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California Court Blocks Harmful Dam Project in Stanislaus County

PATTERSON, Calif.— A judge has rejected plans to build a new dam in the Central Valley, ordering the Del Puerto Water District to vacate its approval of the project.

The Stanislaus County Superior Court [ruling](#) stated that the district's approval of the Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir was based on an insufficient environmental study and violated the California Environmental Quality Act. The district failed to adequately address the relocation of Del Puerto Canyon Road, which was a key part of the project, according to Monday's ruling.

"Considering how much this dam would damage local wildlife and an already strained ecosystem, the court made the right call in denying this project," said Peter Broderick, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Agencies are required to closely scrutinize major infrastructure projects before they're built, and the Del Puerto Water District failed to do that."

The proposed project would store 82,000 acre-feet of water, drawing from the already imperiled Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The reservoir would destroy 800 acres of habitat for California red-legged frogs, California tiger salamanders and golden eagles, species that are protected under the state Endangered Species Act.

"With this outcome, the imperiled species of Del Puerto Canyon will live to see another day," said Isabella Langone, conservation program manager for the California Native Plant Society. "We hope this ruling sends a clear message that cutting corners on environmental review and the disclosure of a project's impacts is not acceptable."

"Friends of the River supports many nature-based water storage solutions, solutions that provide drought relief without destroying the environment," said Jann Dorman, executive director of Friends of the River. "Del Puerto Canyon reservoir will destroy a beautiful canyon and will only fuel increased demand among the agricultural interests in the San Joaquin Valley, worsening dependence on the already strained Delta. This project takes inexpensive taxpayer-subsidized federal water, puts it in a reservoir, evaporates a lot of it, warms it up, privatizes it, then sells it to the highest bidder."

The ruling was in response to a lawsuit filed by the Center, California Native Plant Society, Friends of the River and Sierra Club. The coalition was represented by the Law Office of Donald B. Mooney.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization working to protect California's native plants and their natural habitats through science, education, stewardship, gardening, and advocacy. www.cnps.org

Friends of the River is dedicated to preserving and restoring California's rivers, streams, and their watersheds, as well as advocating for sustainable water management. Friends of the River is nationally recognized as an authority on the adverse impacts of dams on rivers and ecosystems, and has led successful campaigns for the permanent protection of many outstanding California rivers and streams.

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