



Measure B: A Case Study of a Successful Parcel Tax Measure

Linda J. LeZotte
Director, Santa Clara Valley Water District

North Bay Watershed Association Conference
April 11, 2014



Who we serve

2,000,000 people

15 cities

12 water retailers

4,700 Direct well owners

Fast facts

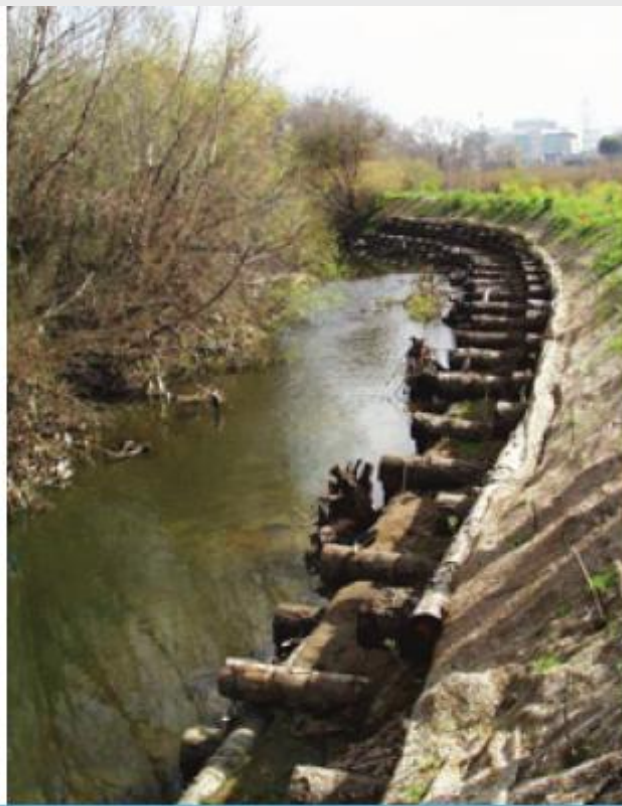
- 10** dams and surface water reservoirs
- 3** drinking water treatment plants
- 1** advanced water purification center under construction
- 3** pumping plants (own or operate)
- 1** state-of-the-art water quality laboratory
- 140** miles of large transmission pipelines
- 275** miles of streams
- 400** acres of groundwater recharge ponds



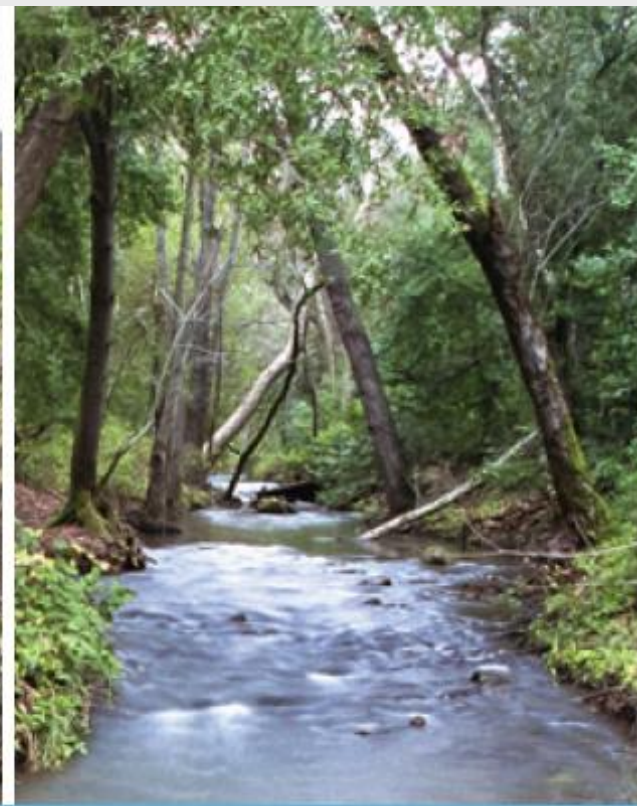
Our core services



SAFE, RELIABLE WATER



**NATURAL FLOOD
PROTECTION**



**HEALTHY CREEKS &
ECOSYSTEMS**

Background on Measure B: Clean, Safe Creeks 2000

- ▶ Eight variable rate categories:
 - ▶ Single Family Residence \$39 + CPI inflation factor
- ▶ 67% voter approval: 66% was needed.
- ▶ No funding for water supply or drinking water quality
- ▶ Was set to expire in 2015
- ▶ Needed to expand program to include water supply, water quality projects

Setting the Stage

- ▶ Late Start in Building Program
- ▶ 2010 survey discouraging—negative voter sentiment
- ▶ 2011, 2012 surveys pointed to Presidential election

Broad Based Front End Community Organizing

- ▶ How to organize the community
 - ▶ Initial Mailer to All Households
 - ▶ Phone Banks
 - ▶ Door to Door Surveys—bridged “digital divide”
 - ▶ Online Surveys
- ▶ Ultimately 16,000 residents weighed in



The Role of Polling and Focus Groups

- ▶ Reliance on polling to stay on course
- ▶ Focus Groups Results Have to be Considered
 - ▶ Tax reduction vs. straight renewal (lesson learned)
- ▶ Ballot language
 - ▶ Pick words wisely
 - ▶ Every word counts

Additional Efforts to Engage Public

- ▶ Continued Website/social media presence: web survey, collect emails
- ▶ Blue Ribbon Task Force: cross section of community leaders
- ▶ Online polling throughout
- ▶ Board Buy-in Key



2011 Safe Clean Water Blue Ribbon Forum

Informational Efforts to Educate Public

Active web site updated weekly

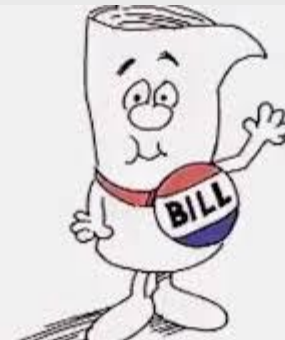


Blue Ribbon Forum Input Resulted in “Community Recommended Plan” presented to the Board of Directors



The Fork in the Road: Go or No Go

- ▶ Final Polling Results and Information
- ▶ Vocal Environmental Community Opposition to Measure
- ▶ Final Changes to Program—the \$6M question
- ▶ Placing the Measure on the Ballot



Safe, Clean Water: Measure B Campaign

- ▶ Obstacles: lawsuits, Board election distractions, potential media coverage, 75 Words.....and More!

Herhold: The Golden Spigot doesn't deserve to pass its new tax

By Scott Herhold

sherhold@mercurynews.com

Posted: 08/22/2012 11:13:45 AM PDT

Updated: 08/22/2012 03:52:26 PM PDT

Herhold: Golden Spigot is at it again

By Scott Herhold

Mercury News Columnist

Posted: 01/05/2010 07:00:00 PM PST

Updated: 01/06/2010 09:57:52 PM PST

Stream of Tax Dollars Fund Water District "Meetings"

Santa Clara Valley Water District board members charge for meetings that appear to have nothing to do with water

By Jenna Susko, Julie Putnam and Jeremy Carroll | Tuesday, Sep 11, 2012 | Updated 8:36 AM PDT

View Comments (0) | Email | Print | 2 | 7 | 25 | Send



Herhold: Why you should be skeptical about two local tax measures

By Scott Herhold

sherhold@mercurynews.com

Posted: 10/15/2012 02:21:28 PM PDT

Updated: 10/15/2012 03:07:50 PM PDT

Two-word error could cost Santa Clara Valley Water District half a billion dollars

By Paul Rogers

progers@mercurynews.com

POSTED: 09/19/2012 02:59:48 PM PDT

UPDATED: 08/19/2012 02:56:56 PM PDT

In what could turn out to be one of the costliest clerical errors in California history, a two-word mistake is threatening to bring down a half-billion-dollar tax measure scheduled for the November ballot in Silicon Valley.



Safe, Clean Water: Measure B Campaign

- ▶ Safe Clean Water Facebook
 - ▶ 272 “Likes”
 - ▶ Approximately 62% were aged 25-54
 - ▶ Almost 60% were women
 - ▶ Weekly, 117,134 people viewed content associated with the Facebook page



Social media, poll analysis strengthened resolve of key supporters



Safe, Clean Water: Measure B Campaign



facebook Search for people, places and things

YES ON B

Safe, Clean Water for Santa Clara Valley
277 likes

Community
Vote YES on Measure B to ensure safe, reliable local water supply in the Santa Clara Valley, without increasing tax rates.

274 FOLLOWING 31 FOLLOWERS



SafeWaterSCV
@SafeWaterSCV

Vote YES on Measure B to ensure safe, reliable local water supply in the Santa Clara Valley, without increasing tax rates.

274 FOLLOWING 31 FOLLOWERS

Follow



Tweets

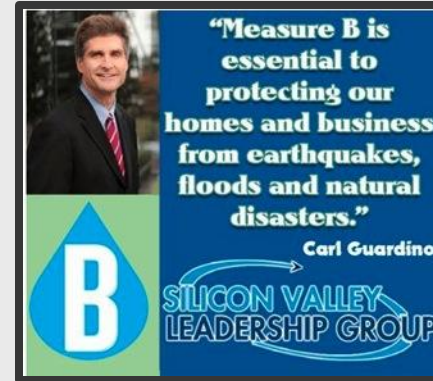
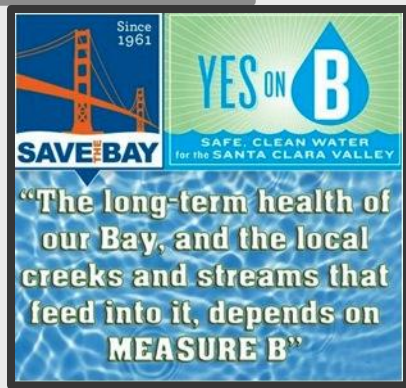
SafeWaterSCV @SafeWaterSCV 7 Nov
Thank you for supporting Measure B - for #safecleanwater for #santaclaracounty!

@SafeWaterSCV



Safe, Clean Water: Measure B Campaign

- ▶ Broad coalition, key endorsements, District leadership earned *Mercury News* endorsement



The Opposition Strikes Back

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Read this week's issue:
Tax and hunting measures to appear on 2014 ballot

Santa Clara Valley Water District parcel tax, Measure B (November 2012)

Santa Clara Valley Water District parcel tax, Measure B was on the [November 6, 2012 ballot](#) for voters in the Santa Clara Valley Water District in [Santa Clara County](#), where it was **approved**.^[1]

Measure B replaces an existing parcel tax. Although the amount of the proposed Measure B tax varies depending on the size of a given property and the uses to which the property is put, the new tax will initially be \$56.00/year for the hypothetical "average home" in the district. At least \$548 million is expected to be raised by the tax through 2028. According to the provisions of Measure B, the water district's governing board will be allowed to increase the tax by at least 3% every year. Measure B will be in effect for 15 years (through 2028).^[2]

Property owners in Santa Clara County already pay a parcel tax to the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The existing parcel tax was approved in November 2000. When the tax first was levied, it was \$39.00/year for the hypothetical "average home". When voters approved the tax in 2000, it came with a provision that allowed the water district to adjust the tax levy upward every year by at least 3% to account for inflation. The water district has increased the levy every year by at least 3.00%, which is why in Fiscal Year 2012-2013, the tax will be \$54.22/year.^[3] That tax is set to expire in June 30, 2016.^[4]

A 2/3rds supermajority vote was required for approval.

Election results

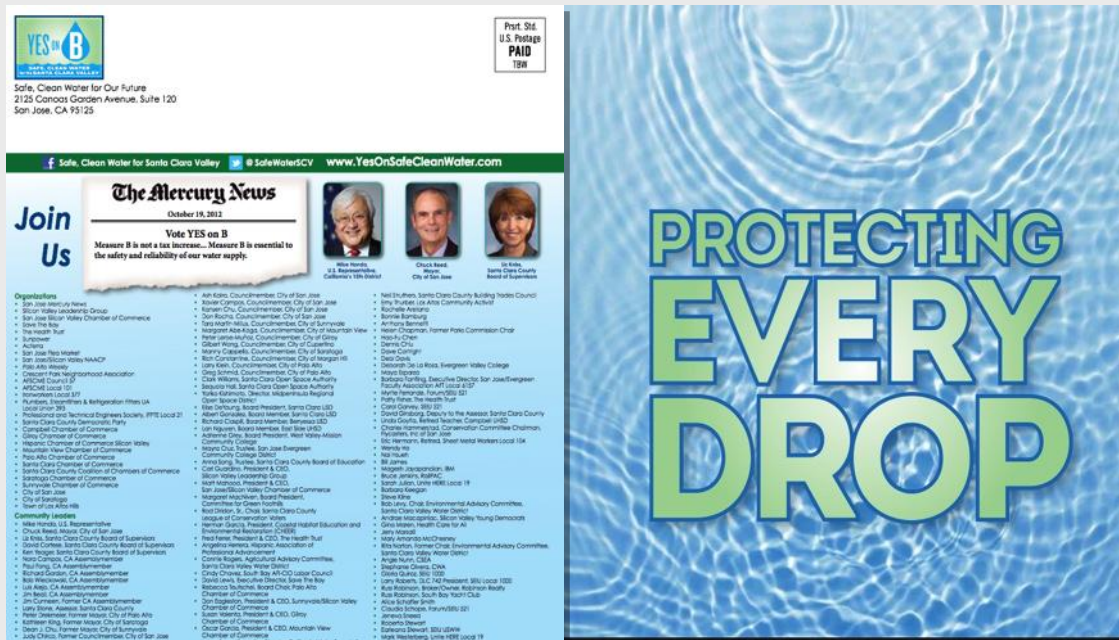
Measure B		
Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ Yes	434,021	73.69%
No	154,970	26.31%

Contents [hide]

- Election results
- About the district
- Pro and con arguments
- Support
 - Supporters
 - Arguments in favor
 - Water supply
 - Environmental
 - Fiscal
- Opposition
 - Opponents
 - Arguments against
 - Environmental
 - Taxpayer
 - Accountability
- Parties Remaining Neutral
- Lawsuits
 - To change date
 - To remove
 - Ballot arguments
- Text of measure
 - Ballot question

Safe, Clean Water: Measure B Campaign

- ▶ Grassroots outreach to voters of color
- ▶ Late fundraising allowed some mail radio ads, robo calls



The Opposition Strikes Back

Santa Clara Valley Water District

Opposed: Friends of Coyote Creek Environmentalists for Living Streams Western Waters Canoe Club
Refused to Endorse (remained neutral): Sierra Club Audubon Society Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition,
If these groups won't endorse, something is very wrong with Measure B!

Some environmental groups did endorse Measure B – usually for very disappointing reasons. Some were misled by plausible, but untrue, statements by the District. Here are examples of the Water District's misleading alarmist statements:

UNTRUE: Anderson Dam earthquake repairs will be delayed if Measure B is delayed til 2016.



UNTRUE: The only time to pass Measure B in November 2012.

TRUTH: The Presidential Primary in June 2016 is a good time to bring a better more effective tax proposal back to the voters.

Yes on streams



No on Measure B

Environmentalists say: Send the Water District back to rewrite the Measure by June 2016.
Voting No in 2012 will force the District to do it right in 2016.



Meng Syn, Dentist, Flyfisherman

I caught my first steelhead on a Santa Clara County stream as a teenager. Over the decades, Water District projects have decimated the local fishery. Until they write a measure to put back the environmental money they diverted to other projects and agree to keep their promises to restore the fishery, I'm voting NO on B.



Roger Castillo, Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Group

I spend a lot of time in the creeks and know what the fish need to survive. They need us all to vote NO on Measure B and get the Water District to rewrite the Measure to restore the fishery, as well as natural flood protection and environmental projects.



Richard McMurtry, water engineer, Regional Water Quality Control Board (retired)

It is a waste of money to throw money at water quality and environmental projects, without a clear focus on the projects that will actually achieve environmental goals. We have the engineering knowledge to do much better than Measure B; let's apply it by rewriting Measure B to provide balanced funding for flood protection and the

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Lessons Learned

- ▶ Start early with a strong team, develop detailed program descriptions, engage and educate community, recruit key supporters from target groups, ensure your Board supports
- ▶ Think creatively about social media, dig deep into your voter research

Santa Clara County \$548 million parcel tax for flood protection, water cleanup and projects approved

By Paul Rogers
progers@mercurynews.com
Posted: 11/06/2012 08:00:00 PM PST
Updated: 11/07/2012 02:00:21 AM PST

Percent	Votes
73.69%	434,021
26.31%	154,970
	588,991



Questions/Comments

