



# Congress approves bill supporting study of McClure storage project

## *Legislation expected to be signed into law*

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Bi-partisan legislation that paves the way for a review of the Lake McClure Storage Enhancement Project has been overwhelmingly passed by both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

The Water Resources Development Act/America's Water Infrastructure Act passed the House by voice vote. It passed the Senate with a 99-1 vote. The legislation is expected to be signed into law in the coming days.

"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 today at a press conference with legislative sponsor Congressman Jim Costa.

The legislation includes a provision authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to accept non-federal 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 existing law, the owners of non-federal dams cannot provide the necessary funding to the Corps. The new legislation enacted by Congress removes this hurdle by authorizing the Corps to accept non-federal funding for such reviews.

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). In May, they – along with Congressmen Tom McClintock (R) and John Garamendi (D) – had introduced stand-alone legislation to provide the required authorization for the Corps.

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 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 than 30 years ago. In turn, this is expected to allow for increased end-of-season carryover storage.

After the President signs the bill, which he is anticipated to do, the Corps will start 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.

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