

February 21, 2003

Contact: David A. Breninger
(530) 823-4850
Dave Carter
(530) 265-NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Auburn - Officials of the Placer County Water Agency on Thursday (Feb. 20) offered a status report on efforts by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to design and construct the agency's American River Pump Project.

On Thursday afternoon, PCWA Board Chairman Mike Lee, Division I Director Pauline Roccucci and General Manager David Breninger met with U.S. Rep. John T. Doolittle (R-Roseville) at his Roseville office to brief him on the project. They reported on the meeting later Thursday at the PCWA Board of Directors meeting.

"We're on a critical path right now," said Lee. "We need Reclamation to get going now so the project won't miss deadlines or have delays."

"We're counting every droplet of water we have," Roccucci added. "Reclamation needs to assure the agency the project will be operational by April, 2005."

As rapid growth has stretched existing water supplies, PCWA has worked for eight years with Reclamation in planning the pump station, which would supply up to 35,500 acre-feet of agency-owned water annually from the American River to customers in Placer County.

The total project is estimated at \$31 million, which includes the pump station and intakes at \$17.5 million, river restoration at \$12 million and a bridge at \$1.5 million.

Federal authorities approved environmental studies for the project last fall and were scheduled to seek construction bids at that time. But by this week Reclamation had still not advertised for bids.

Breninger said Reclamation officials have an overall budget shortfall to deal with, which apparently cascades down to specific projects such as the pump station.

"Our hands are tied. We've done all we can at the local level," Breninger said of the high priority project, which would restore a pump station the agency once had but was removed by Reclamation to make way for the Auburn Dam.

Breninger said the bidding process must begin in the next few weeks if Reclamation's contractor is to be selected and have time to complete the work by the April, 2005 deadline.

All three officials expressed confidence that Congressman Doolittle would exert appropriate influence at this early stage of the project so that it is achieved on time.

"I believe Mr. Doolittle will develop a strategy and move on it," said Lee. "He's going to make it a priority item, which the agency greatly appreciates."

In other business, PCWA directors:

- received a presentation from the PCWA Technical Services staff and Montgomery Watson Harza Consulting Engineers on water infrastructure planning. Based on county and city general plans, the agency is planning for major water system improvements through the year 2050 for the Zone 1 service area.

- heard reports on 2003 projects, goals and objectives from Power Systems Manager Steve Jones and Field Services Director Mike Nichol.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Mar. 6, in the Placer County Board of Supervisors chambers, 175 Fulweiler Avenue, in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.