

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda in order to provide the Board of Supervisor's response to the Grand Jury's report on Lake Cachuma.

On May 19, 2016, The Santa Barbara County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) released a report entitled "Lake Cachuma, Protecting a Valuable Resource, You Can't Drink Paper Water", which investigated the operation and agreements for Lake Cachuma and the distribution of water from the Lake. The report concluded that the Grand Jury "found it difficult to unravel the complex web of water agencies, water contracts, water regulations, water purchases, water sales, water portfolios, and water management plans that are designed to supply a safe and secure water source to all people living on the South Coast. This report attempts to unravel portions of this web and to address those issues deemed most pressing and most able to be improved with a focus on the importance of Lake Cachuma". Today, the Board will consider the proposed response to the report, adopt their preferred response and authorize the Board Chair to sign the response letter. The Board is required to respond in writing to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 17, 2016.

The Board of Supervisors is named as a responder to Findings 1-6 and 8, as well as Recommendations 1-4, 5a, 5b, 6, 8a, and 8b.

Background:

The Cachuma Project was built by the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) between 1950 and 1956. The Lake first filled and spilled in April 1958. The County Water Agency (CWA) was established by the State Legislature for purposes of contracting with the federal government for the Cachuma Project and for the construction of Twitchell Dam. The Water Agency utilized its taxing powers to ensure that the costs of the projects would be repaid to the Federal government.

Since the initial years, the County through the CWA and the Flood Control District began to take a central role in the Cachuma Project including technical studies and analysis which included inflow and flood flow forecasting into and out of Cachuma (flood modeling conducted by the Flood Control District).

In addition to the Water Supply Contract held by the CWA for the benefit of the Member Units, the County also holds a separate Managing Partners Agreement with USBR for the operation of the park at Cachuma Lake for recreational purposes. USBR is committed to providing multiple benefits from its projects and while the Cachuma Project provides an invaluable water supply to the region, it also offers valuable recreational benefits that are important as well. Cachuma serves as the only real fresh water recreational opportunity for boating, fishing, camping, and offers nature activities as well. Cachuma also has evolved into a vibrant ecosystem important to the area.

These values are not at odds with each other. The park and the environment are well adapted to fluctuating Lake levels based on rainfall patterns. However, as a crucial water supply, Cachuma deliveries need to be planned to span a critical drought period to ensure a stable water supply. In doing so, all other values associated with Cachuma thrive as well.

Cachuma also plays a critical role in the delivery of State Water Project (SWP) allocations to the South Coast. Deliveries of State Water are pumped into the Lake at the Dam and the Lake itself is the

conveyance to the South Coast through the Tecolote Tunnel. Currently, those SWP deliveries are being pumped to the tunnel along with remaining Cachuma Project water.

Operation of Cachuma also must be done in accordance with state law which protects downstream water rights. In addition, with USBR as the federal entity that owns and operates the Dam, operations must also conform to the Federal Endangered Species Act requirements.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: NA

Fiscal Analysis:

NA

Special Instructions:

1. As per Recommendation B, please forward the original signed letter and responses to the Presiding Judge of Santa Barbara County Superior Court.
2. Please send a copy of the signed letter and a copy of the minute order to Richard Morgantini, Fiscal & Policy Analyst, County Executive Office

Attachments:

Attachment A - Response from the BOS to the Presiding Judge of Santa Barbara County Superior Court

Attachment B - 2015-16 Grand Jury Report entitled Lake Cachuma, Protecting a Valuable Resource,
You Can't Drink Paper Water

Authored by:

Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

Richard Morgantini, Fiscal & Policy Analyst, County Executive Office