER ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

The 2004/2005 Fresno County Grand Jury (FCGJ), realizing the critical nature of the water shortage situation, studied the issue of water within Fresno County. The FCGJ examined the impact of surface and ground water on the economy and welfare of the communities. Segments of northeast Fresno County have water problems due to lack of water in the underground rock fissures. This area lacks subterranean rivers known as aquifers.

Experts in the field of geology, hydrology and engineering, along with government leaders and concerned citizens were interviewed. Documents including the Fresno County Ordinance Code and Public Review Draft Environmental Impact Report were researched to finalize this report. Fresno County depends on the affordability and availability of water for its existence. Without a regional oversight of water use and sales, the rapid growth in Fresno County is a potential disaster.

FINDINGS

- A. Fresno County is facing a severe water shortage problem.
- B. Water supply and delivery is essential to the quality of life in Fresno County. This has a direct environmental and economic impact on the County.
- C. Agriculture and dependent businesses are sustained in Fresno County by affordable and reliable water supply through the use of stored surface and ground water.
- D. For at least the last 20 years, throughout much of Fresno County, ground-water is in an overdraft (removing more than is replaced).
- E. Geologists and water experts encourage an increase in the development of recharge basins.
- F. Experts estimate that a minimum of 2,000 acres for recharge basins will be needed to provide water for present and future growth.

- G. Surface water and recharge basins add a substantial amount of water to aquifers.
- H. Proposed reservoirs such as Temperance Flat are a means to prevent losing run-off water from foothills and mountain snow pack.
- I. Developers are not being sufficiently assessed for developing sufficient water sources and recharge basins.
- J. Water meter use is not required in most parts of Fresno County.
- K. By 2006, the City of Fresno must comply with federal standards for water meter usage. Installation and reading of water meters in all neighborhoods must be completed by 2013.
- L. Double water meters for household and yard watering, with tiered usage pricing, would create incentives for efficient water use.
- M. There has been no scientific basis that agriculture requires more water per acre than subdivisions.
- N. Water, originating in Fresno County, is being sold for use in other counties even though there is a need for water in Fresno County.
- O. More three-stage water treatment plants are needed. The three stages are:
- potable water for households
 - gray water for agriculture
 - tertiary water for landscape
- P. The use of purple pipe identifies tertiary water.
- Q. Prior land usage is a direct source of water contamination.
- R. The County requires tests to identify potential soil and groundwater contamination.

- S. For individual wells, the requirements for a draw-down test (pump test) has changed from .5 to 1.0 gallons per minute, under pressure. Wells, yielding less than 5 gallons per minute, require use of a 2,000 gallon storage tank.
- T. Most County Planning personnel are not knowledgeable in long-term water issues and potential water shortages.
- U. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a valuable tool to preserve and protect water resources.
- V. Running water to obtain hot water is a costly waste of energy and millions of gallons of water each year.

CONCLUSIONS

- A. Availability of water is a major issue. Experts in the field concur that lack of water is a great concern.
- B. The development of future water supplies will require additional means of water treatment, storage and delivery systems.
- C. Residential, commercial and public use of water should be balanced.
- D. Agriculture requires less water per acre consumption than subdivisions and provides recharge for aquifers.
- E. The long-term impact of preserving agricultural land may require constraints on urban growth.
- F. Fresno County Zoning Ordinances pertaining to water use should be reviewed since forty-year-old plans are still in use.
- G. Fresno County currently has a Water Advisory Committee overseeing water issues.
- H. Development of additional recharge basins will assist in the replenishment of aquifers.
- I. Pre-existing water contamination is a concern for redevelopment or in-fill projects.

- J. Additional water reservoirs are necessary to store mountain water run-off.
- K. The implementation of meters and tiered pricing of water usage will encourage conservation.
- L. Water treatment plants with three stages would assist recharge and the purification of potable, tertiary and gray water.
- M. A knowledge of water planning is necessary for Planning Department personnel.
- N. Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) are useful and necessary tools to preserve and protect water resources.
- O. The present test standards for minimum gallons per minute is an insufficient volume for water supply requirements of a residence.
- P. The use of on-demand hot water recirculation systems would save millions of gallons of water and reduce costs.
- Q. The current Residential Building Code does not require on-demand hot water recirculation systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2004/2005 Fresno County Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors:
 - direct the Water Advisory Committee to be more diligent in overseeing the sale and use of water
 - develop and implement a tiered system of water pricing for the use of potable, tertiary and gray water
 - require the installation of double water meters in all future developments
 - require developers to demonstrate availability of an adequate water supply for all future developments
 - require performance bonds from developers for the assurance of future water supplies to their projects
 - require developers to set aside land to be used for re-charge basins

2. The Fresno County Planning Commission require documented evidence of availability of water supply that complies with County policy before approving any new development.
3. Temperance Flat be developed as a reservoir for snowmelt and foothill run-off.
4. Tertiary water from all water treatment plants be used.
5. Draw-down test (pump test) standards be raised to a minimum of 5 gallons per minute, not under pressure, for 48 hours.
6. An immediate building moratorium be implemented until proven water sources are located, developed and preserved.
7. The County Residential Building Code require an on-demand hot water recirculating system be installed in all new residential construction.
8. The Fresno County Zoning Ordinances pertaining to water use be reviewed