



News for Immediate Release
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For Safety, DWR Orders Cut
In San Clemente Dam Levels

For safety, the California Department of Water Resources today ordered California American Water to lower water levels at San Clemente Dam on the Carmel River in Monterey County.

Michael J. Spear, Interim Director of DWR, issued the order in a letter to CalAm President Paul Townsley. The order provides that the storage level at San Clemente Dam, located two miles upstream of Carmel Valley Village, be maintained 10-feet below the spillway crest year round, until further notice. This lowering reduces the amount of water stored behind the dam to approximately 75 acre-feet. CalAm is further ordered to submit a plan and schedule within 30 days to lower the reservoir an additional nine feet to nearly completely drain the reservoir and eliminate the dam safety risk. These steps must be taken by Nov. 1, 2004, according to DWR.

The dam, built in 1926, has safety deficiencies, documented in 1992 by a CalAm consulting firm, Woodward-Clyde Consultants. In June 1992, DWR concurred in that consultant's findings that the dam is deficient under the design earthquake and design flood loadings, and requested that CalAm proceed with remediation.

Under California's Water Code, DWR has legal responsibility to assure that San Clemente Dam's safety deficiencies are remediated to avoid loss of life and property.

A concern is that an earthquake could cause dam failure. While originally built to hold 2,000 acre-feet of water, due to silt buildup the reservoir holds only about 150 acre-feet of water. The silt load could be threatening to downstream life and property in case of dam failure.

In recent years, Spear noted, CalAm has worked closely with DWR and other resource agencies on alternatives to improve safety at San Clemente Dam. This includes a recent completion of a drawdown project that reduces but does not eliminate the risk of dam

failure.

"It has become apparent that the alternatives being investigated will not result in the remediation of San Clemente Dam in the near future," Spear informed CalAm in ordering the lower storage levels.

"Given the severity of the consequences of dam failure, it is important to take further steps to eliminate the risk."

Remediation of the dam's safety problems was not achieved sooner, in part because CalAm had hoped to build a new dam whose reservoir would inundate the old one.

A public hearing was held on September 15 in Monterey to discuss the future of the dam and the prospect of developing a watershed plan for the Carmel River. The river is habitat for two federally protected endangered species: steelhead trout and red-legged frogs.

Spear noted that CalAm still has "fishery and sediment issues that you need to resolve with other regulatory agencies, but these issues need to be resolved within the outlined schedule."

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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