

President Trump Approves Funding For Water Projects That Could Mean More California Reservoirs

Ezra David Romero

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President Donald Trump signed a bipartisan infrastructure bill this week that could lead to raising the Shasta Dam and funding other reservoir projects.

The plan is to spend \$6 billion throughout the country over 10 years. The president says the funding will go toward ports, reducing flood risk, restor[e]ing ecosystems and performing upkeep on waterways — “which are in deep, deep trouble, but they won’t be for very long,” Trump added.



Shasta Dam / US Bureau of Reclamation

The Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 would also improve drinking water, and also water storage and delivery, Trump said.

The measure passed the Senate in early October with an almost unanimous vote of 99 to 1.

Central Valley-based Republican Congressman Jeff Denham says the bill could fund the raising of Shasta Dam.

“This will allow us to build everything from new reservoirs to actually building desalination plants and groundwater storage,” Denham said. “It’ll be a way for us to control our water throughout the state and create better habitat for our environment.”

He also said the law will also enhance needed local flood protection for more than 50,000 Central Valley residents.

Some environmental groups oppose many of the reservoir projects, like Shasta, Sites and Temperance Flat. They want to preserve the land and endangered species. Trump's decision comes days after he signed a memorandum Friday that would streamline regulations to help speed up deliveries from California's two main water systems to farmers.

Ezra David Romero is Capital Public Radio's environment reporter. His stories have run on NPR programs like Morning Edition, All Things Considered and Here & Now.

He grew up on a peach farm south of Fresno and spent the last five years reporting on agriculture and environment for Valley Public Radio covering six counties between Los Angeles and Sacramento.

He's a graduate of Fresno State, where he studied digital media and geography.

Romero also worked for the Fresno Bee covering police, elections, government and higher education.

He's filmed multiple award-winning documentaries and has won five Golden Mike Awards through RTNA of Southern California for his radio reporting. In 2016, he was awarded a second place podcast award from PRNDI.

In his spare time, Romero hikes the Sierra Nevada, road trips the Pacific Coast and frequently visits ice cream shops.



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FOR addendum: To be clear, the 2018 Water Resources Development Act/ America's Water Infrastructure Act (WRDA/AWIA) is an authorization bill, not an appropriations (funding) bill. It is unclear why Representative Denham believes that WRDA/AWIA will allow funding for the raising of Shasta Dam. In other interviews, he has pointed to the authorization for the establishment of a U.S. EPA bank charged with providing loans to water projects. In an unrelated development, early this year the Department of the Interior wrote that it has determined that the Shasta Dam raise is ready for commencement of construction under the authority of the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN), a statute which requires cost-sharing and compliance with state and federal law. The California Resources Secretary has written Congressional leaders informing them that the dam raise is illegal under California law.