

Calif. may look at groundwater regulations

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

For nearly 50 years, California has passed sweeping environmental laws that limit private property for the common good – from the nation's toughest automobile pollution standards to curbs on clear-cutting forests to rules requiring that developers keep beaches open to the public.

However, when it comes to preserving one of the state's most critical and politically divisive resources – billions of gallons of groundwater that are vital to farms and cities – California lawmakers and voters have done almost nothing.

Now, driven by the historic drought and new pressure from Gov. Jerry Brown, the chances of reform appear better than ever.

Decades of intense pumping have dropped water tables dangerously low in places such as the San Joaquin Valley and Paso Robles. Scientific studies show that the ground is sinking in some places and that aquifers are at risk of running dry.

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