

## Pipeline Is Insurance For Areas of Livermore

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By Ron McNicoll

Even prehistoric bones didn't slow down a pipeline project. Zone 7 Water Agency is on track to install more water capacity that can be used for back-up or daily operations, for portions of Livermore.

The \$22 million pipeline is under construction from near Airway Boulevard and along Las Positas Boulevard to serve the Springtown and Wagner Farms areas.

The construction company unearthed some bones from a woolly mammoth and a 10,000-year-old horse not far from the Target store in Livermore in 2008. The artifacts have been set aside by a consultant and an archeologist for preservation.

The new line, with a capacity of 12 million gallons per day (mgd), will join an 8 mgd pipeline already there. The new one will add to the conveyance capacity for moving water to Springtown and Wagner Farms when Zone 7 has the Patterson pass water treatment plant down for maintenance.

When Patterson is shut down, Zone 7 draws water from Lake Del Valle, via the Arroyo Del Valle, and from Valley wells. That water goes to northeast Livermore through the 8 mgd pipeline there now. The water travels from the west, instead of coming from the east, which is the route taken by lines that carry the Patterson Pass water.

There is no worry about the eastern lines that carry the Patterson water, because there is plenty of capacity to meet the summer's peak demand, said Zone 7 and Livermore officials. If the Patterson plant were down for maintenance in the winter, as happened for eight weeks recently, there also is no problem. Water use in winter is relatively low. The current 8 mgd line can handle it.

However, in summer, water use climbs to between 14 and 17 mgd, which is too much for an 8 mgd line. Water rationing would result. Simple math shows that the area would have to conserve by approximately 50 percent, said Livermore city staff water specialist Randy Werner. The new pipeline will erase any need for that.

However, if the pipeline were not in place by June 30, it can't be used to deliver needed water, however remote the chance a drought will occur, Werner told Zone 7 directors at their board meeting Jan. 15.

### STATE SHUTDOWN ILLUSTRATED PROBLEM

Livermore had a preview of that kind of situation last year, when the state shut down its pumps at the Harvey Banks pumping station in the Delta for nine days. The state didn't run

out of water for the Valley, because it did have at least nine days of back-up in nearby Bethany reservoir.

The state doled out the water at a reduced rate to meet the needs of Zone 7 and two other downstream agencies. While the Harvey Banks pumps were shut off, the Bethany reservoir was getting low, and the water was becoming murky, said Werner. He asked the Zone 7 board for assurances the new pipeline would be finished by June 30.

Werner acknowledged that it's unlikely there will be any crisis. However, he wanted to pursue the worst-case situation with the board, in order to cover all bases. Werner cited the delay in starting the project as a reason for his skepticism.

The project began a few months behind schedule, because the board rebid the construction contract. The board awarded it in April 2008 to Ranger Pipelines. Work on the project began in July, and was projected to be finished in one year.

Rhett Alzona, the Zone 7 staff member in charge of the project, said it looks to be on track for a completion June 30. About 53 percent of the pipeline has been laid so far. Werner met the day after the meeting with Zone 7 general manager Jill Duerig. "Jill reassured me that the state reassured her that it will keep Bethany reservoir full, no matter when the pumps are shut off," said Werner.

#### CLOSE TO RECORD DRY YEAR

The board also heard assistant general manager Kurt Arends report on projected rainfall. Zone 7's normal allocation from the state water plan is 77 percent of total capacity, since the state water plan has never been built to 100 percent capacity. Last year, Zone 7 wound up getting 35 percent on that scale.

(Actually, Zone 7's share has declined to about 70 percent, now that a federal judge's ruling has imposed certain conditions on pumping from the Delta, said Arends.)

This year, the agency was given an estimate at the start of the rainfall year, Oct. 1, of 50 percent of capacity, the same as it was given at the start of the previous rainfall year. It's hard to tell right now where the water deliveries will wind up exactly, said Arends. The months of heaviest rainfall, February and March, are still ahead.

However, a chart that Arends provided the board shows that unless things change radically, the weather pattern is for one of the driest years in modern times. It looks a lot like last year's performance, said Arends.

The northern and central Sierra precipitation records, not Valley rainfall, are what count for Zone 7 water supply. So far, precipitation in the northern Sierra in January has been 15.4 inches. That's lower for mid-January than the 20 inches for 2007-08, and the 25 inches for the average between 1922 and 1998. This year's 15-inch performance is above the 5 inches at this time in 1923-24, the driest season on record, and 3 inches for 1976-77, the second driest season.

The amount of water stored at Lake Oroville, a significant dam on the water project, was described as "very low" in general manager Jill Duerig's report to the board.

## ZONE 7 APPROVES SALMON STUDY FUNDS

On another item, the board unanimously authorized spending \$40,000 as Zone 7's share of a study about restoration of steelhead to Alameda Creek. Zone 7 has been one of 17 agencies to take part in the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup, which was formed in 1999.

The first phase of the workgroup's study is complete, and the second phase will be underway this year. The additional funding is to support the second phase.