

# Nipomo to vote (again) on water

By Jerry Bunin  
Telegram-Tribune

Nipomo decided Wednesday to spend about \$6,650 on a second election to decide if the community will join the State Water Project.

The Nipomo Community Services District agreed to hire a private firm to hold an election May 12.

Community voters have already rejected State Water once, but the district board didn't like the election results.

District Board President David Manriquez said Wednesday the importance of State Water justified spending extra money on a special election.

That's hogwash, says Paul Luiz, who represents a group opposed to State Water and to another election.

He said board members have lost touch with the voters and should resign. That would be better than forcing voters to spend time and

money launching a recall drive against them.

When board member Katie Fairbanks suggested waiting to see how the May 12 vote turns out, Luiz said, "OK! I'll ask it (the resignations) after the election."

The sparks started flying last November.

Area voters rejected joining the State Water Project on a 356-to-328 vote. District directors had promised to abide by the results of that election.

But they changed their minds because of the low turnout — only 29 percent of those eligible voted — and because of allegedly misleading information opposing State Water mailed out just before the election.

The board's reversal angered some people. They formed a group called Nipomo Citizens for Democracy and circulated a petition that gathered twice the number of signatures necessary to force a new election.

Technically, the new election is on

whether the first election should be binding.

However, Manriquez said the board hopes the ballot argument will focus on Nipomo's need for State Water.

But Luiz said his group will have a different focus.

"The State Water issue has been resolved. The voters took care of that last November," he said. The only issue left, Luiz said, is voting rights and protecting democracy.

The district will hire Sequoia Pacific from Exeter to conduct the election. County elections officials would not do it because they are too busy preparing for the June 2 primary.

Nipomo is interested in about 2,000 acre-feet of State Water.

An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, enough to serve two families of three people for a year, according to County Engineer Clint Milne.

The county has until June 3 to tell the state Department of Water Resources how much of the wet stuff local water agencies want.