

# BOARD STYMIED

# ON WATER SALE

## What a Change In Last 4 Years!

### Carty Critical Of Plan

By JIM BROWN  
COUNTY supervisors dead-locked yesterday over a proposed plan to sell water from Matilija dam as Supervisor Edwin Carty protested it would allow a few ranchers to buy the entire 1,000 acre feet of water offered for sale this summer.

He and Supervisor R. E. Barrett stalemated on the tentative policy for sale of water when Carty declared:

"The way we're starting out it's possible for three ranchers to go in there and buy the whole 1,000 acre feet."

And Barrett retorted:

"There's no way you can take this water and benefit all the people of Zone 1 (Ventura river-Ojai valley area)."

Both agreed there isn't enough water to meet the demand.

Sitting as directors of the county-wide flood control district, supervisors postponed approval of a "notice of intent to sell water" drafted by Barrett and deputy district attorney James Dixon. They will consider it further next Tuesday.

Basically, the plan provides:

**COST DIPS**  
1948: \$60  
1952: \$25

THE price of \$25 per acre foot which the flood board of supervisors considered yesterday for the sale of Matilija dam water is considerably less than the estimated \$60 per acre foot under discussion nearly four years ago.

On June 25, 1948, the flood board met with Consultant Harold Conkling and county flood control engineer Robert Ryan to discuss the sale of water from Matilija dam.

#### PLAN OUTLINED

At that meeting Conkling suggested that the flood control district make plans to deliver water to areas that are incorporated in some way, as a city or as a water district. He said the flood control district didn't want to deal with individuals. It will take time to form water districts where they are needed, Conkling said, so this work should be started immediately. Now, during the drought, is the time to form the districts, he declared.

Conkling told supervisors it was absolutely necessary to have the Matilija water rights determined in a judicial manner before water is released and sold. He said the flood control district

OVER

# SUPERVISORS DEBATE POLICY FOR SELLING WATER IN MATILIJA DAM

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tioned the allocation of 1,000 acre of water to the Ojai valley area.

"I'm thinking of the users in the avenue district and the city of Ventura. If they bid for some of this water we can't divert it all to the Ojai valley area."

Price observed that the proposed contracts would bind the flood control district to supply Ojai valley users with 1,000 acre feet of water every year as long as that much is available. He wondered if half the Matilija's estimated 2,000 acre feet of safe yield is a fair proportion to allocate to the Ojai valley.

County Engineer Robert Ryan observed, at the same time, that the 2,000 acre feet is only an estimate of the amount of water available for sale annually.

Some estimates have been as low as 1,300 acre feet, he said.

If that turned out to be the case, only 300 acre feet of water would be available for sale to users on the Ventura river when and if conduits are installed to serve that part of Zone 1.

Dixon said the flood board must decide, ultimately, how the water will be divided within the Zone 1 area.

He pointed out that the proposed Casitas dam, which could supply water to most Ventura river valley users, "may change

the entire picture." The Matilija dam, he noted, is "just one step in the zone's development of water."

Carty commented, "I can't see rushing into a deal like this" as Barrett urged speedy action on the notice of intent to sell water. Barrett said prospective buyers should be informed as soon as possible whether water will be sold this summer.

Carty said that if the owners of 800 acres of land purchased two and a half acre feet of water per acre of land, they would use all of Matilija's annual safe yield of 2,000 acre feet.

"It just doesn't add up," he declared.

On the other hand, Carty pointed out, if the water is sold equitably among all who apply to buy it, "the amount each man would get would be no more than a spit."

## CARTY SPEAKS UP

The Oxnard-Hueneme area supervisor, who owns 140 acres of land in the Ojai valley area, continued:

"Only thing I can see people wouldn't squawk at is putting the water into underground gravels so everybody would get a crack at it through their wells. If I've got to pay for that dam on my tax bill every year and I can't get a drop of water, and only about three guys have got it all—which is possible under this deal—I know I'll be squawking!"

Barrett replied that no matter how the water was spread into underground gravels, one area would claim the other was getting all the benefits.

He said there aren't enough gravels in the Zone 1 area to enable a fair distribution of water by spreading.

The Ojai area supervisor answered Carty's complaint that the water would benefit only agricultural users by stating:

"This water isn't going to be used for agriculture. This water is going to be used for domestic purposes."

Barrett said purchasers couldn't afford to rely on Matilija water for agricultural use, but would have to subdivide their lands in order to retain contract water rights. Eventually, he said, more than 10,000 people would benefit.

"Well, now you're talking about 10 or 15 years from now," Carty said. "But we've got 30,000 people in Zone 1 paying for that (Matilija dam) through taxation right

now. These people are going to squawk who are paying ad valorem taxes on that dam."

"Well, they're going to squawk no matter what you do," Barrett said.

"Well, they're justified in it too," Carty answered. "I don't see how we can justify ourselves, though."

"There's an element of justification," Barrett said, "in the complaints we had when we tried to spread the meager quantity of water that was available last summer."

He told Carty:

"All our discussion points up one fact: There's insufficient water and a desperate need to develop more water."

Questioned later, Barrett, who has decided not to seek re-election as supervisor from the third district, was non-committal about a bond election this year for the proposed Casitas dam. He said he "personally" hopes to see the people of Zone 1 vote on the bonds this year, but was indefinite on the prospects of an election.

He said, however, that engineering studies of the dam have advanced to the point where an election could be called this summer.



**OVER THE TOP** — The Matilija Dam northwest of Ojai, nearly empty last night, began spilling water this morning at 3 a.m. when a cloudburst hit the area. The water spilled over the notches cut in the dam late last summer to insure that the dam would be safe.