

## Our View: Communication fail on Centennial Dam

The Union Editorial Board  
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There's something about the Centennial Dam project that doesn't hold water.

We're years into this project, with over \$11 million already spent, and there are plenty of questions this community has about the dam.

An [independent audit](#), released last month, attempts to answer some of them. We now know that some costs have exceeded budget. We're told there were no inappropriate expenses.

But we still don't know if the Centennial Dam is the right way to address our water supply issues, and we don't know how much it's going to cost.

Transparency has long been an albatross around the neck of the Nevada Irrigation District Board of Directors. For a long time you had to submit a written request to get audio of a board meeting on a CD. Video was out of the question for years.

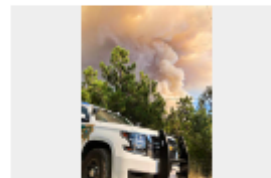
That's since changed, but an opaque pall continues to hang over NID's actions.

NID has quietly purchased property in the project area despite serious reservations from a sizable contingent of its customers. This discontent arguably has become the issue of the NID elections this November — elections that could change the direction of the Centennial Dam project.

And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

The problem is, we don't know if it's bad. Centennial could be part of an answer to our future water concerns. It might be one of the solutions to the state's recurring droughts. This

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The problem is, we don't know if it's bad. Centennial could be part of an answer to our future water concerns. It might be one of the solutions to the state's recurring droughts. This dam could help anticipated water supply issues, a burden generations down the line never will have to experience.

Expect these concerns to bubble up this election season.

Take a look at who's running for office, and who's already talked publicly about the project.

Ricki Heck, unopposed for the Division I seat, has said NID should stop buying properties for the dam.

Bruce Herring and Chris Bierwagen are vying for the Division II seat.

Herring has criticized the dam project in letters written to The Union. Bierwagen's public stance on Centennial is unknown.

The Division IV election is between incumbent Will Morebeck and Laura Peters. In a June release Peters said NID must evaluate the risks it's taking and how it manages its finances.

Board support for Centennial could flip depending on how irrigation district residents vote this November.

You can learn more about the candidates by attending a 5:30 p.m. Tuesday forum at Peace Lutheran Church, 828 W. Main St., Grass Valley.

We're not taking a stance on how people should vote. Instead we're interested in a methodical approach to this project that includes a thorough examination of potential alternatives to the dam.

Sure, we're already years into the preparatory stages of this project. But that's not a reason to continue down a path, maybe throwing good money after bad, when there's a better — and possibly cheaper — way to ensure our water needs are met for decades.

The recent audit was a good move on NID's part, though even this ostensibly good faith document gives critics ammunition. Some dam opponents see the audit as severely lacking information they want, mainly the project's cost and source of funds.

And that brings us back to our main point: transparency.



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There's a reason two of the three NID elections this November have competition. There are reasons protestors wave signs outside of NID's main office on West Main Street in Grass Valley.

People want answers and openness to this process. They're angered over money spent on properties before the dam is a certainty. They point to the state Water Commission's determination that the dam has zero public benefit and wonder at the efficacy and wisdom of NID's board of directors.

And they fear that, years from now, this project in its current form will place an albatross around all our necks.

*Our View is the consensus opinion of The Union Editorial Board, a group of editors and writers from The Union, as well as informed community members. Contact the board at [EditBoard@TheUnion.com](mailto:EditBoard@TheUnion.com).*