

Becoming Porterville

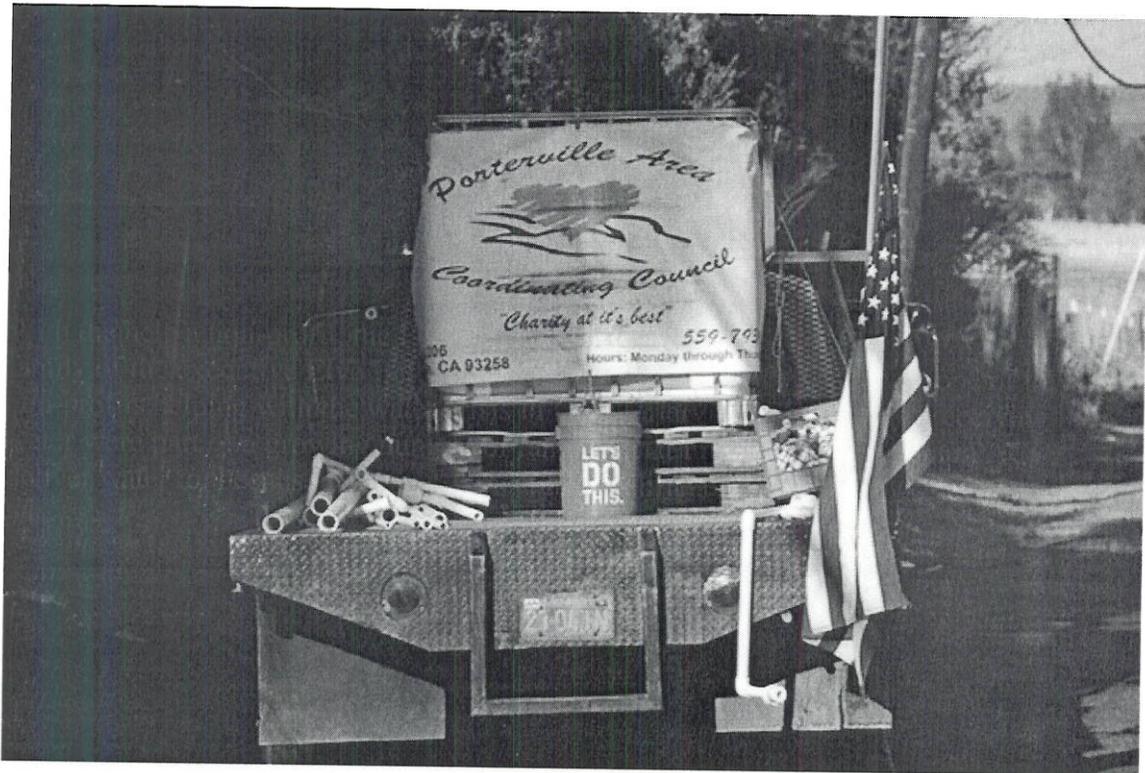
East Porterville is a small community South East of Fresno. It sits nestled against its bigger sister, Porterville, amid orange groves, alfalfa fields and a growing number of fields that go unplanted. East Porterville might have gone unnoticed, if not for a woman named Donna Johnson who started asking questions about wells in the town. After doing some research she found that almost a hundred wells in the town of 7331, had gone dry. Overnight East Porterville became media hot spot for stories about the drought impact on California. A Google search for towns without water, finds East Porterville is at the top of the list.



On July 9, 2015, The Family Water Alliance and The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers sponsored a water truck to deliver water to several families in East Porterville. After a stop in Sacramento with elected officials Assemblyman Brian Dahle and Assemblyman Devon Mathis to pick up more water, the convoy made its way to Porterville.

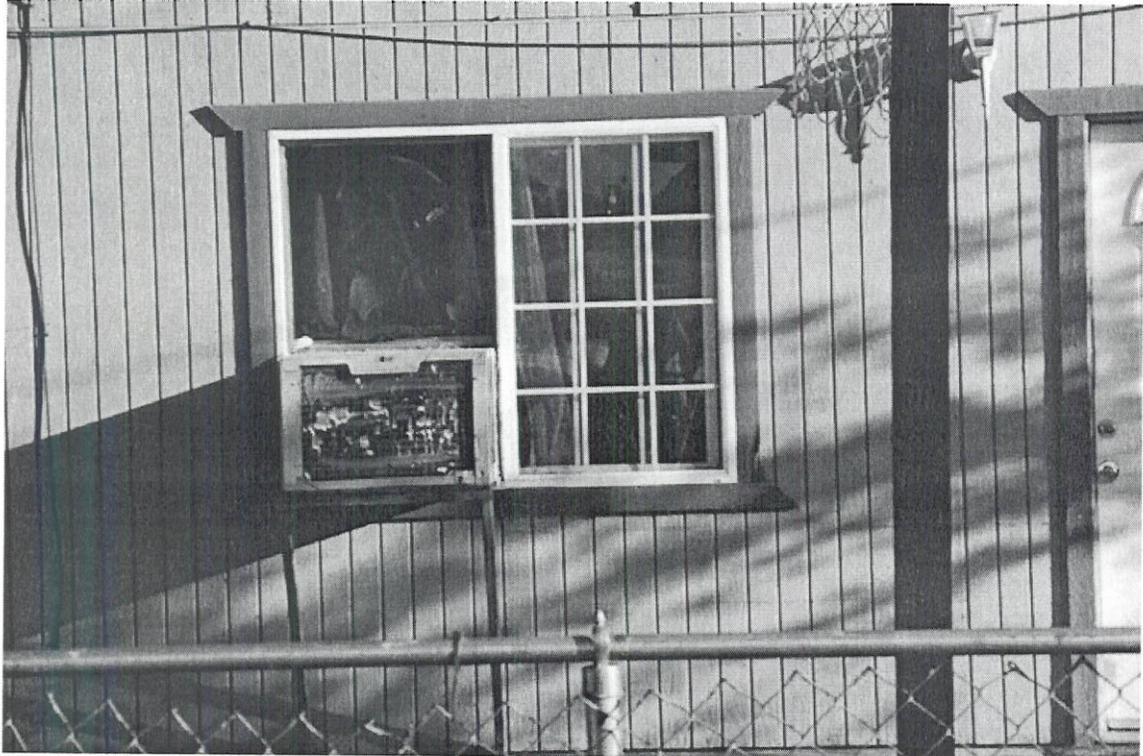


With the help a non-profit, the Porterville Area Coordinating Council (PACC) and the family of the executive Elva Beltran and her husband Fred. PACC is just one of the many non-profits helping with the water crisis in East Porterville. The families receiving the water were part of a growing number of families that Fred and Elva and the PACC deliver water to, because they do not meet the qualifications for county service.





No water means, no water for lawns and for many, it means no way to cool your home. Most families use swamp coolers and swamp coolers need gallons of water each day to operate. Lucky families have been able to purchase small window units to make life bearable. In East Porterville the drought discussion is not about how green your lawn is, but how to get enough water to wash dishes and flush the toilet.



A lone chair sits under the only available shade, a tree that is also showing signs of drought fatigue.



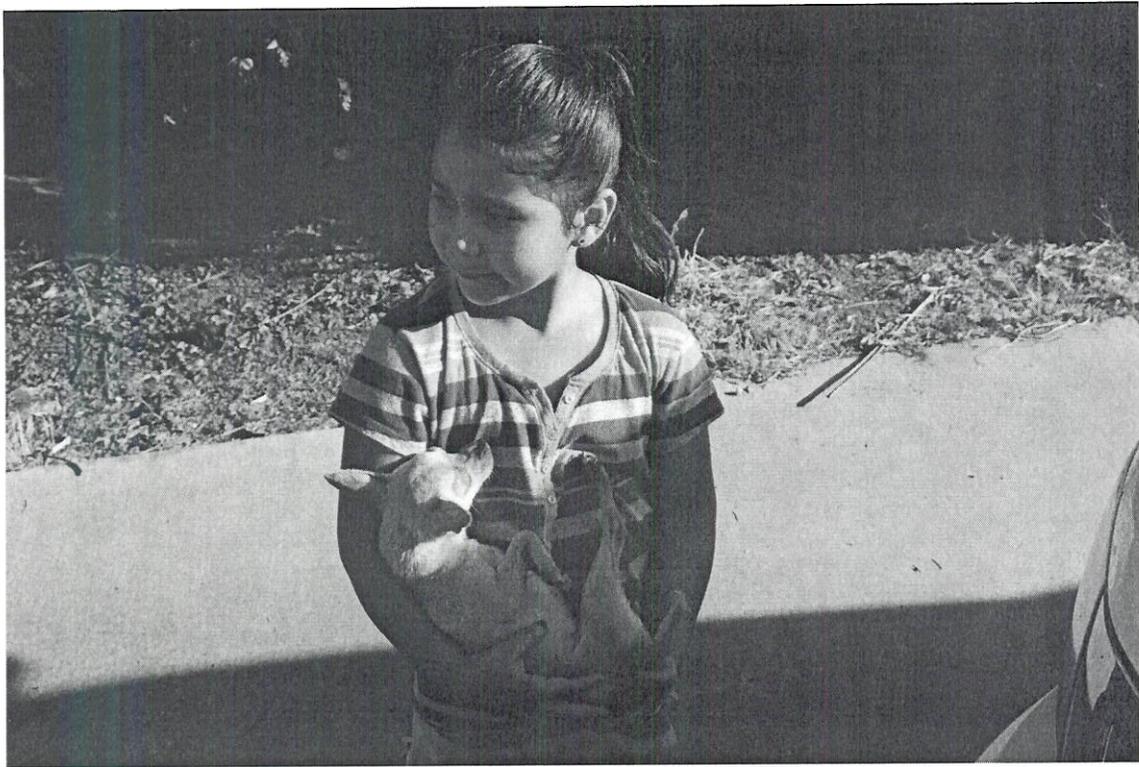
Many people who live and work in the Central and Sacramento Valleys are finding out how much their communities are tied to water projects that some 60 years ago turned our brown state green and built a farming economy that is unequalled in the world. Now decisions made by nameless, faceless bureaucrats, who have no incentive for solutions or compromise are drying up opportunity and hope.

Could your community be next? Communities service districts like Clear Creek, Bella Vista and Central Valley, in Shasta County, have seen their water deliveries cut, in some instances by almost half. While Porterville's water woes do not stem from the cuts due to the drought, or the need to save water to flush the delta, the cases are similar. Porterville is a typical rural community that lacks the money or the political power to move government to solve the problems they face. While the media may be focused on Porterville, that focus rarely turns into political power, as the communities of Hayfork CA and Forks Washington learned during the battle over the Northern Spotted Owl. Some 25 years later those communities still grapple with the unemployment and impacts from changes in forest management policy.

There is hope for Porterville, the hope is to, fund a water district that will drill several deep wells and connect the community with as pubic water district. The state has also declared that the dam on the Tule River can now be refilled after it passed earthquake safety inspections. Refilling the dam, will allow winter rainwater to be captured and released during the summer, which could in turn recharge the aquifer.



For the rest of the state, the passage of the Water Bond in 2014, give all of us an opportunity to retool our existing water system to meet the changing climate issues. The addition of Sites Reservoir in Colusa County and other storage projects throughout the state will ensure that when the next drought arrives, we will be prepared to meet the needs of our growing population. Communities like Bella Vista, Redding, and Happy Valley can become green again, if we use the bond money to expand above ground storage as voters intended. Sites Reservoir will protect, farmers, families and fish. California does not have to become East Porterville.

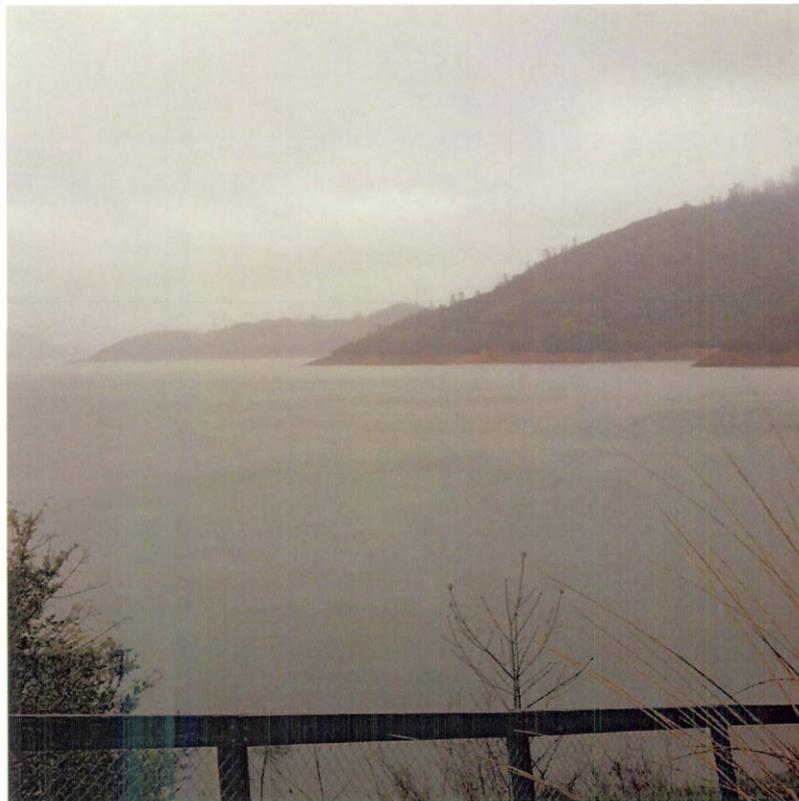


#SaveCAbuildwaterstorage

Becoming East Porterville



Shasta after the rain.



Sacramento at Lake Redding Park



Sacramento below Cottonwood Creek

