



Temperance Flat Blocked. No Help to Salmon, State Rules.

David Taub May 4, 2018

To say that figuring out the state funding formula for the proposed Temperance Flat dam is complicated is an understatement.

But the reason for the state's decision to award just \$171 million for the \$2.6 billion project is crystal clear.

The [California Water Commission](#) determined that the dam wouldn't help spring-run Chinook salmon on the San Joaquin River.

Not even a nickel.

The commission's verdict disappointed those Fresno area leaders who strongly support Temperance Flat, which would provide more water for area farmers and cities. Last November, the Fresno City Council approved spending \$500,000 for pre-design work as part of the project. All told, [\\$40 million](#) has been spent trying to break ground on the dam. The breakdown is \$38 million in federal funds and \$2 million by the infrastructure authority.



Politics 101 by David Taub

The commission debated this week how much of Proposition 1 "water bond" money should be awarded to 11 different water storage projects. Backers of the Temperance Flat Reservoir asked for \$1 billion. CWC staff offered up \$171 million instead, or just 16% of what they asked.

Eight Gov. Jerry Brown appointees comprise the water commission (one slot is vacant). The board consists of six Democrats, one Republican and one No Party Preference. Two members represent the Central Valley — Los Banos farmer Joe Del Bosque (NPP), and Visalia community development specialist Maria Herrera (Democrat). Additionally, CWC chairman Armando Quintero of San Rafael serves as the executive director of the UC Merced Sierra Nevada Research Institute.

Following hours of debate on Wednesday and Thursday (May 2-3), the eight commissioners did not override staff's allocation recommendation.



Water Commissioner Joe Del Bosque
Cal-Span

The project contained five categories of public benefit. The commission voted on them separately. Flood control, emergency response and ecosystem — refuge water supply received the recommended \$400 million. Commissioners bundled those elements into one 7-0 vote.

Members also added \$100 million for recreation over staff suggestion of \$0. That passed by a 5-1 vote (with one abstention and one commissioner absent).

But, the big sticking point was the ecosystem — fishery improvement for spring-run Chinook salmon. Staff said the dam provided no benefit. By a 4-3 vote, the commission agreed. Because of the formula used to determine the projects, the two ecosystem benefits must be half of the overall funding amount. The refuge water supply ecosystem benefit was worth \$85 million, thus the \$171 million award.

The San Joaquin Water Infrastructure Authority, the agency in charge of Temperance Flat, now looks to the next steps, according to its executive director, Mario Santoyo.

“We are not talking about a lawsuit, right now. The board will make any future decisions,” he said.



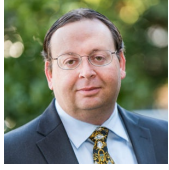
Artist's depiction of Temperance Flat Dam

Local elected officials expressed disappointment about the low funding and vowed to keep fighting for the dam.

“The Commission’s refusal to fund critical water infrastructure projects is unacceptable and I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure the completion of the Temperance Flat Project,” said Rep. David G. Valadao (R-Hanford).

Said Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno): “This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to save, store, move and use millions of acre-feet of water — water that is now wasted and recklessly flushed to the sea. Today’s decision was a shameful betrayal of the clear intention of voters when they approved these funds for surface storage.”

Environmentalists, meanwhile, [call the project a boondoggle](#) and say it would capture water only in extremely wet years.



David Taub has spent most of his career in journalism behind the scenes working as a TV assignment editor and radio producer. For more than a decade, he has worked in the Fresno market with such stops at KSEE-24, KMJ and Power Talk 96.7. Taub also worked the production and support side of some of TV sports biggest events including the Super Bowl, the NBA Finals and NASCAR to name a few. Taub graduated from the University of Michigan with dual degrees in communications and political science. You can contact David at 559-492-4037 or at dtaub@gvwire.com.

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