



DEADLINE: Comment letters are due by Monday, April 10, 2017

The Nevada Irrigation District (NID) is planning to construct a new 110,000 acre-foot reservoir with a 275 foot-tall dam on the Bear River between the existing Rollins and Combie reservoirs. In February 2017, the Army Corps of Engineers started preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Centennial Dam project. The Corps published a [Notice of Preparation \(NOI\)](#), which outlined what will be studied in the EIS.

Where do I send my letter?

Send your letter (email or regular mail) to the Army Corps by 4/10/17 to:

Ms. Kara Hellige, Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1325 J Street, Room 1350
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

CESPKCentennialReser@usace.army.mil

NOTE: For emailed comments, please include "NOI scoping for Proposed Centennial Reservoir Project EIS, SPK-2016-00030" in the subject line.

For further information contact:

Ms. Kara Hellige
970-259-1604

CESPKCentennialReser@usace.army.mil

Why should I send a comment letter to the Army Corps about Centennial Dam?

This project has many potentially significant environmental impacts. It's up to concerned citizens like you to tell Army Corps staff and consultants what you are most concerned about so that they are fully studied in the EIS.

What points should I make in my letter?

The Army Corps is particularly interested in receiving comments related to alternatives to the proposed project, the proposal's probable impacts on the affected aquatic environment, and the secondary and

cumulative effects. (Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act and will be addressed within the Draft EIS.)

Focus your letter on what concerns you the most. Some people focus on the environmental impacts of a new dam on the land, water and wildlife. Others are very concerned about the price tag or traffic impacts and neighborhood safety. Some want to see other alternatives seriously considered.

Some tips for writing an effective comment letter:

- Focus your study requests on the environmental process, what you want analyzed, and what alternatives you want considered.
- Make sure that your specific requests are clear, concise and singular (bullet points are fine).
- Including your opinion on the dam, or telling your personal connection to the river is valid and OK but is not a factor for staff in developing the EIS – so make sure that your personal opinions don't distract from your clear, concise requests to the Army Corps.
- Include your name and contact information in case the agency needs to contact you to clarify a point.
- NOI comments are divided into various categories. Reviewing these categories may help stimulate your thinking and may help organize your comments. The comment categories are:

Air quality	Hydrology / Water Quality
Aesthetics / Visual resources	Land Use / Planning
Agriculture and Forestry	Mineral Resources
Aquatic and Terrestrial Biological Resources	Noise
- Fish	Population / Housing
- Vegetation	Public Services / Recreation
- Wildlife	Socioeconomics
Climate change	Transportation and Traffic
Cultural Resources / Tribal Resources	Utilities and Public Services
Geology / Soils	Water supply
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Water quality
Hazards & Hazardous Materials	Loss of waters (including wetlands)

Do you have a sample letter I can use as a template?

It's always best to use your own words. You can start with your personal experience like how long you've lived in the area, and briefly share your connection to the Bear River and why you think it's unique. **Most important:** Be specific about your key concerns and questions about the project.

Here are some comments and questions you might want to include in your letter:

AESTHETICS: How would the proposed dam impact scenic canyon views? The canyon where the dam would be located is steep and forested. Fluctuating reservoirs often result in an aesthetically unpleasing "bathtub ring" without vegetation. The EIS must fully disclose the predicted extent of this bathtub ring throughout the year during high, low, and average water years. It must also identify the aesthetic impact of this ring on multiple user types including local residents, passing motorists, and recreational users.

ALTERNATIVES: A very important part of this process is making sure NID studies alternatives to the dam and reservoir. What is the full-range of alternative means by which NID could respond to the effects of climate change and drought, including demand and supply side conservation, modification of existing reservoirs, repair and upgrade to aging and inefficient infrastructure and greater conservation efforts? The analysis of alternatives in the EIS should include a thorough assessment of whether existing and reasonably projected water needs of the District can be met through improved management of the existing system and must examine a range of reasonably foreseeable future water use patterns.

CLIMATE CHANGE: NID proposes to build this project to address drought and climate change. To accurately determine the purpose and need for the project, the EIS must include a thorough study of the latest climate change science including the projected impacts on the Yuba and Bear watersheds.

COSTS: It is essential for the public to understand the environmental implications of the costs and expenses associated with the \$500 million-\$1 billion project. How will this commitment of financial resources impact the district's ability to provide recreational opportunities, and environmental protections throughout its service area? An understanding of both the costs and the revenues of the project will help inform decisions on cost effective and environmentally preferable alternatives.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: How would the dam impact Native American cultural and spiritual resources? The Bear River is the ancestral home of the Nisenan and contains lands that are part of that tribe's and our region's heritage. Will the proposed reservoir inundate these cultural sites? How else will these sites be impacted through the construction, maintenance or associated activities of the project?

FISH & WILDLIFE: How would this project impact fish, wildlife and vegetation (local biologic resources) – and threatened or endangered species? A dam of this size could flood hundreds of acres of prime oak woodland and inundate critical habitat and homes for western pond turtles and foothill yellow legged frogs. The reach of the Bear River which would be flooded is also an ecosystem rich in native fish. The EIS must include a full and detailed disclosure of all biological impacts including a quantification of the loss of oak woodlands, riparian ecosystem, and habitat impacts for all native and special status species. To guide decision-makers and inform the public the EIS must also identify all feasible mitigations for such impacts and the associated costs.

FLOWS: What would the impact of this project be on downstream beneficial uses, including fisheries and groundwater recharge? How would this project impact river flows required or foreseeably required to protect the Bay Delta ecosystem and fisheries? How would downstream water users and projects like the South Sutter Water District and Camp Far West Reservoir be impacted?

GROWTH: What impact would the project have on population growth and regional development patterns? The EIS must analyze and disclose any growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project including a discussion of the environmental and quality of life impacts on existing communities.

PROPERTY RIGHTS: How would the dam impact private lands in the project area? The EIS should address how 25 homes and 120 parcels will be impacted including what happens if the dam is not built -- will NID retain ownership over those lands?

RECREATION: How would the proposed dam impact current recreational uses of the Bear River? Many area residents now enjoy easy access to river recreation in the project area such as fly-fishing, rafting, gold panning, swimming and hiking. While many areas would be flooded by the project, the inundation

of the Bear River Campground – 250 acres of public land that provides public hiking trails, river access, and camping—is of particular concern. The EIS must identify these impacts and describe how they will be mitigated. These analyses must consider impacts and mitigations for geographically diverse users and specifically address Placer County as well as Nevada County recreationists.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS: What social and economic impacts would the project have on the nearby communities including Colfax? What local impacts might there be to residents in Colfax who currently have easy access to the Bear?

TRAFFIC: How would the dam impact traffic, public safety, and fire protection efforts during project construction and after completion? The proposed project would flood the only river crossing between Placer and Nevada counties from Highway 174 to Highway 49 and there are concerns about egress during the construction phase of the project. How will these issues be addressed during construction? Where will the new crossings exist and what impact will those new roads and crossings have on our neighborhoods and local community? More broadly, how will these new traffic patterns impact air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, in the region?

YUBA WATER: To what extent would this project rely on water from the Yuba River watershed, and what are the reasonably foreseeable impacts the project would have on river flows in the Middle Yuba River, South Yuba River and Canyon Creek? Would the project lead to increases in the amount or percentages of water diverted from the Yuba River watershed to the Bear River and if so, then under what circumstances? What would be the effect of any additional transfers to the Bear River on water temperatures, flows and habitat in the South and Middle Yuba Rivers?

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO GET INVOLVED:

www.DamWatchdog.org

This information sheet was prepared by the Foothills Water Network (FWN). FWN is a coalition of conservation, angling and recreation groups, whose mission is to protect and enhance aquatic ecosystem health and recreation opportunities in the Yuba, Bear, and American Rivers.