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News and Updates

Virtual California River Awards

Thursday, November 12, 2020 | 7pm

Honoring

Attorney General Xavier Becerra & Deputy Attorneys General Courtney Covington & Russell Hildreth

Online Silent Auction Opens October 29th

California River Awards

Thursday, November 12, 2020

7:00pm

Join us for the first ever *Virtual* California River Awards!

We're pleased to honor **Attorney General Xavier Becerra**, and **Deputy Attorneys General Russell Hildreth** and **Courtney Covington** for their work to defend California rivers against federal attacks on our environmental protections, specifically against the raising of Shasta Dam.

Registration for this virtual event is FREE, but you must be registered to participate in the online auction which opens for bidding October 29th and closes after the event.

[Learn](#)

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Attorney General teams up with FOR to fight raising Shasta Dam

Shasta Reservoir was completed as WWII came to a close. It remains the largest reservoir in the state, between Redding and Mt. Shasta in northern California on land the Winnemem Wintu Tribe has lived for centuries. The reservoir flooded 90% of their land and miles and miles of wild rivers. Some members of the tribe fought in the war only to come home to find their land was underwater.



The Westlands Water District has wanted to make that dam bigger for a long time, and they got their big chance when Donald Trump was elected. Based in Fresno, Westlands is the largest irrigation district in the country and their lobbyist in Washington now serves as Trump's Interior Secretary. There's no daylight between Westlands and the Trump administration.

Their plan is to spend \$1.5 billion dollars to raise the dam by 18 feet or so. This would yield about 50,000 acre-feet per year which is just 1/10 of 1% of our state's annual water demand. **That's an extremely expensive drop in the bucket**

Raising the dam would flood the remaining land of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe. It would also back the reservoir into the McCloud, Pitt and upper Sacramento Rivers, destroying more of these wild and magical rivers. The McCloud is an iconic blue-ribbon Wild Trout Stream beloved by recreational anglers and boaters alike. Beyond these rivers, what's to stop them from advancing similar projects on other W&S rivers like the Merced or Tuolumne if they got away with it here?

Friends of the River won state protection for the McCloud River in 1989. When the Trump administration and Westlands marched forward with planning the project, they broke state law and we stepped up to hold them accountable in court. Ron Stork, our Senior Policy Advocate, did the legal research, organized a coalition with the Tribe, fishing and environmental groups, generated media coverage, recruited incredibly talented lawyers at EarthJustice to represent us, and cobbled together funding from supporters like Patty Schifferle, the Environment Now Foundation, and hundreds of generous people like you.

We also needed the Attorney General to help us defend state law and state's rights. Xavier Becerra has been a true champion for California and our wild heritage. He's effectively built a green shield to protect California from the Trump administration. To our delight, the Attorney General and his Deputies took on the Shasta case and we filed litigation on the same day in Superior Court. Deputy Attorneys General Courtney Covington and Russell Hildreth prosecuted the case brilliantly and we won a ruling that Westlands had indeed broken state law. For this incredible work, and more, we are thrilled to be honoring them this year at [the California River Awards](#) on November 12th. You can [join us](#) virtually and [become a sponsor](#) of the event as well.

This victory shut the project down—for now—but Westlands and the Trump administration won't go quietly into the night. Right now, they're testing ways to skirt state law or push it out of the way or preempt state law. So, we still have our hands full, but we're well positioned and we wouldn't be here without this Attorney General and generous FOR supporters.

"Deliver the River", unique new paper tells the story of the Stanislaus



In 1973 Gerald Meral and David Kay were among a small group of leaders who formed Friends of the River to save the Stanislaus River from New Melones Dam. The Campaign to Save the Stanislaus built a movement to bring winds of change against the era of big dam building and protected thousands of river miles in California. Alas, the Dam was completed in 1978 and remains the second highest dam in the state. The loss was

immense as the reservoir flooded historic treasures in the deepest limestone canyon on the west coast and America's second most popular commercial white-water rafting run.

Nearly fifty years later David Kay's son Sean Kay and Dakota Goodman formed an intergenerational team to tell the story of the Campaign through a unique interdisciplinary lens that blends political science, economics, law, history, anthropology, and ecology. In doing so, "Deliver the River" leads straight to the water challenges and opportunities California faces today and offers valuable lessons from the past.

New Melones remains Exhibit A for how political forces can drive bad planning and flawed economics for the benefit of a very select few. Proponents of New Melones argued that it would provide reliable water through droughts. We are increasingly hearing this promise today, but as climate change puts growing strain on water and rivers there is growing evidence that these mega water projects are dated approaches that simply do not deliver. By the second year of our latest drought, New Melones Reservoir was so low that the river re-emerged. We used that as an opportunity to organize a [trip with Mark Dubois down the historic whitewater run](#) to showcase the project's devastating impacts.

Climate change calls for a new way of thinking about water as we face more severe droughts and floods. To meet this moment, we need to revolutionize water in California by scaling innovative water solutions that are truly climate resilient. "Deliver the River" is required reading for anyone who cares about wild rivers and a climate resilient water future for California with vibrant rivers, environmental justice, and a healthy economy.

About the authors:

Dakota Rose Goodman is a graduate of UC Berkeley. She received a B.A. in Environmental History, with a minor in Human Rights, and an emphasis in Psychology, as well as a B.S. in Society and Environment. Her concentration at UC Berkeley was in California water resources policy and management. She started the first campus chapter of Friends of the River at UC Berkeley since the organization's founding in 1973. Dakota hopes to use her education to work in the field of river restoration and preservation. After graduating with honors from Berkeley, Dakota went to the University of Idaho to further her studies in the area of Western Water resource policy and management. She is currently pursuing a Water Resources Master of Science, in Law, Management and Policy.

Sean Kay is Robson Professor of Politics and Government at Ohio Wesleyan University, where he teaches courses in Environmental Politics and Policy. A former river guide for ARTA, he is the author of multiple books, including his most recent *Rockin' the Free World! How the Rock and Roll Revolution Changed America and the World*.

[Read the full paper](#)

River Currents

By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

[View Full River Currents Article!](#)

Shasta Dam raise

I was going to call this the "McCloud River Blues", but that isn't really the right title for the last month's efforts. Here's the setting. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) released a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS) in April. Its focus was to escape state permitting requirements (which it can't get because of the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act) and to do what it can to rewrite part of its 2015 final EIS that admitted that the project was in conflict with state law...



Reclamation response to critical Shasta Dam raise comments

That story has yet to be written, but it is not hard to speculate. They will dispute that California law means what it says, dispute that it applies to them, and that the federal government doesn't need Clean Water Act and Porter-Cologne clean water permits or state water rights to put an expanded reservoir on the protected McCloud River...

Trump Administration doubles down on dam building

Now this could be the "McCloud River Blues", but it's actually more rivers than that. The President has issued his share of bellicose statements about California water and his share of executive orders too. But on the approaching dawn of his second term (or his last term), he's issued another executive order.

If one lawsuit is good, three (or maybe four) are better

If Reclamation is responding to its "inner Reclamation," the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) was presented with a great opportunity to respond to its inner FERC by its "loss" in the Hoopa Valley Tribe v. FERC decision in the Washington DC federal court of appeals.

Over asserting the power FERC believes that Hoopa gave to them, they have been waiving (killing off) state participation in federal Clean Water Act water quality certifications for their relicensing decisions...

Will Temperance Flat Dam make a comeback?

The proposed Temperance Flat dam has always been a deadbeat dam, living on handouts. It's not that different today. Thanks to some brand-new emergency regulations from the California Water Commission, they might be able to win \$8.5 million dollars for feasibility and environmental and permitting work for their project.

The Temperance Flat Reservoir Authority (or the Friant Authority or the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority) be making a dam pitch, or at least a report, to the Water Commission at their next meeting...

Westside proposed storage reservoirs update

Anyone who looks at a map of California will notice the huge valley in the middle. That's the Central Valley. The west side of it is often called the westside: no Latin expressions are required.

The westside is the focus of some big water projects. They all take their water from the Sacramento River — or for canals that lead from it. Let's start from the north, then go south...

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

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We can't wait to see you at our next event!

Sincerely,
the FOR Staff: Eric, Ron, and Brittney

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