

California's only statewide river conservation organization.



Volume 7, Issue 1

This issue includes:

- FOR News
- Action Alert - take action now!
- Get Involved! - volunteer!
- Volunteer Voice (new!)
- *Currents*



FOR News

- **Thank you for your support in 2016!**

Thank you to all of our supporters that contributed to our work in 2016! Whether it be by financial gift, volunteer hours, signing a petition, or simply telling a friend about the work we do and encouraging their support, we truly appreciate your efforts. In 2017 we will, together,

The RATS launch a new class in January!

River Advocacy Training School (RATS)

We are pleased to welcome 10 new River Advocates to the River Advocacy Training School!

They begin their training later this month. Each River Advocate use their skills to create community engagement and support current FOR projects.

Thank you to the presenters we have the privilege to host at the Training!

- [John Amodio](#)--Environmental Consultant
- [Bill Center](#)--PCL Board member and Camp Lotus owner
- Francis Coats--Attorney (retired)
- [Mark Dubois](#), former FOR Executive Director
- [Steve Evans](#)--FOR Wild and Scenic River Consultant
- [Kyle Jones](#)--Sierra Club Policy Advocate
- [Emily Matthews](#)--NOLA Marketing and FOR River Advocate
- [Bryan Shadden](#)--Videographer and FOR River Advocate
- [Ron Stark](#)--FOR Senior Policy Advocate
- [Eric Wesselman](#)--FOR Executive Director
- [Robert Wilkinson](#), UC Santa Barbara professor of water policy

Learn more!

• DWR Conceals Critical Analysis *by Bob Wright*

Friends of the River led on the joint coalition letter (10 public interest organizations) on November 28, 2016 to Cabinet Secretaries and others requesting the Obama administration to terminate the Delta Water Tunnels project. [*This massive threat to northern California rivers and the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary was formerly known as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and is now called the California Water Fix.*]

Our letter focused on the economics of the project. Our summary pointed out that:

- *First*, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and Federal Bureau of Reclamation have consistently represented to the public over the years that the beneficiaries of the project would pay all project costs. It turns out that is a lie and DWR's own secret *Cal Water Fix Economic Analysis* shows that a substantial public subsidy would be necessary.
- *Second*, the only benefit cost study done for the project shows that the costs would **exceed the benefits by four to one**. The project makes no economic sense.
- *Third*, given the usual enormous cost overruns for megaprojects, the project if carried out will be a **fiscal catastrophe** for ratepayers and taxpayers.
- *Fourth*, the project will **cost at least 3 or 4 times** the absurdly low \$17 billion dollar estimate. That will drastically magnify the amount of the necessary public subsidy."

As we said in our letter, "When it takes fraud, cover-ups, hiding your own *Economic Analysis*, and absurdly low cost estimates to keep a project proposal afloat, that is a **red flag** that the project is a bad one that should not go forward."

Action Alert - Dredging up old mistakes



The SWRCB is now seeking public input for the development of new waterquality regulations for suction dredge mining. The health of our rivers, which provide clean drinking water, habitat for fishand wildlife, and our cultural and historical legacy, is at stake.

The SWRCB could developregulations or restrictions on when and where one could dredge, limit the sizeof the dredging device, or determine that this activity cannot be done at allin compliance with the law.

Comments are due on February 28, 2017.

[Learn more | Write a letter!](#)

A series of public workshops are scheduled in January and written comments will be accepted by Feb. 28, 2017. Please attend one of the public workshops and write a comment email today.

Public Workshops (for more info follow the 'Learn more' button)

- Tuesday, January 17, 2017 | Fresno
- Wednesday, January 18, 2017 |San Bernardino
- Tuesday, January 24, 2017 | Orleans
- Wednesday, January 25, 2017 | Redding
- Monday, February 6, 2017 |Sacramento

Get Involved!

- Attending the **Wild and Scenic Film Festival** in Nevada City? Come by the FOR table! If you would like to help, email tobybriggs@friendsoftheriver.org
- Free for a few hours Jan 19-22? A few more **volunteers needed** to cook meals for the RATS Training. [Sign up here!](#)
- **SWRCB Public Input Workshops** Attend one!
 - Tuesday, January 17, 2017 | Fresno
 - Wednesday, January 18, 2017 |San Bernardino
 - Tuesday, January 24, 2017 | Orleans
 - Wednesday, January 25, 2017 | Redding
 - Monday, February 6, 2017 |Sacramento
- April 2017--Coming this year--a **river issues volunteer training day**. More details soon...

- [Send us river photos](#) to include in a new River Advocate banner!

Want to support rivers? Email [Toby Briggs](#) to sign up to receive volunteer emails.

Volunteer Voice

RiverLove

I've been an active FOR volunteer since 2010. I was welcomed into this community with open arms and invited to participate in whatever way I felt comfortable. Over the years I've volunteered in many capacities- on the river as a guide at BBQs and Influencer Trips, off the river at tabling events, California River Awards and the Capitol River Awards or wherever an extra set of hands were needed. The common denominator at all of these events is that I'm among friends. Friends who share my passion for river conservation and keeping free-flowing rivers for me, and future generations to enjoy.

This year, I was fortunate to guide on the New Voices Rising trip. This is an organization of high school students from Oakland working on environmental justice issues. These kids shared with us their successful efforts in preventing an oil transfer facility from locating in their community. Hearing how these young activists worked together and were successful in their efforts was inspiring. It gives me hope for the future.

And, getting these kids out into nature and on the river was so much fun. We laughed, we played, we splashed and we shared stories about our life experiences. I'm not sure what they enjoyed more- the thrill of whitewater rafting, or the delicious blackberries we picked from the boat as we made our way back to Camp Lotus. In any case, I felt richer for spending the day on the river with this amazing group.

While I might be exhausted after a day on (or off) the river with my FOR friends, I certainly feel great about being a part of this community and look forward to the next time.

RiverLove,
Terri

River Currents *by Ron Stork*

How to give a dam - away

The fate of PacifiCorp's big Klamath River Dams have hung in the balance for more than a decade as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and others have wrestled with keeping them or ordering them to be removed.

In late December, the state of California took a big step and initiated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Scoping Meetings for an Environmental Impact Report for the Lower Klamath Project's License Surrender.

This means that the State Water Resources Control Board is finally embarking on the journey to process PacifiCorp's application to surrender their license and hand them over to a non-profit organization for the purpose of removing the dams.

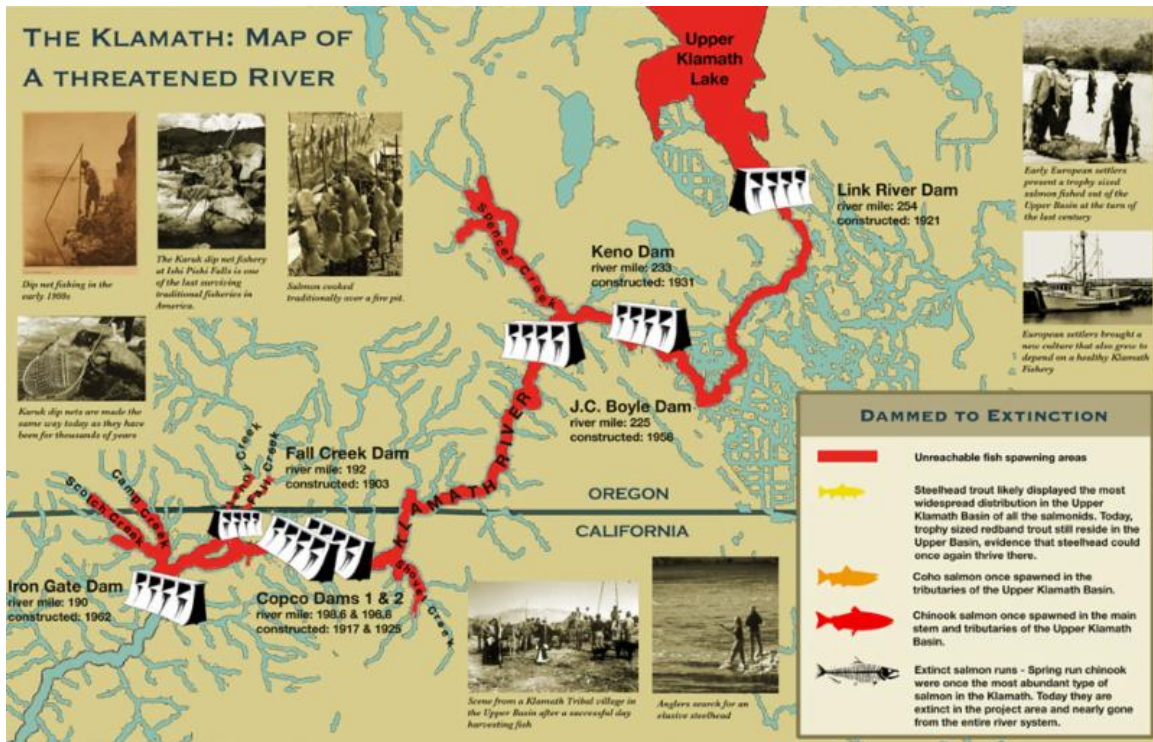
This good news is possible because California and Oregon are currently in the driver's seat (along with PacifiCorp) and not the new Administration in Washington. (Note that PG&E sponsored a bill last year to eliminate or reduce the role of the states in this process. We do

expect it to be reintroduced again, so stay tuned

But turning back to the good news, if you want to give the Board some kudos for stepping forward, you can attend a public meeting in Yreka on January 10, Arcata on January 12, or Sacramento on January 20. Comments are due at the Board by 5 p.m. February 1. The details can be found on the Board's website, and here's the NOP notice with the [meeting and comment information](#):

[More background](#)

[Sign up for notices from the Board](#)



Election season ends

Well, the Electoral College has spoken, and the U.S. has a new president. Judging from his cabinet picks and campaign statements, the incoming Administration will have an entirely new attitude about the importance of the federal environmental mission.

Our working assumption is that federal environmental agencies will be absent from their jobs or working to undermine their missions, at least for the next four years.

The majority of both Houses of Congress also remain controlled by members who vote to unprotect national wild & scenic rivers, who believe they can start a new era of abundance by subsidizing dams and more dams, and who are committed to repeal or chip away at landmark federal environmental and land and water protection laws.

That means that state agencies, the legislature, the Governor, and state environmental law, if they are up to the job, may have to be the Green Shield protecting California from a breathtakingly changed and newly hostile federal government.

Here at Friends of the River, we've been strategizing on where and how we will be playing the difficult game of defense to protect the rivers and river restoration opportunities in which we have invested decades of work. And we still need to advance the cause of river protection in California and recapture the hearts and minds of the people of this state and the nation. Friends of the River is needed now more than ever.

Congressional Outlook

Freed from the threat of Presidential vetoes, we expect that the House will take the lead in

pushing a dam-building agenda and stripping away the roles and responsibilities of federal landmanagers, resource agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency, and even the states, in acting as a check on the federal dam-building, water control, and dam regulatory agencies. The latter are the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The Senate, hopefully, will act as a brake on the House and the Administration. In the Senate many, but by no means all, votes require unanimous consent or 60 votes to cut off debate. California's new Senator will be tested in this crucible: will Senator Harris stand with Californians eager to defend our environment, our rivers, and our values for the next four years, or will she work with the new Administration on their agenda? And what parts of our environment will get her priority attention

She needs to hear from all over California that this is an historic time, and that she needs to be a hero when the histories are written.

The Courts

We expect that federal judiciary appointments will have a less environmental bent, something that will belong-lasting because these are lifetime appointments. But this is the branch of our federal government that is less political and more stable. And it may be getting a lot more work as the federal agencies drop out of their roles to protect the environment.

Expect to see these agencies hauled into court more often for failure to do their job. And yes, we could use a bigger legal team since a lot of the action is going to be in the courts.

If states such as California attempt to use state and federal law to be a defender of the environment, expect the courts to have to sort out whether the states are preempted by federal law from doing so. This issue is going to play out in hydroelectric dam relicensing, in the degree to which U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's dam and diversion operations and Delta operations can be controlled by the state, and whether new federal dams can operate without water rights, essentially commandeering other people's and places water.



More than mischief from the New Congress

As we go to press, we are keeping a wary eye on the new Congress. As expected, the southern

San Joaquin Valley Congressional delegation, although it secured some important victories over environmental objections in Senator Feinstein and Boxer's Water Infrastructure Improvement Act for the Nation (WIIN), wants more – a lot more.

As evidence, on the first day of the 115th Congress, Rep. Valadao (R-Hanford) introduced H.R. 23, the 125-page GROW Act, which is largely a remake of H.R. 2898 from the previous Congress.

While the WIIN attempts to commandeer water from Delta water users and the environment, it often does so in subtle ways that provide the Secretary of the Interior (if she or he were inclined to do so) some countervailing direction in some circumstances where environmental law would be inconsistent with the seizure of such water. The GROW Act is far less ambiguous, outlining in considerable detail when and how federal water operators should ignore environmental law and get the water to the fields of the arid lands of the southern San Joaquin Valley.



As in the previous Congress, the GROW Act would repeal the San Joaquin River Restoration Act, command the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to finish the “feasibility” studies for the big dams it’s been looking at (the CALFED dams), prohibit the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from protecting the San Joaquin River Gorge from the Temperance Flat Dam (which the BLM is recommending for national wild & scenic river status), and authorizing any dam the Secretary of the Interior finds to be “feasible” and for which non-federal funding is secured.

Obviously, there are lots of river-killing instructions in H.R. 23 from this member of Congress and leader of the incoming Administration transition team.

So what do we do about this? First, stay informed; this bill is going to evolve, and there will be others like it. But second recognize that it’s never too early to talk to California’s state officials and the incoming U.S. Senator Harris (or any other U.S. Senator) about the need to protect California’s river environment and even other water users and beneficiaries from the aggressive tactics of Congressmen McCarthy, McClintock, Nunes, Valadao, Costa, and Denham.

It’s going to be a tough four years, but it will be even tougher if we fail to object to the ill wind coming out of Washington D.C.

[Peek at the bill as introduced.](#)

It is not pretty.

California Dam Authorization Bill Signed by the President

The election and a poorly supervised Congress has the capacity to reshape the direction of federal water policy nationwide and in California. And just did.

The passage of the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation (WIIN) Act last week brings to a close this phase of our efforts to block House Majority Leader Rep. Keven McCarthy and Senator Diane Feinstein’s California “drought” bill that tries to push more water into the



Here is a survey of the damage – at least when it comes to dams.

It's a tough picture. Presidents Carter and Reagan's federal water policy reforms are no longer observed – or even remembered.

In a nutshell, the WIIN transfers the arena of federal dam decisions into the Secretary of the Army's and Interior's offices and the backrooms of the federal appropriations committees. The authorizing committees, where we usually have a fairer and more public fight, will lose much of their relevance – other than as a venue to keep more damaging authorizations out of future bills (we hope).

So here's a few **bullet points** about Title 1 of the WIIN and dams:

- Permanent authority to convert Corps flood control dams to multipurpose dams without authorization by the Congress
- Permanent authority to expand or modify Corps of Engineers dams for water supply without authorization by the Congress

Title 3, Subtitle J California, the California “drought” section, lasts for five years (except for projects under construction). Here's some highlights (well, **lowlights**):

- The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to construct and own storage projects where 50% non-federal financing is available
- Interior is authorized to fund up to 25% of storage projects by others
- Interior is authorized to provide assistance to “advance” these projects
- Interior is authorized to provide space in federal reservoirs of other people's water
- Treasury revenues of advanced payments of CVP capital repayment obligations are diverted into an initially \$335 million Water Storage Account to fund the Subtitle J programs
- Appropriations can flow to any project “recommended” by the Secretary of the Interior
- Appropriations can flow to any project declared “feasible” by the Secretary by January 1, 2021.
- Projects have to be declared feasible by January 1, 2021 and recommended by the Secretary before appropriations committees can fund them
- There's some important “savings” clauses, including state law and federal ESA. Hopefully they will mean something and not be repealed in the next Congress. Stay tuned on this.

event or talk!

Sincerely,

the FOR Staff--Eric, Ron, Mandi, Bob and Toby

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