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Capitol Alert

California Congressional Republicans Pitch Newsom on Shasta Dam Expansion

By Andrew Sheeler

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California's Republican congressional delegation, led by House GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, has opened up a new front in the state's ongoing water wars, urging Gov. Gavin Newsom to support the expansion of the Shasta Dam.

"Raising Shasta Dam would improve water supply reliability for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental uses, improve Sacramento River temperatures and water quality below the dam for salmon survival, increase the generation of hydroelectric power, and reduce the risk of flood damage," the letter reads in part.

It notes that despite support from past Democrats, ranging from then-**Gov. Gray Davis** to then-President **Bill Clinton**, Newsom's opposition to the dam enlargement appears to be "because it is presumed the project would have an adverse effect on the free-flowing condition of the McCloud River, or on its wild trout fishery."

The letter says that there has been no "objective, scientific analysis" that raising the dam 18.5 feet would impact the free-flowing condition of the McCloud.

In light of Newsom's recently stated goal of increasing above-and below-ground water storage by 3.7 million acre-feet, the letter makes three recommendations to the governor:

- Reconsider its opposition to the Shasta Dam enlargement project.
- Allow local water districts to partner with the U.S. **Bureau of Reclamation** to advance the project.
- Work with the **Legislature** to amend state law if necessary to make sure the project can be advanced as quickly as possible.

<https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article264536556.html>

F.O.R. Addendum: The letter appears to misunderstand that by definition new reservoirs are not permitted on rivers protected by either the California or National Wild & Scenic Rivers Acts, nor by definition under these statutes can rivers significantly inundated by reservoirs be considered to be free-flowing. This issue has already been litigated. <https://www.friendsoftheriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-0719-Tentative-Ruling-Venue.pdf>. For more, see <https://www.friendsoftheriver.org/our-work/rivers-under-threat/sacramento-threat-shasta/>. Also, past support from Bill Clinton and Gray Davis does not appear to have been demonstrated.