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Crowd fills ballroom for Centennial Dam meeting in Grass Valley

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INFORMATION

Want to comment?

Send mail to: Kara Hellige, project manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, 1325 J St., Room 1350, Sacramento, CA 95814-2922.

Email: CESPKCentennialReser@usace.army.mil

About two dozen protesters on Thursday stood outside the Centennial Dam public scoping meeting, holding signs in opposition to the project.

Carmen Mateo and Marin Lipowitz, both of Grass Valley, each held one end of a sign declaring "Save our Bear River / No more California dams."

"Anytime you build a dam, you're losing the quality of life of the water," Mateo said. "Dams can create

too many other problems."

Dianna Suarez, of Colfax, said she joined the protest because the proposed Centennial Reservoir would inundate the Bear River Park and Campground.

"We are not represented by our government and this is happening to us," Suarez said.

Meeting attendees crowded inside the Holiday Inn Express & Suites in downtown Grass Valley to comment on the project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which must issue a permit for the project to proceed, is writing an Environmental Impact Statement. A draft statement, which will take comments into account, is expected in February 2018.

More public comment will occur after the draft statement is released, which will lead to a final statement. It's unknown when the corps' decision on a permit will occur.

"We'd like to know information from you regarding your concerns," said Kara Hellige, senior project manager with the corps.

The Nevada Irrigation District, the project applicant, has argued the 110,000 acre-foot reservoir is needed because of a prolonged drought, climate change and to ensure a sustainable water system.

The project would impact 2,200 acres on the Bear River between the existing Combie and Rollins reservoirs. The dam would climb to about 275 feet. The reservoir would be 255 feet deep.

"I think our chances are pretty good," said Nick Wilcox, a NID board director. "I think we can make a clear case for the need."

Some opponents have argued that NID should fix existing leaks and improve its infrastructure instead of building the dam.

Wilcox said that fixing leaks in the district's ditch system is a goal, but argued that fix would provide less than a third of what Centennial Reservoir would bring.

Wilcox said if someone could show him an alternative that would provide 110,000 acre-feet water, he'd examine it.

"This is a process and it needs to play out," he said.

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