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Centennial Dam Declared Ineligible for State Funding

Sacramento, CA – The California Water Commission (CWC) officially declared the Centennial Dam project application ineligible for Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) Proposition 1 funding. The Commissioners' unanimous ruling came late afternoon on Tuesday, May 1, the first day of their three-day meeting focused on finalizing the public benefit ratio scores for all WSIP project applicants.

The Nevada Irrigation District (NID), the Centennial Dam applicant, did not appear at the CWC meeting to contest this decision. However, Melinda Booth, Executive Director of the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) testified during public comment in support of the ineligibility ruling.

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Commission for your demonstrable commitment to a transparent and open public process—one that stayed true to the requirements of the Water Storage Investment Program as endorsed by public vote back in 2014,” said Booth. “In addition to the 3,000 letters opposing WSIP funding for Centennial we delivered in February, I have 400 more with me today asking you to take the final step and vote Centennial ineligible.”

Last summer, NID claimed a 4.19 public benefit ratio (PBR) on their original Centennial Dam application. Yet, they received a PBR score of “Zero” on February 2, 2018, from CWC technical reviewers, which NID did not appeal. A PBR score of zero means that for every dollar of Proposition 1 funds spent on Centennial, the Centennial project would provide \$0.00 of public ecosystem and recreational benefits to California and Californians.

“Zero cents on the dollar is a horrible rate of return for California taxpayers. Once again, the proposed Centennial Dam proves itself to be a financial boondoggle for ratepayers and taxpayers,” said Booth.

The PBR is one of four scoring components in the WSIP application evaluation process. The PBR score determines how much WSIP money a project could be awarded, since the WSIP funds are intended to pay for the public benefits of water storage projects. Now that the Centennial Dam project has been found ineligible, the Centennial application will not move forward in the Commission's evaluation process. Final application scores for all eligible projects should be

posted on July 6, and “Maximum Conditional Eligibility Determinations” will be decided at the Commission’s July 24-26 meeting.

“Thanks to the Commission’s May 1 ineligibility declaration, the Centennial Dam application will not be part of the WSIP ranking process,” added Booth. “While this action in itself does not stop the project from being built, it does seriously question the viability of Centennial’s premise. A panel of California state experts found no value in the project as related to public benefits.”

“We applaud this ruling,” said Traci Sheehan of the Foothills Water Network. “SYRCL, the Foothills Water Network, and thousands of Nevada and Placer county citizens believe this is in the best interest of the Bear River, the Bay-Delta ecosystem, the Nevada Irrigation District, and the people of the State of California.”

SYRCL and the Foothills Water Network have been tracking NID’s Centennial Dam WSIP application since September. Based on the information provided in the application, the groups found that the Centennial project fails to qualify for this specific pool of water bond money for several reasons:

- NID submitted an incomplete application for Centennial Dam.
- NID failed to demonstrate with appropriate studies how the project would create net environmental and recreational public benefits. It also failed to show benefits to the Delta or tributaries to the Delta.
- The environmental, cultural and economic damage this project would bring to the Bear River contradicted the stated goals of the WSIP and Proposition 1 funding per Chapter 8 at 79752 of the Water Bond.

More information regarding the Water Storage Investment Program may be found online at: <https://cwc.ca.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>.

About the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL)

SYRCL (pronounced “circle”), is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed. Founded in 1983 through a rural, grassroots campaign to defend the South Yuba River from proposed hydropower dams, SYRCL has developed into a vibrant community organization with over 3,500 members and volunteers based in Nevada City, CA. SYRCL and allies recently collected and submitted more than 3,400 letters to the California Water Commission urging the denial of NID’s request for \$11.95 million in Proposition 1 funding under the WSIP.

Foothills Water Network (FWN) is an alliance of conservation, angling and recreation groups, whose mission is to protect and enhance aquatic ecosystem health and recreation opportunities in the Yuba, Bear and American rivers.

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