

Completion of project 'a new era of water development'

By [Ross Farrow](#)/News-Sentinel Staff Writer
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People have grown tired of hearing endless talk about developing a project to replenish eastern San Joaquin County's groundwater basin, County Supervisor Jack Sieglock said Monday.

"People are tired of studies," Sieglock said at Monday's dedication of the Stockton East Water District's Farmington Groundwater Recharge Program. "Instead of seeing more studies, we're seeing actual results."



That result is a water recharge project at the Stockton East plant on East Main Street, which involves putting water from New Melones and New Hogan reservoirs into a half-foot of water into a 9.5 acre pond at the plant, said Tom McGurk, president of the Stockton East board.

Although Stockton East serves only areas north to Eight Mile Road, the Farmington program headed by Stockton East will help such areas as Lodi, Victor, Lockeford, Clements and Acampo because they are part of the same groundwater basin.

The Farmington program is a \$33.5 million effort to restore the region's groundwater supply and repel saltwater intrusion. Stockton East's goal is to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to spread an average of 35,000 acre-feet of water annually on 800 to 1,200 acres of land through short- and long-term agreements with area landowners.

The target area is generally Highway 99 to Jack Tone Road and the Mokelumne River south to Temple Creek.

Monday morning's dedication, celebrating the completion of the Stockton East project, drew a who's who of political movers and shakers including Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, State Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden and Assemblywoman Barbara Matthews, D-Tracy, as well as Sieglock.

"This is the beginning of a new era of water development," said Pombo, chairman of the House's Resources Committee.

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Pombo announced that an additional \$1.5 million for the Farmington program is pending in this year's House appropriations bill. The allocation is part of \$25 million for the program from the Water Resources Development Act of 1999, McGurk said.

Machado, Matthews, Sieglock and others credited Pombo and Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, for their efforts in providing federal funds for the project.

"This is a team effort; this is a non-partisan effort," Sieglock said.

The next phase of the Farmington project is a detention basin planned just west of Highway 99 on Mosher Creek, which is across the freeway from Morada.

In another groundwater recharge project, the North San Joaquin Water Conservation District has been pumping Mokelumne River water to 25 acres owned by John Kautz southwest of Victor and Locust Tree roads in Victor.

The water has been pumped from the Mokelumne River for six weeks, said Ed Steffani, general manager of the North San Joaquin district. The 25-acre property is being filled with river water 18 inches high with the intent of the water saturating underground to replenish the groundwater basin.

Steffani said that testing has not yet taken place to determine how successful the project is.

In the next week or two, work will begin to soak 20 acres of land owned by the Nakagawa family north of the Mokelumne River near Woodbridge and Dustin roads, Steffani said.

The North San Joaquin groundwater project is being financed through a special \$1-per-acre tax approved by property owners in July. The assessment will be included on property tax bills due on Dec. 10.