



Legislation Introduced In Congress Allows Consideration for Increased Storage at Lake McClure

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MERCED, CA – Legislation to allow for expanded storage at Merced Irrigation District’s Lake McClure was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives this week with bipartisan support from four San Joaquin Valley lawmakers. HR 869 calls for up to 70,000 additional acre feet of temporary storage during wet years.

MID is currently involved in a long, complex process of relicensing its hydroelectric facilities with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Operated by MID as part of the FERC Project, Lake McClure has a storage capacity of about 1,024,600 acre feet and provides storage for irrigation water delivered to approximately 2,200 farmers and produces about 100 megawatts of electricity through a hydroelectric generator on the reservoir’s New Exchequer Dam.

As part of the relicensing effort, MID is considering a project that increases storage in Lake McClure up to 70,000 acre-feet by temporarily storing additional water from two to eight weeks in years of excess rain and snowpack. The increased water supply would also provide approximately 10,000 new megawatt hours per year of renewable energy at the hydroelectric plant. There would be no request for federal or state funds, nor would there be any significant environmental impacts.

The proposed project would require review by FERC to ensure that it meets all environmental, cultural and recreational standards required by law. Currently FERC is unable to consider the project under federal law. HR 869 would clarify the definition of flood control operations on the Merced River allowing for such consideration.

“We greatly appreciate the work of Congressmen Denham and Dennis Cardoza, as well as others who are sponsoring this legislation,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard. “MID will continue to support this effort by providing any technical expertise and assistance needed.”

“This is a good day for Merced County,” said MID Board President Wil Hunter. “This legislation offers outstanding benefits to our community and those served by MID. I applaud the efforts of all who have worked on it. Those of us on the Board of Directors stand ready to do all we can to see this legislation passed and see this increased storage capacity become a reality.”

The legislation was introduced by Rep. Jeff Denham and cosponsored by Reps. Dennis Cardoza, Jim Costa, Kevin McCarthy and Devin Nunes.

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