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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AUBURN -- Representatives of the South Sutter Water District (SSWD) on Thursday (Aug. 5) provided a brief overview to the Placer County Water Agency Board of Directors on a study SSWD is conducting for a potential future dam and reservoir on the Bear River.

The Sutter County-based water district, headquartered in Trowbridge, CA, is the lead agency in a reconnaissance study to build a dam to impound water and to generate hydroelectric power on the Bear River at Garden Bar.

The proposed site for the dam and reservoir would be built across the Placer County-Nevada County line below Rollins and Combie reservoirs and just above Camp Far West Reservoir.

Lyndel Melton, a principal with RMC Water and Environment, based in Walnut Creek, offered a presentation on the current study. He was accompanied at the meeting by project manager Steve Brown and SSWD General Manager Brad Arnold. The group made a similar presentation at the July 28 meeting of the Nevada Irrigation District board in Grass Valley.

Melton said the location for a dam and reservoir was first identified as a potential site in the 1950s and has been the subject of numerous studies over the past half-century.

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“SSWD began the current study to explore ways to firm up its surface water supplies,” Melton said. Currently SSWD supplies up to 35 percent of its customers’ needs with surface water with the remainder coming from wells. SSWD delivers only irrigation water and serves 64,000-acres in Sutter and Placer counties. Rice accounts for more than 80 percent of the use of the water. Melton said the current study looks at potential facilities, hydrologic conditions, preliminary operations analyses, permitting questions and economic and environmental issues.

Melton said the study is being financed by SSWD with assistance from the City of Napa, Palmdale Water District, Castaic Lake Water Agency and San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. Melton said those agencies may have an interest in future water supplies.

If SSWD eventually decides to pursue the project, it would be at least 15 years away, he estimated. He said the reconnaissance study should be completed by year’s end and offered to return to update the PCWA Board at that time.

Members of the agency board and staff raised several questions regarding the proposed project, water rights and who is to ultimately benefit from the stored water and generated power. A detailed presentation will be made to the PCWA board on these and other aspects of the proposed project once the SSWD study is finalized.

In other business, PCWA directors:

- heard an overview of public-private financial partnerships for the construction of public facilities. Consultant Jim Bemis of Montague DeRose and Associates of Walnut Creek went over considerations, benefits, rates, responsibilities and risks of various public-private partnerships that could be used to construct, operate and maintain projects. Bemis said some public agencies have been successful and saved money through these endeavors but cautioned that they can also be fiscally challenging and litigious. He reviewed several different methods and case studies that have been used under public-private partnership agreements.

- Received an overview by agency water attorney Janet Goldsmith on a recent State Water Resources Control Board decision that concludes that significantly more Northern California water from the Sacramento River system is necessary for fishery needs in the Delta. The impact of this is under review by the agency as to its implications and possible limitations upon surface water supplies to Placer County. She also reviewed the current status on a State law mandating that California water users reduce their total daily consumption by 20 percent or more per person by the year 2020. The implementation of this is now under consideration by the State Department of Water Resources. The agency is actively pursuing options and alternatives that strive to reduce the impacts of the law upon agency water customers by taking into consideration the county's climate, population density and past water use efficiency achievements.

- Heard a status report from staff on various local water availability and infrastructure studies. Among these: water supply and fire suppression study for the north and west shore of Lake Tahoe, water rights issues in the Serene Lakes area, treated water infrastructure options for the Midway Heights-Applegate area and General Plan update assistance to the City of Colfax regarding future treated water availability and infrastructure needs. Staff was asked to report back on possible dates for a future Board workshop to review options for treated water infrastructure expansion in the agency's upper Western Water System as served by its Zone 3 water supply.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 19, at the PCWA Business Center, 144 Ferguson Road, in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.

Information on PCWA board meetings may be obtained through the Clerk to the Board at (530) 823-4850 or (800) 464-0030.