

From: [Stacie Wolny](#)
To: [Pacheco Expansion](#)
Subject: Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project dEIR comments
Date: Sunday, February 13, 2022 8:04:30 AM

Hello!

As a resident of Santa Clara County, I completely oppose the expansion of the Pacheco Reservoir, and support the No Project Alternative listed in the dEIR.

"Valley Water began studying Pacheco Reservoir expansion in 1991..." (Chapter 2-4)

And since then, we have come to acknowledge how environmentally harmful they are, such that millions of dollars are now being spent to take dams down all across America. If we've got \$2.5 billion to spend on water, we should be investing in modern methods that are not/much less environmentally destructive, like groundwater recharge, which Stanford's Water in the West (<https://waterinthewest.stanford.edu/groundwater/recharge/>) finds to be much less expensive than reservoir expansion and much more environmentally friendly and useful. And recharge is even more important in this area, given that agricultural over-pumping has led to water table reduction (as noted in this dEIR 3.5-5), sea water intrusion and salinization of groundwater in the Pajaro valley, which impacts both farmers and ecosystems.

Alternately, with that money, on how many acres of farm land could we subsidize retirement, recharge or other improved practices? How much stream could we restore to more natural flows and functioning, instead of making it even more highly managed? Where could we build a water recycling station? How many square miles of lawns could we rip out? Any of these would be much wiser, more holistic uses of our money than outdated, myopic, destructive reservoir expansion. And some of these (like farmer subsidies for more sustainable practices and land management) would distribute that money to a variety of people and groups who need it far more than construction companies and a single reservoir operator. It would also help a larger part of the community to participate in restoring our shared water supply and greater ecosystem, encouraging a culture of stewardship that's desperately needed.

Regarding the Botanical/Wildlife issues raised in the dEIR, I'm very concerned about the impact to Sycamore woodlands, which is noted as being "significant", and "long term". This dEIR, along with other SFEI material such as the Annotated Bibliography for Sycamore Alluvial Woodland Habitat Mapping and Regeneration Studies Project notes that it is a "very rare and threatened land cover type". We can't keep thinking that mitigation will make up for a loss of an established, complex, rare ecosystem. We've already destroyed too much, and should be focusing on conservation and restoration. Any long-term impact to Sycamores is unacceptable.

Impacting 1,021 acres of blue and coast live oak woodland (3.5-70) is also completely unacceptable. Again, we've already destroyed so much of our Oak woodland, which may not be considered CDFW "sensitive", yet they are the foundation and key species of so many central California ecosystems, and icons of this state. SFEI's South Santa Clara Valley Historical Ecology Study (among many others) notes "Oak woodlands and savannas once dominated much of California's inland valley floors, including the south Santa Clara Valley, providing critical habitat for a diverse range of native plant and animal species. The acorn woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, oak titmouse, and Pacific pallid bat, along with over 330 vertebrates, can be found living in these habitats. Researchers have recognized that oaks play a central role determining ecosystem function in these inland valleys, providing essential food resources, nesting canopies, shaded understory plant communities, and other services... In just the period of 1945 to 1973, estimates indicate that rangeland "improvement" (clearing), agriculture and urban development in California have led to the loss of 1.2 million acres of oak woodlands and savannas of the original 10 to 12 million (Bolsinger 1988). Much greater losses occurred prior to 1945. The remaining areas are largely unprotected, making conservation key to the preservation of these communities..." Knowing all of this, how can you possibly propose yet another project that eats away at our precious Oak woodlands?

Along with Sycamores and Oaks, section 3.5 details the many special-status plants and animals, as well as CDFW "sensitive natural communities" that would be "significantly" impacted by this project. How can we possibly still think it's ok to further destroy sensitive ecosystem types for our single-species benefit? Especially the native wetland, riparian and grass communities, which we have decimated both locally and statewide, along with the

species that rely on them.

I also oppose this dam expansion on the basis of its impact to Tribal cultural resources. So much has already been taken from the First People of California, and we should be respecting their historical, cultural and spiritual resources, especially when human remains are involved. If this reservoir expansion does move forward (which I sincerely hope it does not), I urge Valley Water to consult closely with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and other most likely descendants regarding the fates of these sites, and respect their decisions. The entire project site - creeks, fish, frogs, Oaks, everything - was under their successful stewardship for thousands of years, until it was stolen and trashed. Instead of continuing to bury Native people, culture and knowledge under yet more extractive, destructive development, we should be partnering with them to learn how to manage and live on this land in a holistic way that allows all species and natural systems to thrive, not just humans.

Please get with the times and challenge yourselves to do things differently. If we keep doing the same things we've been doing for 200 years, we'll keep degrading this place that we love to live in. We've become so disconnected from our life support system that it might be hard to think like a landscape steward, it might be hard to get out of our reservoir rut, it might be hard to re-invent water management and the many practical, mainly societal, challenges that go along with it. But we must evolve, if we want to leave this place better than we found it for future generations.

Thank you.

~ Stacie Wolny, 