



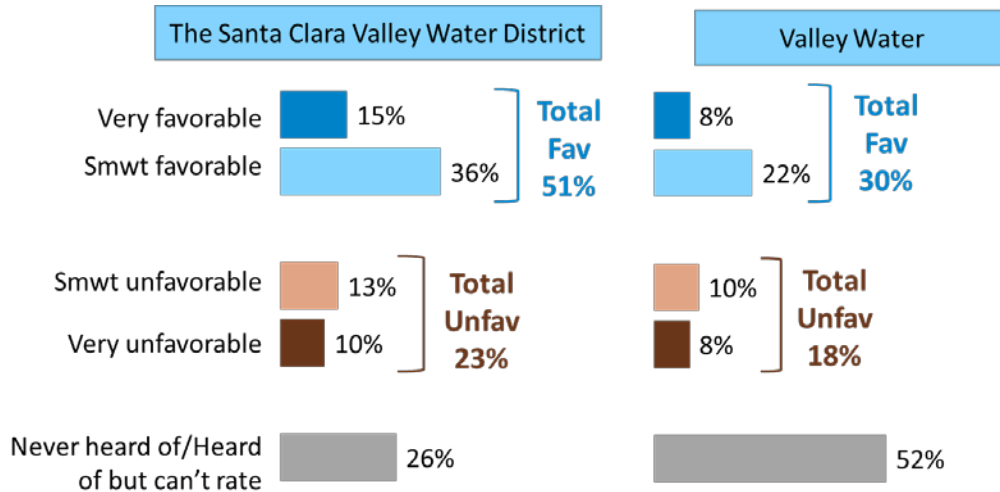
TO Interested Parties
FROM Dave Metz and Miranda Everitt
FM3 Research
RE: Valley Water Voter Survey Results
DATE December 2, 2019

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of local voters to understand their views of Valley Water and a potential measure to renew the Safe Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program. The study found that voters continue to have positive views of Valley Water, and that a solid majority continues to support renewal of the Program; new ballot measure language requirements have dampened initial support, but two-thirds of voters continue to support the concept. Specific survey findings included the following:

- Voters have largely positive views of Valley Water. Half (51%) say they have a favorable view of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, a 28-point margin. Valley Water is less well-known to voters, though voters are nearly twice as likely to offer a favorable rating (30%) than an unfavorable one (18%).

Figure 1: Valley Water Favorability Rating

I am going to read you the names of organizations involved in public life. After I mention each one, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of that organization. If you have never heard of the organization I mention, or don't have enough information to have an opinion, you can tell me that too.

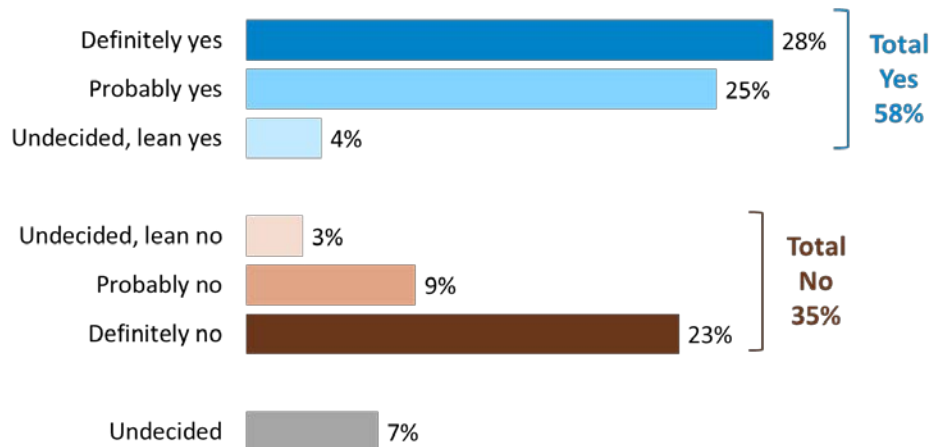


- In the context of new ballot-language requirements, nearly three in five voters support extension of the existing parcel tax.** Figure 2 below shows voter reactions to a draft 75-word ballot label meeting new state requirements for description of fiscal impact provisions; a 15-year sunset and version without a sunset provision were both tested using a split sample. Taken together, such a measure has support from just under three in five (58%), with more than one-third opposed (35%). The "ongoing" parcel tax version has slightly stronger support (31% "definitely" yes versus 25 percent for the 15-year sunset) -- a difference just outside the margin of error.

Recent prior polling testing different measure language on the same concept has consistently shown support hovering around the two-thirds threshold, including 68 percent support in July and in 65 percent support in March.

Figure 2: Voter Support for a Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program Parcel Tax

Shall the measure continuing Santa Clara Valley Water District’s Safe Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program to protect drinking water supply, dams from earthquakes and climate change, reduce pollution in waterways, restore wildlife, creek, Bay habitat, provide open space and flood protection by extending an existing parcel tax (\$67.67 per single-family parcel per quarter acre annually, other parcel types at specified rates; with qualifying senior exemption) (HALF SAMPLE: for 15 years) (HALF SAMPLE: until repealed by voters), raising approximately \$45.5 million annually, with audits, independent citizen oversight be adopted?



- Given a plain-language explanation, support for the measure increases to two-thirds.** Voters were next given a plain-language explanation describing what the proposed measure would do and were asked again how they would vote. Support for the measures increases by 8 points, to 66 percent, as shown in Figure 3 on the next page. This result is comparable to that obtained in several prior polls; in March 2019, support increased by six points to 71 percent "yes" after a similar explanation.

Figure 3: Voter Support After Explanation

Let me tell you a bit more about what this measure would do. The measure would continue an existing parcel tax that voters approved in 2012. It would extend that tax of \$67.67 per year per average residence (HALF SAMPLE: for 15 years) (HALF SAMPLE: until repealed by voters). It funds upgrades to outdated, seismically unsafe pipelines, dams, and infrastructure to improve water supplies and prepare for the risk of flooding, sea-level rise, and climate change. It would also restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat and provide access to open space. The measure would also reduce toxins, hazards and contaminants in our rivers, lakes and streams and remove vegetation near creeks to prevent wildfire risk.

Vote	Initial Vote	After Explanation
Total Yes	58%	66%
Total No	36%	31%
Undecided	6%	3%

- Voters' highest priorities for funding include preventing pollution, disaster preparedness, and protecting drinking water.** Given a 7-point scale on which to rate the importance of potential uses for measure funding, several received a mean score of 6 or higher, indicating that they are "very important" to broad majorities. These include *protecting drinking water; providing a safe, reliable supply of water for the future; reducing toxins, hazards and contaminants in our waterways; providing safe, clean water for future droughts and emergencies; and protecting our water supply and dams from earthquakes and natural disasters.*
- Exposure to arguments in favor of a measure pushes support to two-thirds.** Voters next heard an exchange of pro and con messaging. Support messaging in isolation pushes support above two-thirds to 69% - as shown in Figure 4 below. Opposition messaging erodes that advantage to a 63 percent "yes" vote -- within the margin of error for passage.

Figure 4: Patterns of Support for a Measure

Vote	Initial Vote	After Explanation	After Support Messaging
Total Yes	58%	66%	69%
Total No	36%	31%	28%
Undecided	6%	3%	3%

In sum, the survey result show that voters offer solid support for the concept of extending the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection ballot measure, though new ballot language requirements have contributed to holding initial support under two-thirds. However, a clear explanation of the concept, along with exposure to arguments in favor of a measure of the measure, brings support to more than the two-thirds required. Additional research will be required to gain a clearer understanding of how to craft a ballot questions that clearly communicates the purpose of the measure within these constraints.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From Nov. 21-27, 2019, FM3 completed 823 online and live telephone interviews (on both landlines and cell phones) with likely November 2020 voters in the Valley Water district. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.