

Earth Log: Back to the debate over Temperance Flat

By Mark Grossi



The shoreline of Millerton Lake, with islands appearing and peninsulas appearing with the low water. Temperance Flat Reservoir would overlap with Millerton.

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Most folks who commented Thursday night about the plan to build Temperance Flat Dam were opposed to the \$2.6 billion project. Their arguments ranged from clinical to emotional analysis.

They were commenting to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which has released [a draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) – meaning this project is moving into final stages of planning. Congress still needs to approve it, and there could be many other hangups in the future.

But local opponents saw this as their chance to tell the government to back off. [I wrote about this](#) in The Bee on Friday. I wanted to pick up the conversation again briefly to raise just a few points that I couldn't get into the story with deadline and space constraints.

Many opponents talked about the rich cultural and natural history that would be inundated by a large, new reservoir upstream of Millerton Lake. One speaker talked about rare caves that would be lost in the Millerton Lake area.

A representative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs said the draft EIS does not address water rights of native Americans. / local Sierra Club member said the stretch of river above Millerton Lake is being considered for protected status under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Quentin Cedar, a resident near Millerton Lake, simply called the proposed dam upsetting: “We’re not in favor of this at all.”

There were some supporters of the project. Among them, Tulare County Supervisor Allen Ishida stood out.

Ishida, a third-generation Lindsay-area citrus farmer who has worked for some time on water issues in his county, talked about the ordeal east San Joaquin Valley agriculture has endured this year.

He is one of 15,000 east-side growers who are part of the Friant Water Authority. These farmers buy water from Millerton Lake. They got a zero allocation this year.

Ishida said the shutoff of federal water caused a loss of jobs. Families were forced to move, disrupting children’s education and the local economy.

On top of that, 600 domestic wells have gone dry in Tulare County, he said. Land is subsiding. Ishida said the San Joaquin River restoration had been a drain on water supply from Millerton, too.

“I’m for Temperance Flat,” he said. “I just want the water I contracted to buy.”

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