

Earth Log: Next water rally in Tulare, but storms may be only relief

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Posted by Mark Grossi on March 24, 2014 Updated 13 hours ago



Cracked dry soil at a Terra Bella orange orchard in February.

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San Joaquin Valley water rallies this year happen just before the state makes key announcements. Another rally is scheduled Wednesday in Tulare, but the next move may be up to nature.

The rally at the Capitol in January helped nudge Gov. Jerry Brown into announcing the drought emergency, organizers say.

The one in Firebaugh last week helped persuade the State Water Resources Control Board to tweak its drought order and open the door for farming to possibly sharing in Northern California water, organizers say.

On Wednesday in the International Agri-Center, 4500 South Laspina St. in Tulare, a rally and water update are going to be focused on the zero allocation for east Valley farmers.

Zero is unacceptable, say organizers, including the California Latino Water Coalition.

"We want to continue the pressure," said Mario Santoyo, a Latino Water Coalition leader and Friant Water Authority official.

Friant Water Authority represents 15,000 east Valley growers who have never faced a zero allocation from the federal Central Valley Project at Millerton Lake.

If more Northern California water can be sent into the Valley, east-siders would be relieved of a contractual commitment to give up water in Millerton for senior water-rights holders on the west side. So Millerton water could be used on the east side.

But despite past successes with the rallies, the situation may be too grim for government action to help. A stormy spring after one of the driest winters on record may be the only way to provide water this year.