

# Wilk introduces bill creating one SCV water agency

By [Jim Holt](#) - February 17, 2017, 1:23 pm



State Senator Scott Wilk has introduced legislation to create one new all-encompassing water agency that would manage and distribute water throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

He issued a statement Friday on the introduction of Senate Bill 634, a measure which will establish the new water district.

Currently there are multiple water providers supplying water to the region – a situation, proponents of the measure argue, has resulted in confusion, overlap and added costs for consumers.

Wilk's proposal would integrate existing systems into one state agency. Late last year the boards of the Castaic Lake Water Agency and the Newhall County Water District voted to support legislation that would dissolve the two agencies and create a new valley-wide water agency. The measure introduced Friday is the fruit of those negotiations.

“The measure introduced today is merely a starting point for negotiations. Since we are up against a legislative deadline, I introduced the language provided by the water agency stakeholders but it is by no means where we will end up,” said Wilk.

“While I’m supportive of a valley-wide agency that will pro actively manage our watershed and provide an economy of scale that should reduce the costs of delivering water to ratepayers, I’m not satisfied with the current version of the bill,” commented Wilk. “I plan on fully vetting this proposal as we go through the process.”

Wilk said he is committed to “getting this right.”

He held constituent office hours last weekend specifically on this topic and has actively solicited input from various stakeholders and community members.

“I will continue dialoging with all interested parties so that our final product is a new agency that best reflects the principles of environmental sustainability and a more accountable government,” Wilk said.

“The Castaic Lake Water Agency and the Newhall County Water Division have been in discussion now for 18 months to establish one new agency,” he noted.

““With this bill, they can manage water resources through integrated planning, integrated infrastructure, remove litigation – these are all good things,” he told The Signal Thursday.

“Clearly, this is a benefit to our community and are worthwhile goals,” he said.

The SCV's water wholesaler, Castaic Lake Water Agency, and one of SCV's three main water retailers, the Newhall County Water District, voted in favor of a settlement agreement on Dec. 13 and for the creation of one all-encompassing water agency.

The historic document poised to become law promises – according to bill proponents – to transform what they call a “patchwork of numerous water providers that creates redundant services, stifled integration, inherent conflicts and added costs” into a “new regional water district that would integrate systems”.

What Wilk likes, particularly, about the bill is language that paves the way for Valencia Water Company to be brought into the fold.

Under the bill, all three of Santa Clarita Valley's main water retailers – NCWD, Santa Clarita Water Division and Valencia Water company – would be overseen by one new water agency.

“Bringing Valencia Water company into the fold is particularly important for me, making it accountable and transparent,” he said. “It makes for a more accountable government agency.”

Another aspect of the bill he likes is the way it promises to handle changes made to water rates, fairly, through a ratepayer advocate.

The proposed Act would require the new water agency to have an independent ratepayer advocate that would review specific financial proposals and then form an opinion which would be shared with the board and the public.

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