

Court: California water info can remain secret

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON – Crucial details about the location and depth of certain California water wells can be kept secret, and out of the hands of an environmental group, a top federal appeals court ruled May 9.

Although targeting a specific request for California information, the ruling by what's sometimes called the nation's second-highest court could shape at least a few of the other Freedom of Information Act requests nationwide. More than 700,000 FOIA requests were filed in Fiscal 2014, and the question of what can be denied recurs often.

Tuesday's unanimous decision lumped water wells with those drilled for oil and gas production. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit said that the water well information fits under a long-standing exemption to FOIA. The decision thwarted AquAlliance, the Chico-based group that sought the information.

Read the whole story