

NID to discuss Centennial Dam moratorium



Liz Kellar

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More than five months after the South Yuba River Citizens League first asked the Nevada Irrigation District to consider ceasing work on the Centennial Dam, the water district has set a special board meeting on the issue.

According to a press release sent out Wednesday morning by the water district, the board will consider the SYRCL resolution to cease work activities on the proposed Centennial Water Supply Project, and will also consider suspension of Resolution 2014-43 authorizing application for the water rights for diversion, storage and use of water of the Bear River.

The special board meeting is set for 6 p.m. on Oct. 9 at the Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Building on 255 South Auburn St.

SYRCL has been at the forefront of the opposition to the dam, and in April sent a letter to the water district asking for the resolution to be placed on a future agenda. The resolution directs water district staff to cease, to the extent possible, all expenditures and activities related to the Centennial project until the Raw Water Master Plan update is complete.

According to SYRCL Executive Director Melinda Booth, she got no response from water district General Manager Rem Scherzinger.

"I gave them two months," she said, adding that she followed up with Scherzinger in June and he assured her he was working on it.

"He told us that if we wanted to push it, we could initiate a formal process that he outlined for us," Booth said.

SYRCL opted not to pursue that option at that point, because, Booth said, "My goal is to work with NID in positive ways."

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"I said I would wait to hear from him," she said. "Then four months had gone by ... I felt like they were ignoring us."

In August, Booth sent the water district a formal request to place the resolution on a future agenda, complete with approximately 450 pages of requested supporting documentation.

"We think it's valuable for the board to vote on this," Booth said. "We wanted to hear that from the board, that (proceeding with the dam project) was what they wanted to do. We wanted to have that conversation and be deliberate about it rather than letting things happen."

In the letter dated Aug. 27, Booth wrote that one of SYRCL's greatest concerns is that expenditures, including property acquisitions, legal analysis, planning, engineering, promotion, study and all field work related to Centennial Dam cease during the Raw Water Master Plan update process.

Ceasing the work being done on the dam project would "prevent public disenchantment with the Raw Water Master Plan process and re-engage the proper stakeholders and the public," Booth wrote.

"Be assured that this formal agenda item request is offered in the spirit of engagement and support of re-building trust between NID and its constituents," she added.

"We want to work with NID," Booth said. "We don't want to fight them, but we are going to keep asking questions until we get appropriate answers."

Scherzinger could not be reached for comment as of press time.

Contact reporter Liz Kellar at 530-477-4236 or by email at lizk@theunion.com.



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