

Public chimes in on issues at Plan for Water workshop



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What: Plan For Water public workshop

When: 4-6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 10

Where: Rock Creek Elementary School, 3050 Bell Road, Auburn

For info: Go online at PlanforWater.org

Approximately 60 residents turned out for the first public workshop for what will be a two-year process during which the Nevada Irrigation District will update its water plan for the next 50 years.

The Raw Water Master Plan process and the [hire of consultant group](#) The Kolbe Company was approved by the water district board in September, intended to foster a more collaborative approach. The discussion surrounding the district's future water needs has been contentious, in part because its Centennial project remains highly controversial.

"We want to find out what's important for you," consultant Heidi Kolbe told the participants at Saturday's session held at the Nevada County fairgrounds. The next meeting will be in Auburn on Dec. 10.

The Plan for Water meetings will provide the basis for the district's Raw Water Master Plan update, water district officials said. That plan update is intended to project the district's future water supply and demand conditions and develop alternatives to meet those needs.

"We all need to be on the same page," water district Assistant General Manager Greg Jones told participants on Saturday. "The purpose (of the workshop) is to engage and gain a common understanding. We're taking a back seat and letting this process unfold."

Informing the thread of many of the discussions happening in the smaller break-out groups was the long-term commitment being sought by the district to build the Centennial Reservoir.

Some common themes emerged: A healthy watershed. Transparency by the agency and accessibility to accurate data. Prioritizing sustainable, local use. Conservation. Allowing the public to engage in decision-making.

"Everything will be transcribed ... and will be available online," Kolbe said after the Saturday workshop. She added that a summary report will also be prepared and presented to the water district board.

The South Yuba River Citizens League has requested a [moratorium](#) on spending on the Centennial dam until the Raw Water Master Plan update is complete. That resolution was discussed at an October meeting, and a "compromise" resolution by board member Scott Miller was approved and later rescinded.

Any future decisions on the Centennial Dam will be the responsibility of the new water district board, after three new members are sworn in on Dec. 12. Proposed guidelines for the formation of a public participation committee also have been tabled until the new board is installed.

Contact reporter Liz Kellar at 530-477-4236 or by email at lizk@theunion.com.

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