



Zayante Dam and Reservoir (Booth 16) (/initiative/4Wqt/zayante-dam-and-reservoir-booth-16)

Seventy years ago this project was recognized as a potential reservoir site, however for various reasons it was never constructed. A new reservoir could function as storage of flows from Zayante Creek and the San Lorenzo River and as a seasonal water source to supplement supplies in drought. While the City retains ownership of some relevant property there are several issues requiring additional evaluation including but not limited to regulatory and environmental feasibility. Based on a 1963 engineering estimate of \$3,272,000, if escalated to 2020 with inflation rates of 5%-7%, costs may be between \$52,800,000 and \$155,000,000.

Submitted by Water Department Staff

Comments

Michael Lewis 3w, 6d ago

CON

The environmental reasons for not building new dams years ago are still valid.

Robert Singleton 3w, 4d ago

CON

While I admire the amount of work and detail that went into this proposal, I do not think it can be implemented without significant environmental impact. In general an energy intensive project can be offset, but the creation of a dam or reservoir has a very large direct impact on the natural landscape. It is one of the main reasons why very few dams and reservoirs have been constructed in California in the past 50 years.

Allison Titus 3w, 6d ago

A seasonal water supply from a reservoir is not a sustainable solution during a long-term drought. Water supply from a reservoir relies on rains, and constructing a new reservoir during a drought may cause unnecessary environmental damage without a large return on water.

Jean Brocklebank 3w, 6d ago

CON

It was a bad idea before and it is still a bad idea.

Dave Hodgin 4w, 1d ago

PRO

Every solution carries with it problems to mitigate. A non-controversial fact is that Santa Cruz County, in general, has plenty of rainfall to satisfy any conceivable need, even in drought designated years. In many parts of the world they would be delighted to have the rainfall we experience in even our worst years. What we do not have is adequate storage to collect water and hold it until needed to maintain stream flows in the off season and supplement supplies in times of shortage. We have two choices. The easiest is banking water underground, in the aquifers beneath us but there are governmental barriers to overcome. The next is a series of holding ponds in our mountains. These ponds (reservoirs) will be costly to create. However then will provide water for many years at relatively little cost and no consumption of fossil fuels. They might even produce clean energy. Other choices, such as desal, might be less costly to create but will require a never ending major expense to operate. And something will need to be burned to create the tremendous amount of electrical power required. That could be an environmental disaster in someone's community. So, despite the political roadblocks, we need to seriously evaluate the dam choices!

Heather Lukacs 4w ago

QUESTION

At your presentation today at the water open house, you mentioned that environmental impacts were the biggest concern for this project decades ago (when first proposed). What has changed since then (if anything)? And, how does this alternative compare to other proposed storage/reservoir locations such as the quarries?

Bill Smallman 3w, 6d ago

NEUTRAL

I do not feel that reservoirs should be looked at as solutions, but rather as emergency water sources. Moreover, I don't like the Zayante site, maybe because that is my, and quite a few others, secret way to San Jose+ it is so close to Loch Lomond. I have been looking for a drawing of the Zayante Dam for awhile. There are houses/roads that will be affected. You need to superimpose the drawing with a recent parcel maps to determine costs which would add onto the total cost. I do believe there are some better sites, both on and off-stream. I also think reservoirs are not as bad as many people think. They add more water to the ground water basin which is critical for the fish habitat. Yes, they remove sections of Salmon/Coho habitat, but nearby unaffected streams in the watershed benefit. If they are truly used only in drought conditions, then they create wonderful recreational areas in wet years, like Loch Lomond, but I think they really have to be carefully placed and we should take full advantage of abandoned quarries, because these potentially can be transformed into aesthetically beautiful areas and also good for the environment as reservoirs.

Doug Engfer 1m ago

NEUTRAL

Bill Smallman 3w, 4d ago

NEUTRAL

I've listened to a lot of arguments about not building any additional dams to create reservoirs. There are some reservoirs that have been naturally created from landslides, like Earthquake Lake in Montana. If you agree that all man made dams are bad, then perhaps you should argue to tear down all the ones that have already been built and go start trapping beavers, because they like to build dams too!

Jean Brocklebank — 3w, 2d ago

California already has 1,400 dams on rivers, proving that dams do not provide water supply options for a growing human population and resultant demand. If they did, California - and Santa Cruz - would have no water supply problems. In response to Bill S., Quake Lake was formed by a 7.5 earthquake in 1959 that killed 28 people and caused millions of dollars of damage. Beavers do not do that. Their dams actually create habitat, slowly but surely, not catastrophically.

Fred Martinez — 2w, 6d ago

Should have been built at the time, Santa Cruz still owns the land. Ask Mike Rotkin what happened. Humped Back Slug.

James Lewis — 2w, 3d ago

PRO

Another reservoir to harvest our renewable rain water is a great idea. Much better than desalination, which is essentially converting oil into water. While on the subject of dams, why are reservoirs not dredged to extend their useful lifetime. Considering the alternatives, it seems like a good idea. As far as fear of earthquakes, California is full of both earthquakes and dams (many of which are over 100 years old). I do not believe there has been a single dam which failed catastrophically due to an earthquake here. Let's not waste precious public funds to make ourselves safe from the boogeyman. I further think the rights of local fish are not a sacred cow. They need to be on the table with the rights of the poor to have ample water to drink at an affordable price.

David Faulkner — 3d, 9h ago

CON

Increasing storage capacity is not the answer. There is far too much we can do with conservation and reuse before we even think about something as environmentally destructive as building a dam. I can't even believe this was thought up.

Bill Smallman 2w ago

PRO

I wish we did not have to build reservoirs, but do think we need more to support the current population. This is difficult for me, because I am an environmentalist. I don't like this site however, and think other sites should be looked at. I think they should only be used during dry periods, and the sites should be carefully chosen so that they would create open space recreational areas. Reservoirs do allow more water into the ground water basin and support habitat, just of a different type. Loch Lomond starts draining too fast right after one dry year, and then they close it to the public. The ground water basin in SLV is over 100 feet low. This has a devastating effect on the Steelhead/Coho. When this reservoir was first proposed, it was to support growth. Growth happened anyway, and we did not add any water infrastructure other than the Felton Diversion Dam. I think in the situation we are in right now, we should re-examine possible reservoirs that can do the same function Loch Lomond does, because clearly this one reservoir is not enough.

Jan Karwin 2w ago

This proposal is worthy of further research and evaluation by the panel of experts provided that it is now conceived as an off-stream storage facility.