

Thursday May 11 2017 | 6 comments



Another View: NID needs to re-think Centennial Dam



When I lived in Grass Valley in the 1970s and 80s, I thought NID was a good organization. I thought working for them would be a good job because they seem to work outdoors in our beautiful Sierra foothills. Thirty-five years later I have a different perspective from across the Bear River.

When NID proposed the Centennial Dam on our Bear River, I took another look at what is called a public utility district. I have been attending board meetings, reading their website, and watching. When you are a

hammer, everything looks like a nail. And when you are an engineer for NID, every river is a water conveyance, and every water conveyance is an opportunity to divert, store, or sell water.

NID is good at getting water to their customers. They are not good at landscape management, public relations communication, creative watershed management, fisheries management, recreation planning, financial planning, cultural resources, or river ecosystem enhancement and sustainability. Times have changed and an enlightened, environmentally aware population who values living here in this beautiful place demands more.

I get the impression that most of the people who work at NID are engineers, equipment operators and administrative personnel. The elected board members seem to be a doctor, two farmers, a nurse and teacher, and an environmental scientist. That seems to work when no one is watching and everyone is getting their water. Now NID has decided to take a big billion dollar step into the California Water Wars to impound as much water as possible before it runs out.

This has left NID sorely lacking. They have spent 8.9 million dollars of their ratepayers and taxpayers money on a dam proposal without first completing a financial feasibility study, an environmental impact statement and report, or acquisition of water rights for the impoundment. They are running people out of their homes and taking away recreational

opportunities from people whom they don't even represent without even visiting the areas.

They are trying to preclude Placer County Planning Department from making Bear River Park part of the Comprehensive Park and Trails Plan for the next generation of Placer County residents. All while believing that they know more than the rate payers and out of district citizens. In fact one of the board members came out with a letter proclaiming it to be "The Truth about Centennial Dam."

If NID wants to move into the new climate change reality, they need to let go of the old ways of environmental exploitation and top down patriarchal rule.

The first step may be to become more transparent by live-streaming all their meetings and becoming more open minded toward the people they serve. In fact they may need to understand that above all else, they are in public service.

We are their bosses.

It has become apparent that NID lacks the wisdom, the vision, and the creativity to manage the living ecosystems and landscape level watersheds that they are currently trying to destroy. In spite of the fact that fisheries and wildlife biologists, botanists, hydrologists, soil scientists, foresters, landscape architects, fuels and fire prevention specialists, and archaeologists exist, it is apparent that none of them work for NID. And if they did, a dam would not be the first option proposed to stabilize the water supply and ensure water quality. If you are a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Dianna Suarez, Colfax