



Valley leaders won't give up fight for Temperance Flat, despite water commission vote

By Brianna Calix
bcalix@fresnobee.com
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Leaders from across the central San Joaquin Valley gathered Friday, May 4, 2018 to express their anger and frustration with the California Water Commission after it voted to minimally fund the Temperance Flat reservoir project.

BRIANNA CALIX bcalix@fresnobee.com

Leaders from across the central San Joaquin Valley gathered Friday to promise people here they won't give up the fight for Temperance Flat reservoir, one day after the California Water Commission decided to allocate minimal money to the project.

But, project proponents said it was too soon to know exactly how they'll proceed. Mostly, they used sharp words to express their anger and frustration with the commission during a Friday news conference at Fresno City Hall.

Fresno County Supervisor Buddy Mendes said the "kangaroo" water commission "mugged" Valley residents by not providing more funding for the project. Former Fresno Mayor Alan Autry accused Sacramento politics of "hijacking our water." Assemblyman Jim Patterson said the water commission staff "turned their back on science."

Joining them were Fresno Mayor Lee Brand; Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno; Steve Worthley, Tulare County Board of Supervisors chairman and president of the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority; Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula, D-Fresno; Mario Santoyo, the authority's executive director, and others.

Meeting in Sacramento, the commission voted 4-3 Thursday to uphold its staff recommendation, which declared Temperance Flat would have no benefit to environmental habitat, in particular San Joaquin River spring-run Chinook salmon. Although project supporters asked for \$1 billion from \$2.7 billion in state Proposition 1 funds, staff only recommended funding \$171.3 million, citing a low public benefit ratio.

Two San Joaquin Valley commissioners, westside farmer Joe Del Bosque and Maria Herrera of Visalia, voted in favor of the project.

Now, project proponents may have to ask the federal government and private investors for more money to fully fund the project. They're weighing whether it's worth the cost to continue the application process for Proposition 1 funds, Santoyo said.

"Decision makers in Sacramento have, for the most part, ignored the needs to the Central Valley," Brand said. "Consequently, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. As a matter of economic justice and responsible governance, Sacramento needs to understand our issues, and more importantly, make decisions that recognize the needs of the entire state, including our region."

Worthley said at the next meeting for the joint powers agreement, officials will discuss moving quickly to approach private investors, such as water agencies, about their interest in the project. Officials will also engage with partners in Washington, D.C. to explore other options.



This is a view to the north over the edge of Big Table Mountain into the gorge containing the upper reaches of Millerton Lake near Temperance Flat. The proposed Temperance Flat dam would be constructed roughly where the lake is obscured by the ridge coming in from the right. MARK CROSSE Fresno Bee file



This is a view to the north over the edge of Big Table Mountain into the gorge containing the upper reaches of Millerton Lake near Temperance Flat. The proposed Temperance Flat dam would be constructed roughly where the lake is obscured by the ridge coming in from the right. MARK CROSSE Fresno Bee file

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