

# Army Corps unveils timeline for work on Isabella Dam

Cathy Perfect, Lake Isabella Kern Valley Sun, 5-18-10

Army Corps personnel spoke May 12 at a heavily attended meeting at the Odd Fellows Hall in Kernville regarding the ongoing issue of the two dams at Isabella Lake. A study of the dams began because of concerns over seismic activity and water seepage discovered in 2006.

In laying out the project's timeline, Project Manager Veronica Petrovsky, said more analysis needs to be performed, reviews conducted, measures considered and plans drawn up; the Corps anticipates construction work could begin in October 2014.

The "Overview of Risk Driving Potential Failure Modes (PFMs) identified nine Primary PFMs in the main dam, two more in the spillway, four in the Borel Conduit, and nine in the Auxiliary Dam. Internal erosion and seismic stability are primary concerns.

The Kern Canyon Fault runs directly underneath the Auxiliary Dam, and major seismic activity could offset the dam itself, geotechnical engineer David Serafini said. He cautioned, however, that there hasn't been an earthquake on the fault for more than 3,300 years.

Other concerns include a poor foundation on the Auxiliary Dam, and both dams could overtop if there was massive flooding, Serafini said. Again, the chances of that happening are slight.

When seepage problems under the Auxiliary Dam were discovered in 2006, the Corps instituted a "pool restriction" that limits the amount of water stored at the dam to 360,000 acre-feet, or 63 percent of its maximum capacity.

Among the things that need to be accomplished are floodplain mapping, economic analysis, real estate and mitigation plans and cost analysis, Serafini said.

An Environmental Impact Statement has to be drafted to describe a wide range of alternatives and what their impact on the environment would be.

An administrative draft of the Environmental Impact Statement is expected in November. A Dam Safety Modification Report, which basically contains all of the information on what the Army Corps has selected and the reasons why, should be complete by December 2011, said Petrovsky.

Petrovsky and her staff declined the Sun's repeated requests for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation used at the meeting. At press time, the request for these public information documents had not been answered