

# Record Searchlight

## Trump administration studies raising the height of Shasta Dam

*Redding Record Searchlight*

By Damon Arthur

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Visitors can see Mount Shasta in the distance over Lake Shasta and the Shasta Dam on Friday April 24, 2020. *Matthew Brannon/Record Searchlight*

The decades-long battle over an effort to raise the height of Shasta Dam took another turn Thursday when the Trump Administration released a new environmental report on the plan, just five years after completing a similar study.

The most recent environmental study and feasibility report takes another look at how raising the height of Shasta Dam 18½ would affect the environment around Lake Shasta and downstream of the structure.

The report says there is new information to consider surrounding the effects of raising the dam, particularly on wetlands and the McCloud River, a protected stream that flows into Lake Shasta.



Ports on the Shasta Dam spillway send thousands of gallons of water down the face of the dam Monday. The amount of water released rose to 30,000 cubic-feet per second.  
*Damon Arthur/Record Searchlight*

“The Trump Administration is committed to delivering reliable water to Californians and throughout the West, and long overdue investments need to be made in California’s aging infrastructure to meet current demands,” Bureau Commissioner Brenda Burman said in a statement.

“California simply does not have enough carryover storage, and this is a strategic project that is smart, cost-effective and an environmentally sound investment for California,”

The government estimates the dam raise would cost about \$1.4 billion.

By raising the 600-foot-tall Shasta Dam by 3%, or an additional 18½ feet, the proposed project would increase water storage capacity in the reservoir by 634,000 acre-feet or more than 200 billion gallons — enough water to support two million people a year.

#### [State Supreme Court weighs in on Shasta Dam case](#)

However, the government has run into stiff opposition from environmental groups and the state of California, both of whom have sued — and won in court — over potential impacts to wildlife and the McCloud River, which would be further inundated when the lake fills higher due to a taller dam.

The Fresno-based Westlands Water District began an environmental impact report on raising the height of the dam, but a judge ordered the agency to stop after it was sued in Shasta County Superior Court by the California Attorney General's Office.

#### [Westlands' role in Shasta Dam-raising project takes a beating in Redding](#)

The state AG successfully argued that raising the height of the dam violated a state law that says no agency of the state can participate in planning projects that would affect the McCloud River.

In the meantime, the owners of resorts, homes and marinas around Lake Shasta have lived with uncertainty over whether they will be required to sell their properties or move to higher ground to accommodate a new, higher lake level.

In October 2018, President Trump directed the secretary of the interior — who previously did work for Westlands Water District — and the secretary of commerce to expedite environmental reviews of water resources projects in the West, the bureau said.



In addition to increasing the amount of water coming down the spillway of Shasta Dam, four of the five turbines were generating electricity Tuesday. *Damon Arthur/Record Searchlight*

The increased storage from the dam raise would improve water quality in the Sacramento River below the dam by lowering water temperatures for winter-run chinook salmon and other fish that migrate up the river to spawn, according to the bureau.

Environmental groups, however, believe a higher dam would be harmful to fish spawning downstream of the dam in the Sacramento River.

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<https://www.redding.com/story/news/2020/08/06/trump-administration-studying-raising-height-shasta-dam/3310958001/>

*F.O.R. addendum: The article relies on Reclamation's press release's conflation of the proposed project's storage and the modeled yield of the project. The preferred alternative of the 2015 proposed project's average annual new deliveries are less than 10% of the proposed storage increase. Conflating new storage with new water is common, and contributes to an exaggeration of the potential benefits of new storage, in this case by a factor of more than ten.*