



S.F. plans new Calaveras Reservoir Dam

By Wes Bowers

The San Francisco Planning Department held a scoping meeting at the Fremont Main Library on Monday to discuss the environmental impacts for reconstruction of the Calaveras Reservoir Dam above Milpitas.

The meeting's purpose was to gather public input to help identify a range of actions, environmental effects, and alternatives.

Calaveras Reservoir, located on the boundary of Alameda and Santa Clara counties and approximately 10 miles east of Milpitas, is the largest reservoir in the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's regional water system. Milpitas is among dozens of Bay Area cities whose drinking water comes from Calaveras Reservoir.

Calaveras Dam is located at the northern end of the reservoir, approximately one mile upstream from where the Calaveras and Alameda creeks meet.

According to San Francisco Planning Department staff reports, the California Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams, has limited the amount of water that can be stored in the reservoir since 2001.

This is because the dam is located near a seismically active fault and determined to be vulnerable to earthquakes, reports state.

Since 2001, the reservoir has been storing approximately 40 percent of its full capacity, which is about 96,850 acre-feet of water.

The Division of Safety of Dams has stated the reservoir cannot store its full capacity until safety deficiencies are corrected.

"We've looked at 12 alternative dams in different locations and made of different materials," Dave Rogers, project manager with the public utilities commission, said. "We will rebuild the dam immediately downstream of the original dam and have the exact same storage."

Rogers said the project includes building a dam of equivalent height and improved seismic design, with operation of the dam to release up to 6,300 acre-feet of water a year for the enhancement of fisheries and other natural resources of the Calaveras and Alameda creeks.

He said the new dam would be built at the downstream edge of the existing structure, and that dam would be used to keep water away from the construction site, and allow the reservoir to remain in operation.

"We want the new dam to start as close as we can to the original to avoid landslides," he said.

The new structure will also have a new intake tower, as well as a new outlet valve for water releases necessary for environmental purposes.

Diana Sokolove, spokesperson for the San Francisco Planning Department, said technical studies on the project should begin in 2006, with a draft environmental impact report to be prepared in 2007.

Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance, said his organization supports the efforts to rebuild the dam, as long as the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission preserves the steelhead trout population that runs in the creeks.

"We support the PUC's efforts to have a reliable and seismically safe system," he said. "But the major failing we see is that part of this purpose is to restore the fisheries that the steelhead travel."

Sokolove said all concerns regarding wildlife and fisheries will be taken into consideration, and public comments will be accepted in written form through Nov. 30.

Residents can send comments to diana.sokolove@sfgov.org , or to the San Francisco Planning Department, Attn: Paul Maltzer, Calaveras Environmental Review, 30 Van Ness Ave., Suite 4150, San Francisco, Calif., 94102.

The plan is available on the Web at www.sfgov.org/site/planning_index.asp.