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Fight to protect water continues

In November, the State Water Resources Control Board delayed adoption of the Bay Delta SED Plan for 35 days.

It is the second delay in the past few months and was prompted by a joint letter from out-going Governor Jerry Brown and Governor-elect Gavin Newsom. The Board similarly delayed the final adoption of the Bay Delta SED Plan in August.

The delays are intended to provide more time for voluntary settlement agreements to meet the objectives of the Bay Delta SED. The purported intent of the Bay Delta SED is to support salmon in the Delta and San Joaquin River system. The Bay Delta SED Plan intends to divert up to half the water flowing into Lake McClure away from the local region and instead send it north to the Bay Delta. MID has countered that simply diverting water away from eastern Merced County will do nothing to address



Above, organic sweet potatoes are harvested in Livingston after being grown with MID water from Lake McClure. **Below**, Lake McClure at the height of the drought. Under the Bay Delta SED Plan, droughts would occur every other year on average.



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Congress advances spillway study

Bi-partisan legislation paving the way for a review of the Lake McClure Storage Enhancement Project has been overwhelmingly passed by both chambers of Congress and signed into law by the president.



Left, MID is proposing to raise the Lake McClure spillways by up to 8 feet.

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the main stressors affecting the salmon lifecycle: including predation by non-native bass and loss of floodplain habitat .

"We welcome the pledge of the Governor and Governor-elect to actively and meaningfully engage to bring this matter to closure. Their participation is critical if we are going to reach a settlement at this point," said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

"Merced ID has been consistently proactive in advocating for ecosystem restoration of the developed Merced River corridor. Our Merced River S.A.F.E. Plan would immediately provide increased flows on the Merced River; restore 5.5 miles of habitat for salmon spawning and rearing; decrease non-native salmon predators and their habitat; and modernize salmon hatchery

operations for the benefit of California fishermen."

MID will continue to advocate its Merced River S.A.F.E. Plan as the process continues.

To learn more, visit:

MercedRiverSAFEPlan.org

Continued From Front: "Storage"

"This marks a significant step forward in our effort to store up to an additional 57,000 acre feet of water in Lake McClure at the end of the irrigation season," said MID Board President Dave Long during a press conference with legislative co-sponsor Congressman Jim Costa.

The Water Resources Development Act included a provision authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to accept nonfederal funding for the review and update of operating manuals for locally-owned reservoirs. The Corps is required to regularly review and update operations manuals for the reservoirs it regulates. However, budget constraints prevent it from carrying out this responsibility. Further, under previous law, the owners of non-federal dams could not provide the necessary funding to the Corps. The new legislation enacted by Congress removes this hurdle.

The operations manual for Lake McClure has not been significantly updated for more than 30 years.

Modernization of the Lake McClure manual is critical for advancement of MID's proposed plan to raise the spillways at Lake McClure and

create additional bottom-water storage capacity.

"We have worked diligently on this for many years, and we are grateful to members of our Congressional Delegation for their ongoing support of our efforts," said John Sweigard, General Manager of Merced Irrigation District.

The non-federal payment provision was added to an earlier House version of the water infrastructure bill this summer by local Congressmen Jim Costa (D) and Jeff Denham (R).

The Lake McClure Storage Enhancement Project would allow for up to an additional 57,000 acre feet of carryover water storage in the 1-million-acre-foot reservoir. Located in the Sierra Nevada foothills, Lake McClure provides crucial water supplies to Valley farmers, the environment, recreation and replenishment of groundwater for urban use, including drinking. The project will have no impact on the Wild and Scenic River aspect of the Merced River.

The Lake McClure Storage Enhancement Project has two essential components:

- A physical modification of the existing spillways at Lake McClure to provide additional flood control space if needed; and
- An update of the Corps flood-control manual for Lake McClure, taking into consideration new watershed data and science that has become available since the original manual was published more the 30 years ago. In turn, this is expected to allow for increased end-of-season carryover storage.

The Corps will soon begin a process to develop "implementation guidance" for the legislation, taking several months to complete.

Once Corps Headquarters has issued an implementation guidance, the Corps' Sacramento District can begin discussions with Merced I.D. on agreements to fund, review and update operations criteria for Lake McClure.