

Earth Log: Maria Herrera is third Valley member on water commission

By Mark Grossi



Self-Help Enterprises representative Maria Herrera, second from left, discusses a dry well at the home of Benjamin Luengas, left, and Lazara Luengas. Paul Boyer, also of Self-Help Enterprises, right, joins discussion, which took place last year in Tulare County.

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The San Joaquin Valley now has a third member on the California Water Commission, the group that will have a big say in carving up part of the \$7.5 billion water bond passed last November.

The new member is Maria Herrera, 32, of Visalia, joining west-side farmer Joe Del Bosque, who was reappointed, and Dave Orth, general manager of the [Kings River Conservation District](#).

It's a nine-member commission, so we're not talking about a majority. But this commission will decide on the public benefits of funding individual water storage projects with \$2.7 billion of the bond money.

Where would this money be spent? That's the question. New reservoirs? Groundwater banks?

Around here, the talk is about [Temperance Flat Reservoir on the San Joaquin River](#), northeast of Fresno, nearly tripling the capacity of Millerton Lake. Farming has pursued it for decades. The federal government is nearing the release of an Environmental Impact Study on the idea.

Back to the water commission. Herrera, who must be confirmed by the state Senate, adds a different voice. She has

been working with rural communities for many years.

She was a community advocacy director at the [Community Water Center](#) in Visalia from 2008 to 2014. The group has helped many poor communities work on water system fixes.

She now works for Visalia-based [Self-Help Enterprises](#), a nonprofit devoted for decades to community building. Herrera also is a member of El Quinto Sol de America and la Asociación de Gente Unida por el Agua.

Keep your eye [on this group](#) over the next few years.