

## Michele King

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**From:** Barbara Ballenger <baballenger1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 10, 2024 3:24 PM  
**To:** Clerk of the Board  
**Subject:** I'm against building the Pacheco Dam

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Valley Water's proposal to construct a huge new dam and reservoir would result in huge environmental costs and questionable benefits. It could raise the price of those who will receive the water by almost \$150 even before the company starts paying off the loan.

The main benefit for Santa Clara County is a small amount of emergency water supply. Environmental benefits (outside of the County) were added to the project to obtain a Proposition 1 Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) grant. The \$500 million grant was supposed to cover half of the project when it was approved in 2017, but project cost estimates have ballooned to almost \$3 billion (\$5 billion with finance costs). Of course, environmental costs are not included, and they will be extensive. A draft environmental impact report (EIR) completed in 2021 identified 13 "significant and unavoidable" impacts. That EIR has been deemed insufficient, and a new draft EIR will be completed in mid-2025. Dams have been found inefficient at providing water, with 50% evaporation, and old dams are being removed due to their not being effective and their destruction of wildlife & ecosystems. The money would be better used on rainwater capture & treatment.

- The proposed additional flows and the restored habitat below the new dam will not guarantee development of an independent Steelhead population. The National Marine Fisheries Service has questioned how the objectives for water supply reliability/operational flexibility and for increasing habitat for steelhead via improved flow and water temperature conditions will be managed during drought periods. Operational parameters for the 35,000 acre-foot habitat storage reserve need to be presented to the Board.
- More information is needed to quantify the benefits of providing water to San Joaquin River wildlife refuges in below-normal water years (one of five water year types). The information provided to the Board should include how much would have been supplied between 2012 and 2022, to get a feeling for the magnitude.
- It is unlikely that water quality issues caused by poor-quality imported water will be eliminated in Pacheco Reservoir. These water quality issues are currently being addressed by blending with other water sources and adjusting water treatment - much less costly solutions. Due to costs for pumping and evaporation loss, Pacheco should only be used when the groundwater basins are full, so will often be at low levels and will be warm, conditions conducive to algae blooms and other water quality issues.

- The Board should request an independent review of this benefit analysis because many factors are not fully addressed. This may be true for future topics as well. We expect Valley Water will continue to selectively analyze and present information about the Pacheco Reservoir project to avoid discussion of the deeper issues.

In conclusion, the lack of financial backers in the dam belies the poor effectiveness of this project. The Pacheco Dam project should be dropped & money should instead be put into rainwater capture & water treatment in order to provide the most water at the lowest cost to customer water bills.

Thanks,  
Barbara A Ballenger  
California resident