

# Congressmen call for more Central Valley water storage

**Central Valley Business Journal, 3-3-11**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Lake McClure in the Sierra foothills would be enlarged under a bill authored by five Central Valley congressmen.

Located just below Yosemite National Park in Mariposa County, Lake McClure is owned and operated by Merced Irrigation District.

Congressman Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced; Jeff Denham, R-Atwater; Jim Costa, D-Fresno; Devin Nunes, R-Tulare, and Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield are the co-sponsors of the bill.

The 14-line bill was introduced by Mr. Denham.

It says, “‘flood control operations’ shall include occasional short term increases in the level of Lake McClure not to exceed elevation 877 feet mean sea level for a period not to exceed 60 days between May 1 and July 31 of above-normal water years.”

To increase the capacity of Lake McClure, the existing spillway at the New Exchequer Dam would have to be modified. The legislation would allow temporary (2-8 weeks) storage of water in wet years instead of releasing the excess water immediately when it is not needed downstream.

According to Mr. Cardoza’s office, the Modesto Irrigation District estimates the project would cost \$40 million in capital costs, “which is less expensive in total cost and the cost per acre-foot of new storage than any on-going CALFED surface storage project.”

Mr. Denham says there would be no federal funds used for the project.

It would create approximately 70,000 acre feet of additional water available, which is enough to supply about 160,000 homes, the sponsors say. The project would also generate an additional 10,000 megawatt hours per year of hydroelectric power.

“Increasing our water storage capacity in the Central Valley is key to protecting our communities from flooding and preventing unnecessary water shortages that hurt our farmers and families,” says Mr. Cardoza. “Raising the spillway is a commonsense solution that will benefit our farmers and communities alike, and the Central Valley delegation will work together to pass this legislation.”