

People can't drink studies -- they need water

Todd Fitchette, Western Farm Press, 2-2-15

It's been said by people much smarter than me on agricultural issues that we can do a lot of things with reservoirs and dams in California, but without them we can do but one thing.

We can watch more human beings suffer.

With reservoirs and dams we can irrigate crops, manage flood flows, recreate and, most importantly, store water for delivery to human beings.

Ample surface water also gives us the ability to meet California's long-term goal of groundwater sustainability as outlined in a trio of state laws that went into effect Jan. 1.

San Francisco discovered the need for a sustainable source of water for a growing population after the 1906 earthquake and set out to create O'Shaughnessy Dam as a result. The dam was built on the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park – a controversial move to say the least.

The fun part about Congress' decision to dam up a river in a national park was the determination that public lands should be developed for the public benefit.

That wouldn't happen today.

O'Shaughnessy Dam – you might know it as Hetch Hetchy – holds back over 300,000 acre feet of water that is directly piped to San Francisco, bypassing the Delta region and any modern-day legal rights fish might have for that water.

Likewise, Metropolitan Water District discovered in the 1990s that it too needed additional surface water storage, setting the stage for several projects that would greatly increase the district's water-holding capacity.

Ironic in all this is the same arguments used by the rest of California to supply water for farmers gets laughed at as infantile and meaningless as the needs of fish are more important than the needs of those outside of California's two major urban centers.

Why is San Francisco allowed to bypass the Delta with its enclosed Hetch Hetchy system but new surface storage is verboten?

What is abhorrent and unacceptable for residents of Los Angeles and San Francisco apparently is not for residents of Terra Bella and Porterville, who continue today in the third-world conditions of manually carrying water into their homes because they have no running water.

This brings me back to the [Modesto Bee's editorial](#) I cited in my previous blog.

Noble as new studies can be they're irrelevant if we can't overturn provisions in the Endangered Species Act, Central Valley Project Improvement Act and the two biological opinions on salmon and Delta Smelt that say fish deserve water and humans do not.

We don't need any more studies; we know what must be done. It's time to repeal provisions in federal law that place environmental needs over those of human beings.

I'm told work continues in the House of Representatives, where twice last year stand-alone legislation was passed to correct this malfeasance of justice, but was derailed through inaction by the U.S. Senate.

It looks like we're headed for a long, dry season and the possibility that we will see major reservoirs in California completely dry up this summer.

If that happens fish will die and we will likely see salt water in places along the Sacramento, American and San Joaquin Rivers that we've never experienced.