

## Reaching the voters:

How the Santa Clara Valley Water District passed the Clean, Safe Creeks & Natural Flood Protection Plan in November 2000

Presented by  
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Santa Clara Valley Water District  
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# Water district faced an unprecedented challenge

April 1998

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- Sunset of voter-approved benefit assessments in June 2000
- No replacement revenue to maintain service or construct new flood protection projects
- Prop 218 requirement for 66%+ voter approval
- Shift in community desires from previous elections in early 1980's

# A cohesive strategy led to success at the ballot box

## Five keys for reaching voters:



1. Poll early and often
2. Have a solid program
3. Engage opinion leaders; educate community
4. Understand voting patterns
5. Campaign to win

# Polling is a reliable, quantitative way to learn the community's desires

Polling began in 1995 – five years before the election

## Primary findings:

1. Voters concerned with housing, transportation, education, economy
2. Our core issue – flooding – barely resonated with voters
3. Voters did connect with environment, clean water, healthy bay, trails

# Polling identified other factors that made voters more likely to support

- Market threshold of \$39
- Pay-as-you-go funding model
- Low-income senior exemption
- Independent Monitoring Committee
- 15-year sunset

# Testing ballot language through polling is essential to success

*Shall the Santa Clara Valley Water District replace an expired program assessment with a special parcel tax to protect homes, schools, businesses and roads from flooding and erosion; protect, enhance and restore healthy creek and bay ecosystems, provide additional open space, trails and parks along creeks; and provide clean, safe water in our creeks and bays?*

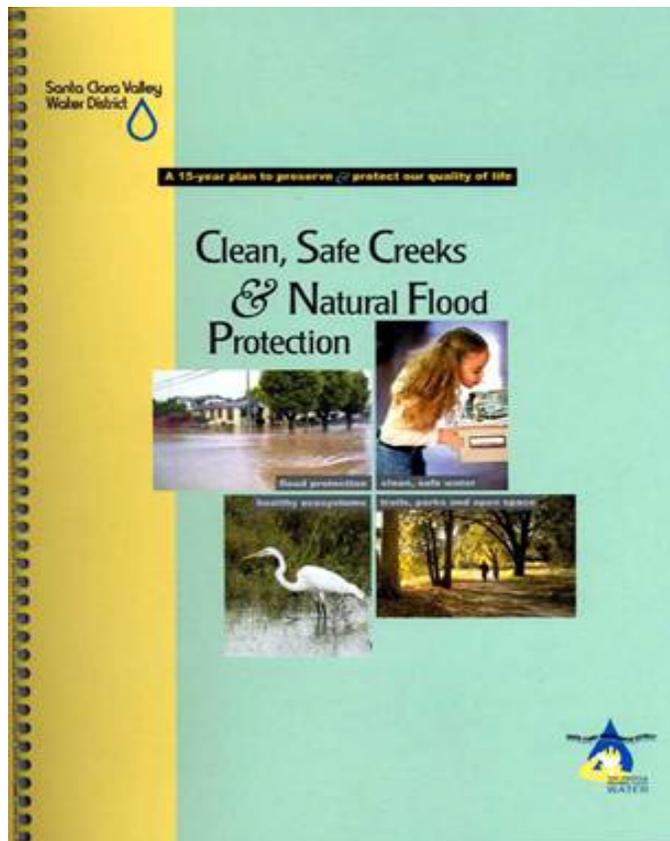
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# Clean, Safe Creeks and Natural Flood Protection: a voter- approved program



- Comprehensive watershed management
- \$24.7 million per year for 15 years - approx \$39 per single family home

# Clean, Safe Creeks and Natural Flood Protection: a voter- approved program

73%



Flood protection for homes, schools, businesses and transportation

10%



Clean, safe water in our creeks and bays

13%



Healthy creek and bay ecosystems

4%



Trails, parks and open space along waterways

# Flood protection for homes, schools, businesses and transportation

1  
outcome

Construct flood protection capital projects to reduce number of parcels subject to flooding.

Use progressive flood protection design that reduces sediment and turbidity and improves water quality.

Employ natural techniques that include stream restoration, removal of invasive plants and revegetation with native species.



# Clean, safe water in our creeks and bays

2  
outcome

Reduce or eliminate pollutants such as mercury and diazinon from local waterways.

Patrol creeks for illegal dumping.

Cleaned creeks of illegally dumped chemicals.

Clean trash from neighborhood creeks.

Remove graffiti from bridges and floodwalls.



# Healthy creek and bay ecosystems

3  
outcome

Protect endangered species.

Restore and create tidal and riparian habitat.

Remove of fish migration barriers and install fish ladders.

Revegetate of native plant species.

Remove of non-native, invasive plants.



# Trails, parks and open space along waterways

4  
outcome

Provide public access to open space or trails along creeks.



Increase community recreation opportunities.

Encourage bicycle paths for alternative transportation.

Incorporate open space, trails and parks into flood protection projects.



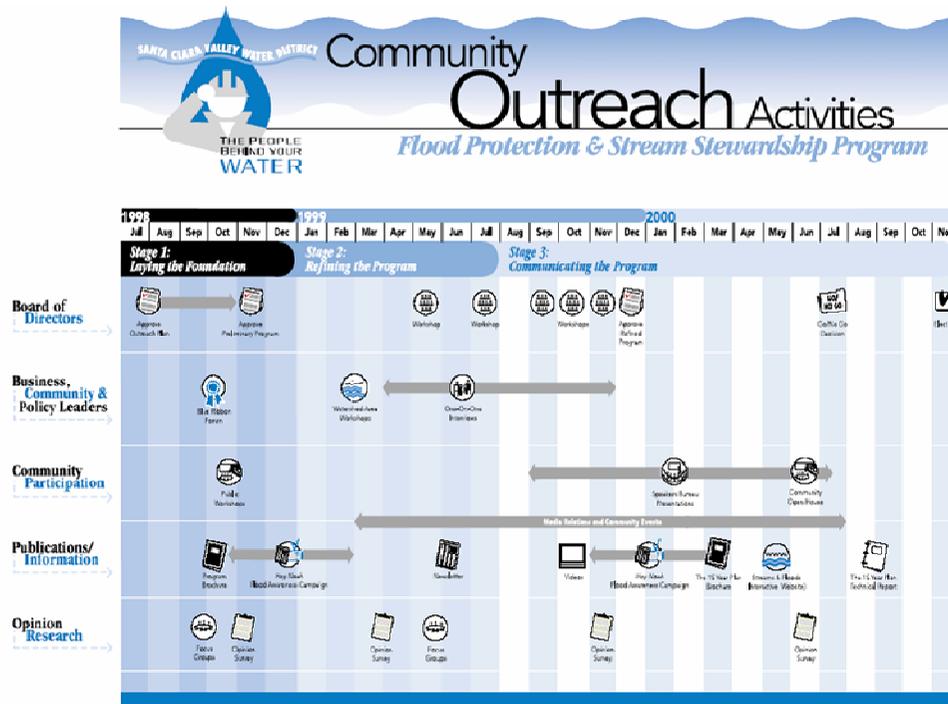
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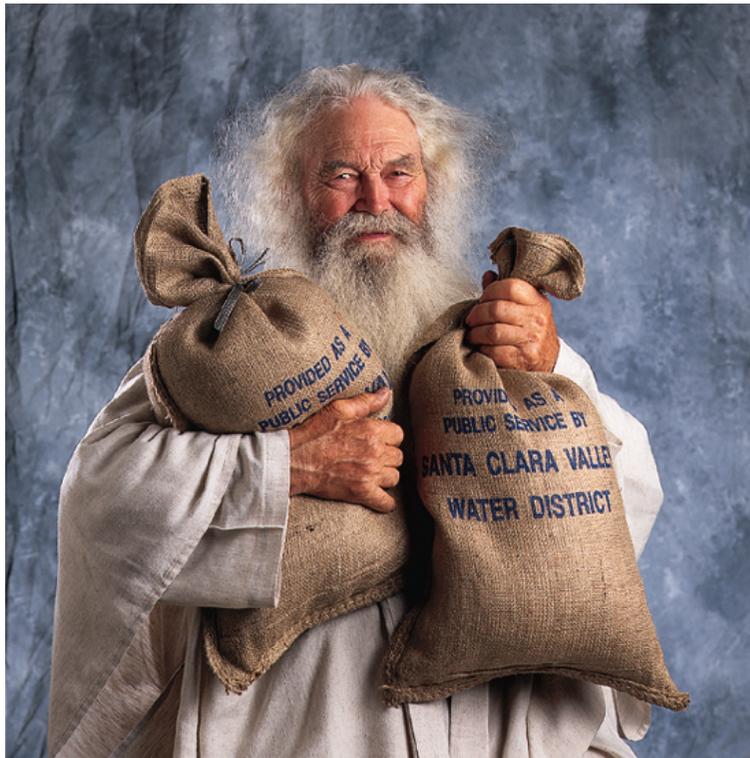


# Reach out to opinion leaders to gain support and understand opposition



- More than 100 one-on-one meetings with government, business, environmental groups, special interest and other stakeholder groups
- Meetings with every city, mayor and city council
- Two countywide blue ribbon forums

# Help community achieve basic knowledge of the topic



- Hey Noah! Flood Awareness Campaign
- Brochures
- Speaker's bureau
- Newsletters
- DVD/Videos
- Flood education brochure
- "Tour-your-watershed" interactive web program
- New streams and floods web page
- Media outreach packets

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# Choosing the right election is a crucial decision

1998

**June**

Gubernatorial Primary

**November**

Gubernatorial General

2000

**March**

Presidential Primary

**November**

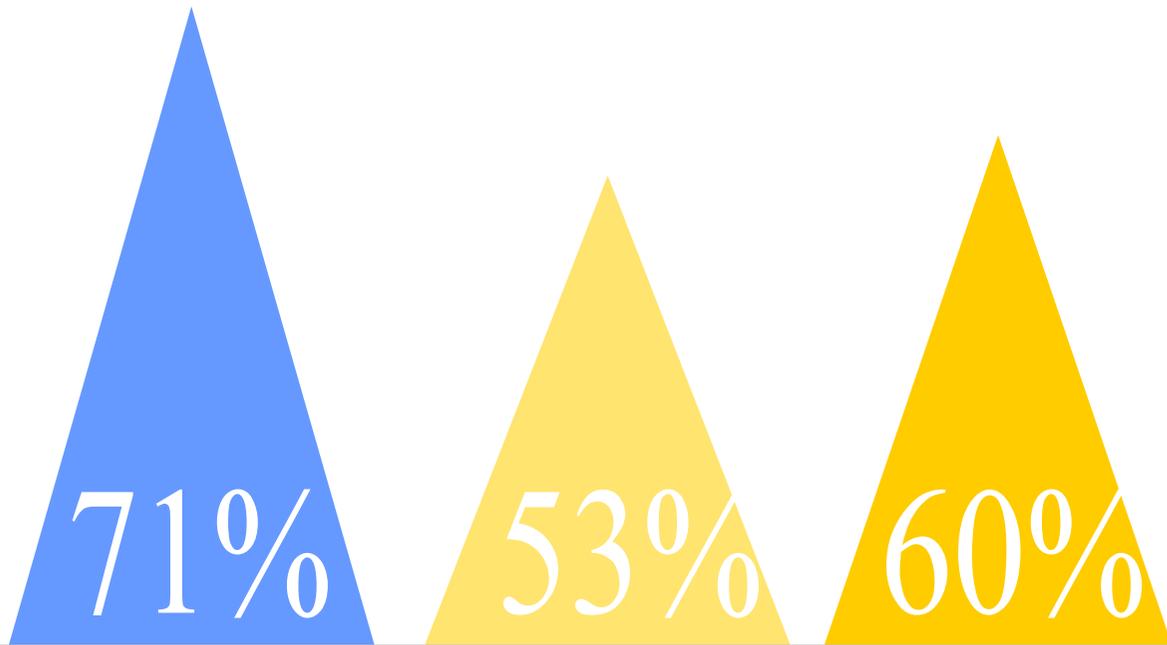
Presidential General



- Maximizes turnout potential

# Higher turnout brings “occasional voters” more likely to support the measure

71% turnout in  
Nov.'00 25%  
higher than  
Mar.00



Nov '00

Mar '00

Nov '98

# Polling data analyzed bases of support and opposition - pointed to need for “highest turnout” election

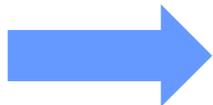
From EMC Survey April 1998:

“...the whole district shows 37% base yes voters, 33% target voters, and 30% no voters. To be victorious the campaign needs to be able to win over almost all of the target voters...The zones in which the measure receives the most support are the Northwest and the East.”

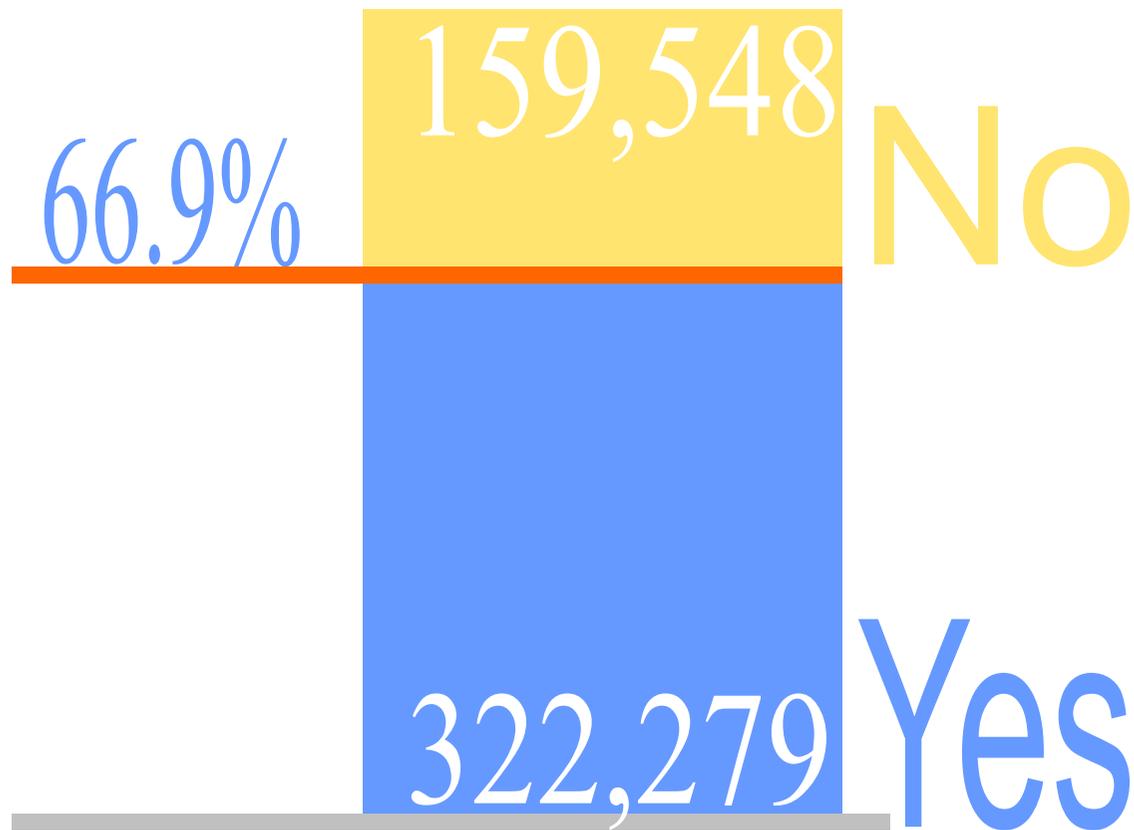
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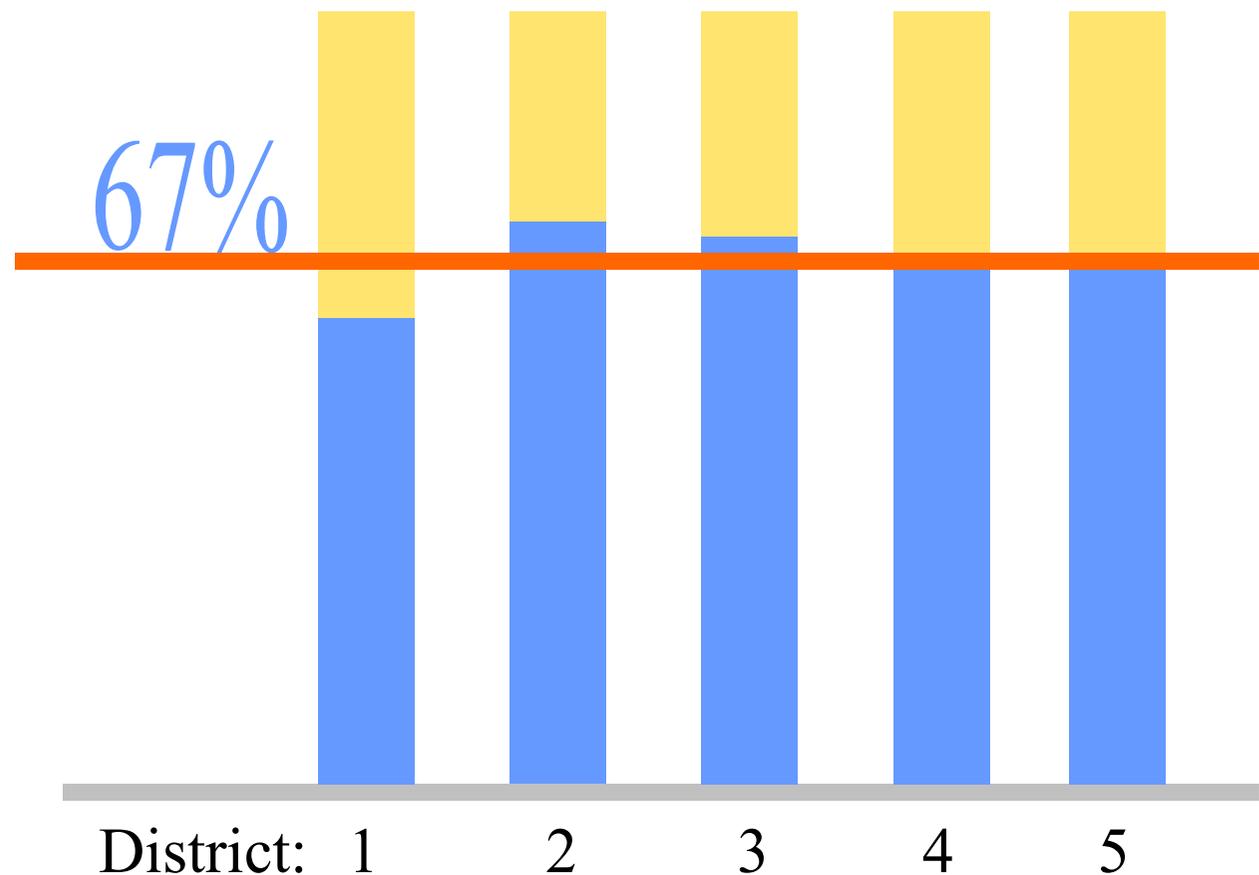


# Measure received countywide support in November 2000



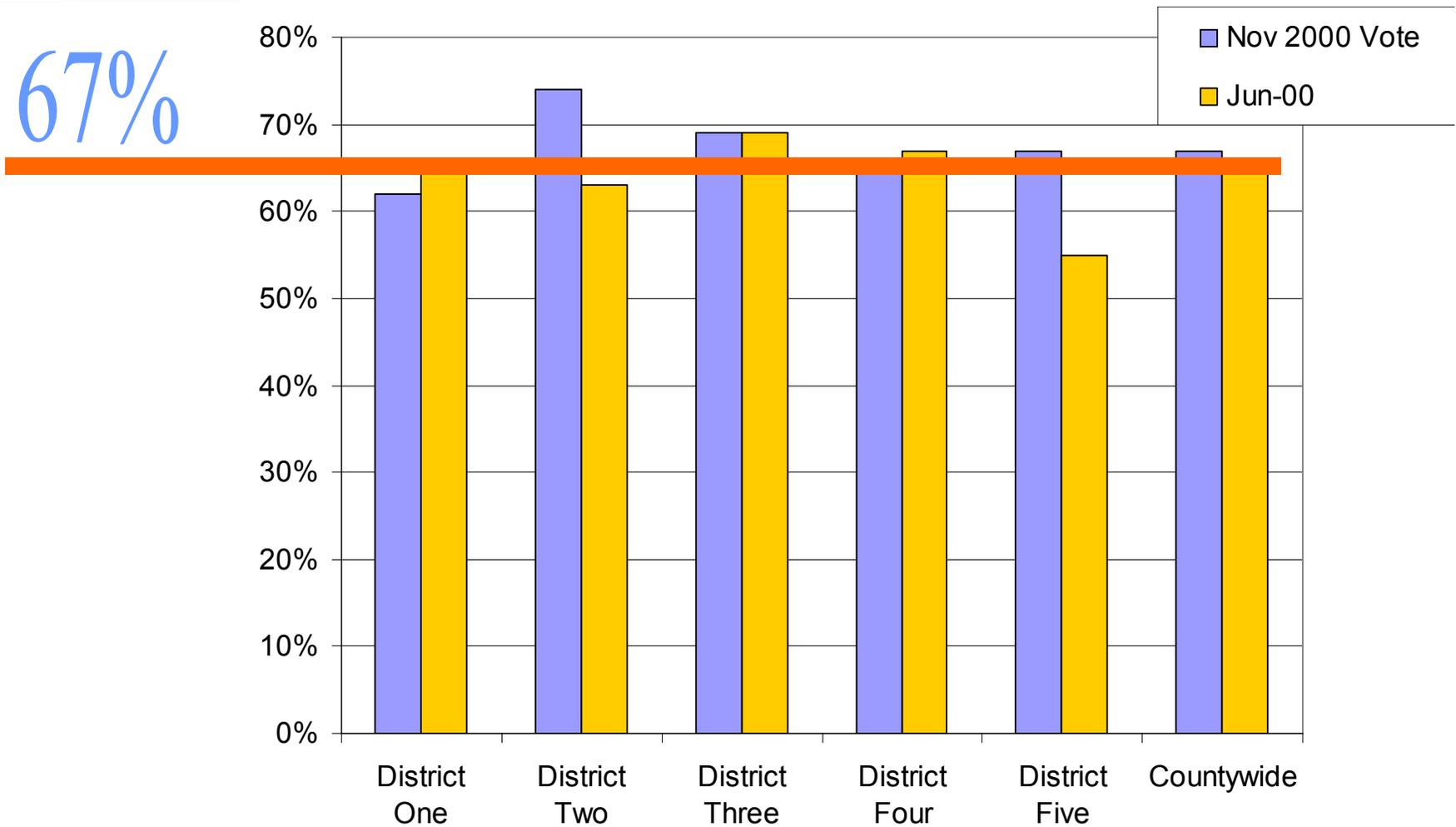
# Strategy to go countywide rather than by watershed made the difference

- Even jurisdictions where the measure did not receive 2/3 support - the number of “yes” votes boosted countywide results.
- District 1 approval 62%, but accounts for 21% of all “yes” votes countywide
- Geographic formula would mean a lower level of service in one part of the county



# June 2000 polling forecast November results

Actual Votes in Favor Compared to Polling Results



# Informational and campaign efforts countered the effects of the organized opposition

- Areas targeted by private-party 'Yes on B' supporters - particularly the northwest portion of the county, showed the greatest movement:

June 2000 poll: 55%

November 2000 vote: 67%

# A strategic path to victory

- Careful program planning
- Consideration of the various factors that influence a successful election such as bases of support, polling, and turnout
- Effective and persuasive external campaign
- Resulted in a victory for the Clean, Safe Creeks and Natural Flood Protection Program