

Mr. Tam M. Doduc – Board Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

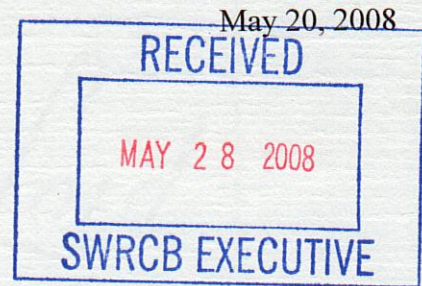
Subject: Auburn Dam Project

Dear Mr. Doduc,

It has been reported that the Auburn Dam, approved by Congress 43 years ago may be scrapped, based on possible revocation of the water rights the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation obtained from the state 38 years ago. Cutting through legalize, the basic rationale is a contention that the Bureau of Reclamation failed to prosecute, with due diligence, the construction of the Auburn Dam. Nothing could be further from the truth. Due diligence by the Bureau has been demonstrated throughout the history of the controversy over whether a dam at Auburn should be built, and if so, the type. It boils down to four possibilities, i.e., no dam; a dry dam for flood control only; an expandable dam for flood control which can be converted to supply water and electric power later; and a multi-purpose dam providing flood control, water storage, and power generation at the outset.

You scheduled a Pre-Hearing conference for June 4th, followed by a Public Hearing July 22nd on the revocation. I suggest the need for these hearings be reconsidered as the Auburn Dam has proven to be far more necessary for flood control than water supply and power.

Changeover of the design responsibility from the Bureau to the Corps of Engineers (COE) occurred in 1988, although not by Congressional reassignment. The Bureau asked the COE to study and make a recommendation as to the design for an Auburn Dam, which immediately created a problem, i.e., the divided responsibilities of the two Government Agencies that build dams. The COE normally builds flood control facilities only and has little interest in water storage or power generation. The Bureau of Reclamation is responsible for dams that store water and generate power. The COE, in conjunction with Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA), completed a Flood Control Report before the Bureau began its American River Water Resources Investigation Planning Report. Consequently, the Bureau Report, funded by the Sacramento Metropolitan Water Authority (SMWA), created specifically to represent water interests that would contract for Auburn Dam's stored water (of which I was one of four founders, and its first Executive Director – which has become the Regional Water Authority (RWA), the City and County of Sacramento, the American River Authority (ARA), and the County of San Joaquin, was two years late in starting. As a result, the Corps Report reached Congress in time for the 1992 budget hearings. The COE, concerned with flood control, recommended a "dry" dam with no permanent water storage capability, and that recommendation set off a flurry of activity by water interests and local politicians who feared Congress would approve the COE dry dam and de-authorize the multi-purpose dam. Joined by the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) all agreed to press for an expandable dam, close to what the COE termed an "Advanced Features Dam". The COE report states, "This concept consists of a single-purpose flood control dam with advance features that could be expanded later by non-Federal interests to meet water supply and power needs." The "Advanced Features" include blocked-off penstocks for hydropower and a foundation for a wet well to supply water. The water interests' task was to devise a way to get such language into anything presented to Congress to keep the multi-purpose option open. A selected group of representatives from ACWA and local water interests journeyed to Washington to lobby for an expandable Auburn Dam. ACWA selected me to be their Auburn Dam spokesman before Congress and the National Wildlife Federation. Notwithstanding our plea, the dam issue in Congress became so contentious that the dam was dropped from the Public Works Authorization and the Appropriations Bill. Money was provided to continue the Federal Government's part of the cost of the Bureau's study, and the COE were



instructed to examine other alternatives. This resulted in a supplement (1994). Based on the 1991 Report and the Supplement, the COE narrowed the options to three. They were:

1. The Folsom Modification Plan lowering the winter water level by 720,000 acre-feet, lowering the dam's spillway, enlarging river outlets, shoring up levees on the lower American River and heightening levees on the east side of the Sacramento River. The level of protection would be the 180-year storm, not the 200-year level established as minimum in 1992.

2. The Folsom Stepped Release Plan lowering the winter storage level by 670,000 acre-feet (*present re-operation level*), *lowering the spillway, and enlarging river outlets, increasing the maximum release of water from 115,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 180,000* which necessitates extensive modification of down stream levees and weir bypasses, and modification to Yolo levees to handle increased flow. Level of protection, a 235-year storm. This is the option environmentalists pinned their hopes on to offset a dam at Auburn.

3. The Detention Dam Plan, which is equivalent to the 400-year dry dam of the 1992 proposal with some modifications which include control gates in the river outlets in lieu of unrestricted open holes. Its construction would permit Folsom Dam to be operated with the traditional 400,000 acre-feet of flood control space used before the 1986 flood and would retain Folsom's present maximum water release to 115,000 cfs, deleting need to modify Folsom Dam. The Detention Dam would have 894,000 acre-feet of floodwater detention space.

The COE made no recommendation in their alternatives Report, leaving the decision to SAFCA and the Reclamation Board. In the examination of the options it was obvious that two flood control detention dams, Folsom and Auburn, on the American, would be vastly superior to modifying the Folsom Dam, *shoring up the levees, and increasing Folsom's water release from 115,000 to 180,000 cfs*. In 1996 local politicians agreed the COE Folsom Stepped Release Plan alternative to a detention dam at Auburn is a poor substitute for flood control and that a flood control dam at Auburn is essential to provide for the public safety. The COE repeated the warning in the 1994 Alternatives Report when addressing the Folsom Stepped Release Plan's requirement to increase Folsom Dam's maximum water release from 115,000 to 180,000 cfs, along with shoring-up levees and other improvements. They stated: "But even with these improvements, concerns would remain about such high releases." The local politicians endorsed the COE and SAFCA recommendation that a 500-storm year detention dam provided the best cost to benefit ratio. Unfortunately, attempts to convert the recommendation into Congressional legislation and inclusion of the cost of the dam and levee repair in the budget were unsuccessful. Instead, Washington did agree to allocate \$57 million for fixes to the flood control system designed to achieve 100 year flood protection, and to scale back the \$10 million yearly cost to \$2.5 million to SAFCA as compensation from loss of power and water sales as a result of re-operating Folsom Dam. However, none of the \$57 million was appropriated, stretching any work to be done with federal money until 1998.

In 1998 SAFCA, supported by Congressman Matsui, broke with those politicians who supported the Auburn Dam. Although SAFCA and Matsui continued to voice support for the Dam, they changed their position, based on recognition that Congress was not willing to provide money for the Dam. In an effort to get some improvement in flood control, they opted to support the dangerous Stepped Release Plan. This was opposed by Congressman Doolittle, who proposed rebuilding the cofferdam at Auburn, and the Auburn Dam Council who supported Doolittle. The battle in Congress raged through 1998, and the end result was that both proposals died.

In 1999 Congress ultimately settled on approval of \$285 million in new flood control measures for Sacramento. The approved measures include enlarging outlets at Folsom Dam, Raising the lowest levees on the American River, and raising levees along Morrison creek and its tributaries in South Sacramento, and in 2000 the Sacramento Property Owners approved a flood control assessment for the American River and South Sacramento Streams floodplains to finance the local match for the flood control projects approved by Congress in 1999. Improvements to American River levees,

including deep under-seepage cutoff walls and erosion protection and operational improvements for Folsom Dam allegedly now provide 100-year protection for much of the American River Floodplain. In addition, Sacramento area property owners, within the 200-year floodplain, approved a consolidated flood control assessment to finance the \$326 million local share of the costs for SAFCA's \$2.68 billion plan to achieve 200-year flood protection for the region.


However, notwithstanding planned improvements for Sacramento's flood protection Sacramento still will have the lowest level of flood protection of any major city in the U.S. Remember that the COE, Bureau of Reclamation, and SAFCA still agree the best protection for Sacramento is an Auburn dam, providing 500-year flood protection. At this level, protected would be the lives of over 250,000 people and damage of billions to real and personal property. Further, either an expandable or a full service Auburn dam could provide water storage and over 300-megawatts of electric power. It is inconceivable that anyone, and certainly not the State Water Resources Control Board, would want to destroy the possibility of Sacramento obtaining the Auburn Dam's needed flood protection and, by a punitive move, intentionally deny Sacramento such an opportunity.

A footnote. I have a personal interest in this issue. My oldest daughter, her husband, my granddaughter and her husband, with two of my great grandchildren and two of her husband's children, all in the New Orleans area, had to flee Hurricane Katrina to Dallas, Texas. When they returned to their homes, which did survive, although damaged, my daughter sent me issues of The Times Picayune covering the event from the beginning. My interest, beside their safety, was because I lived for almost three years in Algiers, LA, directly across the Mississippi from New Orleans, in the same Orleans Parish (County). The information and maps in the Picayune were what you would expect to find in a major paper covering a local tragic disaster, and interested me as a former resident. However, they didn't have a major impact on me, other than feeling the regret and concern all Americans felt for those affected by the calamity. However, the last Times Picayune map of the flooded New Orleans area was one of the most horrible presentations of a disaster that I have ever seen. It has haunted me. It appeared in the Tuesday, December 27, 2005 issue of the Picayune, a full page map, in color, titled VICTIMS OF KATRINA - WHERE THEY WERE FOUND. The flooded areas were colored in light orange, which covered nearly the entire downtown, and superimposed were bright orange circles of different sizes representing different numbers of bodies found, and where they were located. At the site of my former office downtown, just off Canal Street, were 10 circles, representing about 45 bodies. My daughter tells me that the office building has not yet been put back into service.

I took a copy of the map to an Auburn Dam Council meeting to show to the members, and gave it to the Council's President former Assemblyman Anthony Pescetti. I met with editorialist Tom Philp of The Sacramento Bee, and gave him my file of Picayune papers, including the map for his reference. I also gave a copy to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Chief of Staff before a meeting with the Governor at the Capitol. My prayer is that The Bee will never have to publish such a map of a flooded City of Sacramento.

The Sacramento Valley needs the Auburn Dam.

Respectfully


Joe Sullivan

cc: Governor Schwarzenegger, Senators Boxer and Feinstein, Representatives Doolittle, Herger, Lungren, and Matsui, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Counties of Sacramento, Placer, and Yolo, Cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Rancho Cordova, Sacramento, and West Sacramento, Auburn Dam Council, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, Association of California Water Agencies, Regional Water Authority, Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, The People's Advocate, Sacramento County Taxpayers League, The Sacramento Bee, The Sacramento Union, and Inside the City