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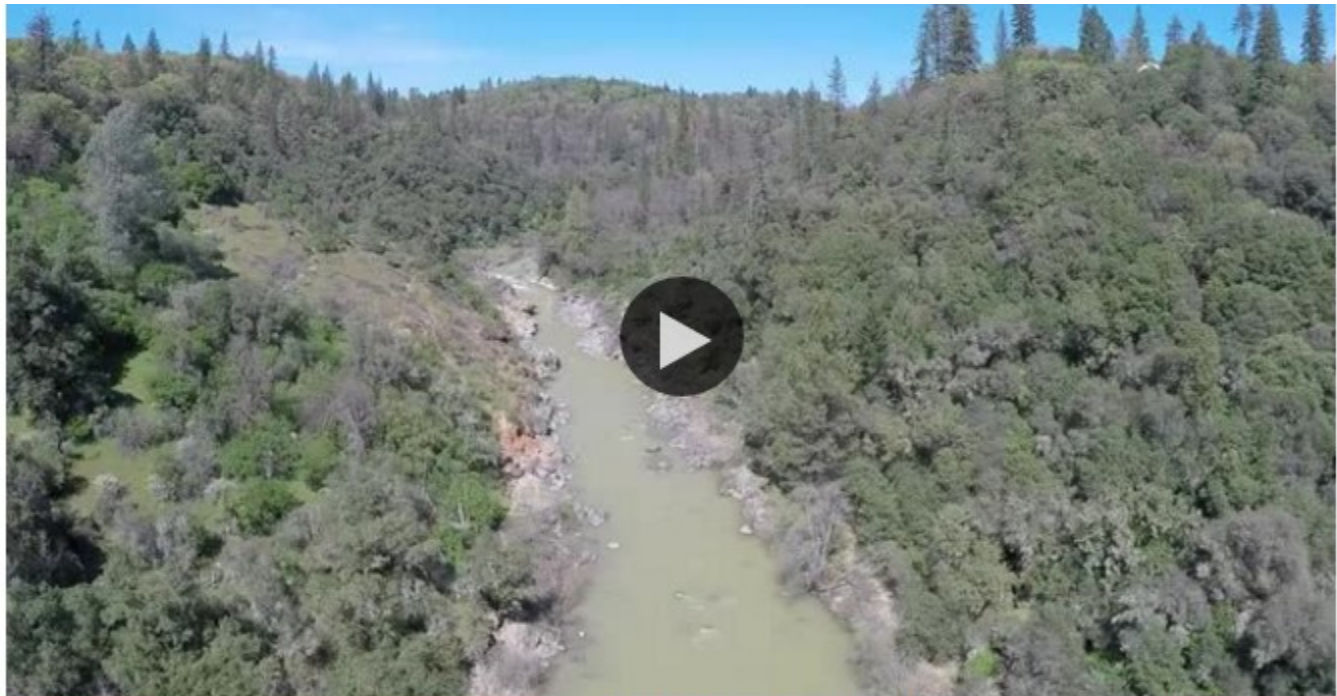
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Several groups oppose Centennial Reservoir project on Bear River



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The Foothills Water Network has formally opposed NID's water rights application for the Centennial Reservoir project, asking the state water board to deny the district's request and effectively stop the project.

The top official with the Nevada Irrigation District, however, said he wants to work with those opposed to the project. He's confident the district will gain the necessary water rights and proceed with the multi-million dollar proposal.

Filing a protest gives those opposed a seat at an upcoming hearing of the State Water Resources Control Board. NID must gain the water board's approval for the project, scheduled for completion in 2023, to proceed.

"This is Step 1 of a very long process," said Rem Scherzinger, NID's general manager.

The Foothills Water Network, a coalition of recreation and conservation groups, filed its protest Tuesday with the State Water Resources Control Board. It's one of 15 people and groups who filed formal documents.

The network argues that the project — which would put a new reservoir between the existing Combie and Rollins reservoirs on the Bear River — would increase the demand on the Yuba River. Instead of diverting water from the Yuba, NID should use alternative methods to protect water resources.

Caleb Dardick, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League, questions if another reservoir is needed to serve future area residents.

"I think they owe us the due diligence to really look at that," Dardick said.

The Nevada City Rancheria Tribal Council, another group opposing the project, states the reservoir would impact ancient Nisenan burning and burial grounds.

"There are many sites within the area of potential inundation that the Nisenan still use for ceremonial and cultural resources and continued community purposes," the council states.

Otis Wollan, president of the American River Watershed Institute and a former member of the Placer County Water Agency board of directors, argues in a release that the reservoir's benefits won't justify the cost.

"We don't think that they should get the water to use for Centennial Dam," said Traci Sheehan, coordinator of the Foothills Water Network.

Scherzinger said he wants to work with those opposed to the project and help solve the issues they have with it.

"We're confident that we'll be able to acquire these rights to move the project forward," he added.

In addition to gaining the rights from the state water board, NID also must complete an Environmental Impact Report. A draft EIR is expected in March or April.

A vote by the NID board on the final EIR would occur before the state water board hearing. Neither date is set.

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