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Director's Corner

Danger still lurks

By Eric Wesselman, Executive Director

While progress toward a sustainable water future is more promising in Sacramento these days, the Trump administration and powerful San Joaquin Valley water interests are pushing an elaborate plan to dam and divert a whopping 2 million acre-feet of water to the Valley. One leader of this effort is Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, a former lobbyist for the Fresno-based Westlands Water District.



Having failed to secure funding or begin construction on several dams and the delta tunnels, thanks to groups like Friends of the River, they launched an all-out campaign in February to advance what they are calling the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint. The Blueprint is a comprehensive repackaging of water projects and environmental rollbacks they have sought for decades. Put more simply, it's a demolition plan for the San Francisco Bay-Delta and the rivers that flow into it.

It is imperative that FOR defend California rivers by preventing Congressional support for the Blueprint through the end of the Trump Administration. FOR is working hard to avoid this antiquated approach through our coalition work with the One Water Network, grassroots organizing, policy advocacy and litigation. At the same time, we are excited to be facilitating vast stakeholder engagement on Governor Newsom's Water Resilience Portfolio

Initiative to advance a sustainable water future and healthy rivers. To fully leverage this opportunity and defend our rivers at the same time, we need FOR running full steam ahead. That's why your support is so important and appreciated. You make all the difference. Thank you!

News and Updates



You're Invited!

Join us for the 22nd Annual [California River Awards](#)

We're honoring artist and naturalist Obi Kaufmann, author of *The State of Water: Understanding California's Most Precious Resource*.

When: October 12, 2019 6:00pm

Where: Marines Memorial Club & Hotel, San Francisco

Tickets on sale now!

Sign up to be a sponsor and receive tickets to the event and exclusive access to a pre-event book signing by Obi Kaufmann.

[Sponsor the Event](#)

[Purchase Tickets](#)

Stanislaus 50-year Reunion

Calling all Stanislaus veterans! Join us this October for the 50th Anniversary since the beginning of the grassroots campaign to save the Stanislaus (1969).



We will also celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Mark's direct action in the canyon (1979) and it is 15 years since our first reunion (2004). As with past reunions, this one will be held at Camp Lotus. We are inviting Stan veterans and their families to join us Oct. 25-27 (Friday to Sunday) to renew friendships, hear talks and see videos on Stan history, and possibly a boating trip or two.

For more details, please contact Paul at pathfinder@cal.net

Pump storage permit withdrawn in the Eastern Sierra

By Colton Johnson, On-River Program Associate and Wild and Scenic Liaison

On August 30th, 2019, Premium Energy Holdings withdrew their application for a preliminary permit for the Owens Gorge pump storage project.

Pump storage has been floated as a "clean" solution to some of California's energy needs. Pump storage projects require the use of dams and other water impoundment methods. These projects are not clean for our rivers, but leave lasting effects.

Pump storage projects require two or more storage reservoirs:

- One at a higher elevation and one at a lower elevation, usually within close proximity.

- The water that is impounded in the higher elevation reservoir is released to spin turbines and generate electricity during peak demand.
- This water is then impounded in the lower reservoir.
- When demand dwindles, the lower reservoir's water is then pumped back into the higher elevation reservoir for later use.

These reservoirs tend to be off stream to facilitate their needs.

As well as flooding land that sits in some of the most pristine landscape in California, these projects would also fail to acknowledge the historic context pertaining to water in the eastern Sierra. The eastern Sierra has long dealt with outside parties stepping in and controlling their water, often to detrimental effects. There are other solutions that can help meet California's energy needs, solutions that preserve our water and natural resources.

Premium Energy Holdings initially had two preliminary permits. The first permit for the the Owens Gorge area was withdrawn. The second permit is for an area further south, at the Haiwee site. The second permit still remains and has yet to be withdrawn by Premium Energy Holdings. All versions of these preliminary permits where met with much local and environmental groups opposition. These groups continue to oppose the Haiwee pump storage project.

MWD weighs moving intakes 20-30 miles north for Delta Water Tunnel

By Bob Wright, Senior Counsel

On August 28 MWD general manager Jeff Kightlinger reportedly "revealed that MWD is looking at moving the Delta tunnel intakes 20-30 miles north (from the Clarksburg area) to accommodate sea level rise. Kightlinger stated that MWD is evaluating the increased costs of a longer tunnel, versus the benefits of extending the lifetime of the project." [Here's one source for more on this latest news from California Water Research on September 2, 2019.](#)

FOR has significant concerns about this possible approach in the Delta, and what it means for upstream communities and rivers and we will be bringing these to the planning process and key decision makers in the coming days and weeks.

Get Involved!

Join our River Advocacy Training School (RATS) next January

Want to take action to protect our rivers? Have you always been curious about the complex world of California water? Join us for the 7th cohort of the RATS program! The program runs mid-January through mid-May and provides a free 4-day training. RATS volunteer 4-6 hrs/week on their own schedule to help FOR deepen their impact on a current campaign. RATS become our advocacy muscle and extend the reach of FOR.



[Applications come out in early November.](#)

[Learn more on our website.](#)

CANOEING

Canoe Adventures—Salmon Paddles - 11/2 and 11/16

Our popular Salmon Paddles are back! Join us for a one-day canoe trip on the Lower American River with a salmon expert. Learn more about the life cycle of salmon and the success and challenges they face on our urban Wild and Scenic River.

No experience needed. Equipment provided.

[Register today!](#)



Volunteer Appreciation

FOR volunteers are the engine of our outreach and fuel to our programs. Thanks to the 30+ volunteers who dedicated one or more days to supporting FOR programs.

If you volunteered this season, we have a special Volunteer Appreciation Day on Saturday, September 21st at Camp Lotus. Check out the 'FOR Get Involved' listserv for more details.

Are you coming? [Please register!](#) Email tobybriggs@friendsoftheriver.org with any questions.

River Currents

By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

[View Full River Currents Article!](#)

Shasta Dam raise court back and forth

August can be busy, and not necessarily just for vacations. In response to the Shasta County Superior Court decision to retain venue over the lawsuits against the Westlands Water District and the preliminary injunction against the Westlands' preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR), Westlands asked the Sacramento-based Court of Appeal to overturn these decisions...



What is Reclamation going to do?

With its Shasta Dam-raise partner in legal trouble, what is the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Department of the Interior, going to do? Their website gives little information.

<https://www.usbr.gov/mp/ncao/docs/sdrep-timeline.pdf>

Here we read that some of the preparatory work has been delayed because they apparently ran out of funds. But at the same time, the August date to sign up Westlands to be a cost-sharing partner, the September date to issue a Record of Decision for their environmental impact statement (EIS), and the December date to award construction contracts remain...

Doing the will of the Secretary

One of President Trump's promises to Central Valley farmers was to make sure that a little fish would not get in the way of getting them more water pumped from the Delta. Cool, semi-clear water. The farmers loved it. But how could he make it so. One way to start that is to make sure that the Secretary of the Interior had close ties with the largest irrigation district in the U.S., the Westlands Water District, west of Fresno. They got that. They can check that one off their list...

Paying off the federal Central Valley Project

California's largest irrigation project was built by the federal government as a depression-era program that bled on into the postwar California world. It delivers about 17% of California's developed water, and its federal contractors have so far managed to avoid making sufficient payments to the Treasury to pay off their debts.

In fact, they are somewhere around \$1.4 billion short of paying for the reimbursable costs of the Central Valley Project (CVP). And since 1992, they've had a 2030 statutory deadline to pay off their debts...

Hoopa case appealed

We've talked about the devastating effects to state and jurisdictional tribal participation in licensing and relicensing of non-federal hydroelectric dams as a result of the DC Circuit's Hoopa Valley Tribe v. FERC ruling. Because the loser of the case (FERC) actually wanted to lose the case, the only one who can appeal the ruling were the environmental intervenors.

Pressed by the states, the intervenors (Cal Trout and Trout Unlimited) exhausted their appeals to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals and now have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the case on the basis of federal Clean Water Act conflict interpretations between three federal circuit courts...

Hoopa on steroids

Not to be outdone by the DC Circuit, and in violation of prior decisions by the federal judiciary, including the U.S. Supreme Court, the Trump Administration EPA has proposed new rules to narrow the scope of the states' Clean Water Act authority to enforce water quality standards.

The new proposed rules also provide federal agencies like the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) the power to decide what water quality certification decisions they approve of and to waive state water quality participation if a state or jurisdictional tribe prove recalcitrant...

Getting the state courts straight too

Last year, after decades of settled law, the California Third Appellate District appeals court inexplicably ruled that California's process for issuing Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act water quality certifications in hydroelectric dam licensing was federally preempted...

News from the Legislature

The California legislature is finishing up its 2019 session this month. We've been tracking a couple of bills that remain in play.

SB 559 (Hurtado) would reverse the voters' rejection of Proposition 3 in the 2018 general election. It would hand \$400 million dollars to the California Water Commission to give away to the Friant Water Authority to reconstruct and expand the Friant-Kern Canal. The water users there had assumed maintenance and repair obligations of this federal canal and had pumped so much groundwater around it that the southern section of the canal had sunk and lost capacity...

And then there is the Congress

Senator Feinstein's bill to amend the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act

of 2016 (WIIIN) is expected to be marked up by the U.S. Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in mid-September...

Click here to read the September [River Currents](#) article by Ron Stork

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Thank you for supporting rivers by staying informed.
We can't wait to see you at our next event!

Sincerely,
the FOR Staff: Eric, Ron, Brittney, Bob, Toby, Kellie and Colton

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