

EBMUD proposal to raise Pardee Dam drowns in vote

By The Record
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SAN ANDREAS - The proposal to raise Pardee Dam and drown a popular whitewater run where the Mokelumne River crosses Highway 49 is officially dead.

As expected, the East Bay Municipal Utility District Board of Directors unanimously voted last week to approve a Water Supply Management Plan for the next 30 years that omits the expansion of Pardee Reservoir.

The proposal to capture more water by raising Pardee sparked bitter resistance in Amador and Calaveras counties, where river recreation attracts tourists. Environmental groups also criticized the plan, because it would reduce flows needed to protect the health of the lower Mokelumne River and the Delta.

"We are very happy with the outcome of this long and challenging process," Foothill Conservancy President Katherine Evatt said.

An earlier version of the water-supply plan adopted in 2009 included the proposal to raise Pardee Dam. The Foothill Conservancy and California Sportfishing Protection Alliance challenged the plan in court, eventually winning an order that forced EBMUD to do more environmental study and to consider other options.

Utility district leaders concluded that cooperating with Contra Costa Water District in expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir in the East Bay was better.

"This process worked," said John A. Coleman, utility board president. "We listened, we heard and we acted. It has always been our intent to do the right thing for our customers and partners to get the best use possible out of this precious resource."

Chris Shutes of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance agreed.

"EBMUD has taken a stand to protect Delta inflow and water quality. West-of-Delta storage is a forward-thinking approach that should be front and center for the entire Bay Area," Shutes said.

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