

Kern County gets leg up in fight against future droughts

*by Tim Johns, Eyewitness News, Thursday, July 26th 2018
KBAK/KBFX photo*

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KBAK/KBFX) — The California Water Commission this week approved two water storage projects here in Kern County.

The projects are designed to help replenish much of the groundwater that was lost during the last drought that ran through 2017.

"This is an additional savings account for Kern County that allows us to capture and store wet year water and re-regulate it into dry year," said Eric Averett, general manager of the Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District, one of the districts that proposed one of the projects.

While water districts around the county have been working to replace the groundwater levels for over a year, they say that the new projects will help them store far more water.

"The project is defined as 100,000 acre feet of additional storage, but likely that number will grow," said Averett.

And when the next drought strikes, that's important insurance for farmers.

"If we can bring in additional water supplies, we have the ability to firm up the amount of water that the farmer can pump,"

And potentially even for consumers.

"I can't say that everyone's water bill is going to go down. What I can say is that it positions us to protect the resource and to try and reduce or maintain existing water rates," said Averett.

A water commission spokeswoman has said that both of the Kern projects are expected to be operational by early next decade.

<https://bakersfieldnow.com/news/local/kern-county-gets-leg-up-in-fight-against-future-droughts>

(FOR addendum: The CA Water Commission allocated Proposition 1 funds for the Kern Fan and Willow Springs groundwater storage projects, the latter south of the Tehachapis. They did not "approve the projects." The Kern Fan project is envisioned to bank Kern River Water (water which never leaves the basin now) and "excess" SWP water on a put-to-take ratio of 2 to 1.)