

## NID reviews Centennial funding application, begins video recording



Matthew Pera  
September 13, 2017



The Nevada Irrigation District applied for nearly \$12 million in Water Storage Investment Program funding — money that would come from the state — for its proposed Centennial Reservoir project on the Bear River.

The program, which is operated by the California Water Commission, funds only "the public benefits portion of proposed water storage projects," according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's website. Those public benefits include water quality improvements, flood control benefits, emergency response, recreational purposes and ecosystem improvements.

NID's application requested \$5.9 million each for recreational benefits and ecosystem improvements.

The proposed reservoir would provide recreational benefits, the application states, including overnight camping, picnicking, wildlife viewing, sightseeing, hiking, biking, swimming, fishing, low-speed motorized boating and non-motorized boating.

According to Doug Roderick, a senior engineer for the district who presented a review of the application at Wednesday's board meeting, the reservoir would provide multiple ecosystem benefits, but the district only applied for investment program funding for one benefit. The reservoir, he said, would "enhance seasonal and permanent wetlands in the riparian habitat."

Roderick said 12 applications were submitted to the commission this year, and funding is expected to be competitive.

Following Wednesday's application presentation, many members of the public contested the district's claims that the reservoir would present recreational and ecosystem benefits.

Grass Valley resident Gary Moon said recreational activities that would be possible at the proposed reservoir wouldn't be an

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improvement over activities that already happen along the free-flowing stretch of the Bear River that would be dammed by the project.

Moon said he'd recently seen people enjoying a variety of activities along the river, including tubing, swimming and fishing.

"There's real emotional value to the recreation that happens there," he said.

He asked, "Why is NID requesting a multi-million-dollar subsidy to provide recreation when there's already a hugely popular recreational resource that NID intends to destroy forever?"

Jenn Tamo, community engagement manager for the South Yuba River Citizens League, said in an email that the reservoir would "destroy prime oak woodland, conifer and riparian systems," contesting the district's claim that the Centennial project would provide ecosystem benefits.

Many said they were concerned that the district would be agreeing to commit water to other parts of the state if it were to accept investment program funding.

NID General Manager Remleh Sherzinger said the application "gives up no water at this time," at the board's Aug. 9 meeting, when directors voted to submit an application to the water commission.

"This is not a commitment," director Nancy Weber said Wednesday. "But it's a roadmap."

Weber added that the district has "not done a good job educating the community on the dam and the need for the dam."

"It's time for public forums on all aspects of this," she said.

Board members later approved a new video recording method proposed by district staff, which live streams and archives footage of board meetings.

An overhead camera was installed in the district's board room prior to Wednesday's meeting, providing a view of the directors and the public speaking podium. Footage of board meetings is now available on the district's website.

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