

Feds to hire contractor for \$1.4B Shasta Dam project next year



*By Kim Slowey
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Dive Brief:

Despite opposition from local officials and environmental groups, the federal government is moving forward with its \$1.4 billion plan to raise the height of the Shasta Dam in California, according to the [Redding Record Searchlight](#). The 18-foot-plus addition alone will cost \$350 million.

A U.S. Bureau of Reclamation representative said it plans to solicit bids in September 2019 and award the construction contract that December. The five-year project would not begin until 2020. When dam work is complete, officials said it would increase reservoir capacity by 14%, create a more stable drinking water and agricultural supply to meet demand and help provide a better spawning ground for Chinook Salmon downstream in the Sacramento River by increasing water flow.

State officials, who are advocating for alternative water storage plans, claim the project would violate state law because it would overwhelm and harm the protected McCloud River and its fishery with the extra water. The additional 20 feet of water in the lake after the height increase will also necessitate the relocation of roads, bridges, campgrounds, resorts and other structures. Advocacy groups said they will sue to stop the project.

Dive Insight:

President Donald Trump and his administration [have been pushing](#) for the project despite resistance from state and local officials. According to a [report](#) from the Los Angeles Times, past projects similar to the one planned for the Shasta Dam have complied with state law even though they were on federal land. Critics of the project also allege that the feds are playing politics with the dam renovations, which will benefit a member of the Trump administration who has ties to the local water district.

Federal officials will spend \$20 million on preconstruction activities in 2019 but are still waiting on Congress to authorize additional funds for the project.

In April, crews began work on the second phase of the [Isabella Dam project](#) in California. The \$200 million effort, led by the Army Corps of Engineers, will raise the dam 16 feet, as well as fix leaks and increase the structure's seismic resiliency. The Corps took action to protect the 300,000 people living below it after a local news investigation questioned the dam's integrity. A 2006 report said the dam had an "unacceptably high probability of failure combined with a very high consequence of failure." Work at the Isabella Dam also includes the addition of a 300-foot-wide spillway.

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