



# Federal legislation advances in support of Lake McClure Storage Enhancement

**For Immediate Release:** Sept. 13, 2018

**Contact:** Mike Jensen

209-354-2856

[mjensen@mercedid.org](mailto:mjensen@mercedid.org)

The House of Representatives today passed bipartisan legislation that will allow advancement of the Lake McClure Storage Enhancement Project. The broadly supported legislation, “*America’s Water Infrastructure Act*” (AWIA, [S. 3021](#)), authorizes water resources projects and programs nationwide. It cleared the House with a voice vote. The bill now moves to the Senate where it is expected to be approved and sent to the President within the next few weeks.

The AWIA legislation includes a provision (Section 1169) that would authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to accept funding from the owners of non-federal reservoir projects regulated by the USACE to pay for review and revision of reservoir operation manuals, including flood-control criteria.

The USACE is required to regularly review and update the operations manuals for the federal and nonfederal reservoirs that it regulates. However, budget constraints prevent the USACE from carrying out this responsibility. The operations manual for Lake McClure has not been significantly updated for more than 30 years. Modernization of the Lake McClure manual is necessary for advancement of MID’s proposed plan to raise the spillways on Exchequer Dam to create additional 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 passage of this legislation marks a crucial step in the process of having this project reviewed.”

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 and Rep. Tom McClintock (R) and Davis-area Member John Garamendi (D) had introduced stand-alone legislation (H.R. 5726) to provide the required authorization for the USACE to accept non-federal funding for reservoir operations reviews.

The provision contained in the AWIA bill does not direct an outcome for the review or revision of operations manuals. It only authorizing voluntary non-federal funding of the process.

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 USACE 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 order to advance the project, the District has offered to pay the costs associated with USACE review and potential revision of the New Exchequer Reservoir Water Control Manual, but the USACE has been unable to accept the funding. That problem would be solved by enactment of the legislation passed by the House today.

###