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Public meetings set for this week on Centennial Dam project

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Keith Hagen/KHagen@theunion.com |

A bird's eye view of the Bear River, at the Dog Bar Road bridge, in southern Nevada County.

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What: Public scoping meetings for Centennial Dam project

Where: Wednesday at the Holiday Inn Auburn, 120 Grass Valley Highway, Auburn; Thursday at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 121 Bank St., Grass Valley

When: 4:30 to 7 p.m. both days

Two public meetings about the Centennial Reservoir project are scheduled this week in Grass Valley and Auburn.

The first meeting, where the public can give comments about the project, is scheduled for 4:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Holiday Inn Auburn, 120 Grass Valley Highway, Auburn. The second meeting will occur from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 121 Bank St., Grass Valley.

Meeting attendees will hear about the project that, if approved, would create a new reservoir on the Bear River between the existing Combie and Rollins reservoirs. They'll also have a chance to give their opinions on the project, which officials have estimated at between \$400 million and \$500 million.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for the project, will take comments given at the meetings for its report.

"We are strongly encouraging the community to attend," said Caleb Dardick, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League.

Chip Close, NID's water operations manager, directed comment about the process to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The corps couldn't be reached for comment.

Officials held similar meetings last year as part of the California Environmental Quality Act. This week's meetings will occur to meet federal requirements.

"Because there's a federal interest in the project, there's a federal review," Dardick said.

NID officials have said the Centennial project would mitigate drought, meet future water needs and improve the district's water supplies. It also would add a new recreational area with walking trails, swimming and boating.

Dardick said he's concerned about the impacts a new dam would place on the area's watershed.

"This is a major project people should be paying close attention to," he added.

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