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SLO State Water foes turn in petitions

Opponents of state water for San Luis Obispo turned in close to 6,300 signatures on a referendum to bring the matter to a public vote, according to City Clerk Pam Voges.

A citizens group, Citizens for Open Government, circulated petitions to put the city's participation in the State Water Project to a public vote after the City Council decided April 22 to sign up for 3,000 acre-feet per year.

The referendum needs only 2,268 valid signatures to qualify.

Voges emphasized that her preliminary "rough count," conducted shortly after the group turned the petitions in May 21, did not check the validity of any signatures, which must be of registered voters who are city residents. In addition, she said, if a person

who was gathering signatures on a petition is not a city resident and registered voter, all the signatures that person gathered would be invalidated.

Voges said it will be awhile before she can get a more accurate count because the County Clerk's Office has asked her to hold off until after the June election before coming in to validate the signatures.

While Voges wouldn't rate the referendum's chances, she did say the

group submitted "an unusually high number of signatures compared to what is usually turned in."

If the referendum has the required signatures, Voges said, she will certify it as valid and send a report to the council. She said she hopes to have that done in time for a meeting tentatively set for June 30.

The council must then decide no later than July 7 whether to put the measure on the November ballot or to repeal its state water decision.

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