

JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
6TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

DEPUTY WHIP

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET

HOUSE ADMINISTRATION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

October 1, 2001

Exhibit: X-36

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Dear Friend:

A few months ago, you expressed to me your opinions on the construction of the Auburn Dam. Today, I am asking for you to express those opinions once more.

Just recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) released its latest comprehensive report on potential solutions to Sacramento's flood control needs. In the report, the Corps made clear that there is no better way to protect Sacramento from flooding than the building of the Auburn Dam.

In fact, despite the naysayers in downtown Sacramento who claim that an Auburn Dam will never be built, the Corps states, "As a basic flood control measure, upstream detention is still feasible and considered the most efficient and generally the most effective means of controlling flooding on the American River."

However, despite the Corps' unwavering claims, the Mayor of Sacramento and members of the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency seem poised to support and send back to Congress for consideration an alternative plan by the Corps that would raise Folsom Dam instead of building the Auburn Dam.

It is important to note that raising Folsom Dam would provide only a fraction of the flood protection of an Auburn Dam and would not provide one additional drop of water to the region or any additional hydroelectric power to a state that so desperately needs to create more generation capacity.

Any way you cut it, raising Folsom Dam will not solve this region's water management needs.

As your representative, I will continue to fight for the Auburn Dam and make sure we don't waste millions of dollars on stopgap solutions to our region's needs. As your representative, I will make my opinions known to the Mayor of Sacramento and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

I ask that you make your voice heard as well.

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In the near future, the Mayor of Sacramento and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency will make their decision as to whether or not they will abandon plans to build an Auburn Dam and choose instead to raise Folsom Dam. As with all decisions of this nature, the views of you and your neighbors will be critical in their decision.

As such, I encourage you to contact Mayor Heather Fargo at (916) 264-5300 and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency at (916) 874-7606 and share your views on this crucial decision.

Again, thank you for your interest in this important debate.

Sincerely,


JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
U.S. Representative

Historic flood deal 'essentially done'

By David Whitney -- Bee Washington Bureau - (*Published November 6, 2003, Sacramento Bee*)

WASHINGTON -- A historic \$420 million deal on Sacramento flood control and Northern California water moved to within an inch of enactment Wednesday when a House-Senate conference committee added it to a must-pass 2004 spending bill.

"This is essentially done," said Rep. John Doolittle, R-Rocklin, who worked out the agreement earlier this year with Rep. Robert Matsui, D-Sacramento.

"You never want to say with certainty that something is done around here, but this is as close to that as it gets," Matsui said. "This bill has to become law, and these projects will be in it."

The fight over flood control had been a difficult and sometimes bloody battle in Congress for a dozen years.

The projects include raising Folsom Dam by 7 feet. That work, together with the installation of new gates on the dam and major levee-strengthening work already under way, will give Sacramento the last major element of American River flood protection sought by the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

The deal also authorizes a new bridge over the American River just below Folsom Dam. That will restore a major commuter route that was lost in February when the federal Bureau of Reclamation closed to public use a road on top of the dam because of national security concerns.

It also authorizes \$135 million for water projects in Doolittle's district upstream from Folsom Dam. Doolittle will have virtually exclusive control over which projects are funded because he is the only California member of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee through which funding will flow.

Finally, the bill approves enough money to complete levee-hardening work that will soon bring long-sought 100-year flood protection to Sacramento -- the magic number required by the federal government to lift the requirement on homeowners and businesses that they buy expensive flood insurance.

It will take more than a decade to complete all the work, but when it's done, Sacramento will have reached SAFCA's minimum goal of 200-year flood protection, meaning the area has a less than one-in-200 chance of a flood in any given year.

Doolittle and Matsui, both with increasingly powerful positions in their caucuses, reached a deal this spring, settling a long and sometimes bitter feud over the best approach for protecting Sacramento from periodic American River flooding.

Flood-control managers sought the raise of Folsom Dam as the final element of a strategy they think will be able to contain the worst likely storms to hit the American River watershed, based

on geologic studies reaching back more than 3,000 years.

When all the work is done, forecasts of a giant storm will prompt the opening of the Folsom Dam flood gates to quickly lower the reservoir, filling the river within the hardened levees to maximum capacity. By the time the storm hits, the theory is there would be ample room behind the dam to handle the incoming flood. The 7-foot rise in the dam's height would serve as an additional cushion to assure containment.

Doolittle has been skeptical about that strategy, and has held up authorizing the final work because he believed construction of a multipurpose dam at Auburn would ultimately be cheaper and safer, delivering 400-year flood protection while also providing water and power the area also badly needs.

Doolittle's problem was that an Auburn dam is politically dead in Congress. When the new congressional session opened in January, it appeared the Sacramento region was in for another season of gridlock on flood control until Doolittle surprised everyone by signaling he was willing to cut a deal.

"This is a win-win for the region," Doolittle said Wednesday. "Sacramento gets interim flood control, and we get interim water."

He called the deal "interim" because he said he would continue to work for the eventual construction of an Auburn dam.

Once the deal was cut, it sailed through the House as part of a huge package of harbor and flood-control projects. But the 412-8 House vote approving the package in September was as far as that bill was going to get this year because the Senate has shown no interest in taking up the measure now. Once that became clear, Matsui and Doolittle went to work quietly on their respective caucuses to have their deal lifted out and approved separately as a rider to the 2004 appropriations bill for energy and water projects.

For that unusual maneuver, Matsui and Doolittle had the state's two well-positioned senators, Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, working that side of the Capitol. Feinstein sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Boxer is a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee that has jurisdiction over flood-control issues.

Together the four lawmakers went to work on committee leaders in their respective chambers to secure the necessary releases so the Sacramento deal could be tacked onto the spending bill.

"Both Senator Boxer and I have been strong supporters of Mr. Matsui's position on this issue," Feinstein said. "He worked out this agreement, and there was no reason why we wouldn't support it."

Boxer said she was pleased to be able to help the effort.

"The people of Sacramento have waited too long for this critical flood protection," she said. The conference agreement on the spending bill now must be approved by both the House and the Senate, in votes that are typically perfunctory, before going to the White House for the president's signature.

Flood control victory nears

President Bush's signature is expected on the agreement.

By David Whitney -- Bee Washington Bureau

Published 2:15 a.m. PST Thursday, November 20, 2003, Sacramento Bee

WASHINGTON -- A groundbreaking flood-control deal for Sacramento was on its way to the White House on Wednesday for President Bush's expected signature after the House and Senate easily approved the 2004 spending bill to which it was attached.

The deal, reached earlier this year between Rep. John Doolittle, R-Rocklin, and Sacramento Democratic Rep. Robert Matsui, authorizes work that will lead to long-sought protection for Sacramento from American River flooding. It also allocates \$66 million for a bridge below Folsom Dam that will restore a major commuter artery lost when the Bureau of Reclamation closed the road across the top of the dam last winter because of national security concerns. Additionally, the measure authorizes \$135 million worth of water projects in Doolittle's congressional district.

"This is a great day," Doolittle said Wednesday. "I am very excited. This gives us a shot in the arm where we have needed it for a very long time."

Matsui said the deal would bring Sacramento 213-year flood protection, meaning that the chance of a flood will be calculated at one in 213 in any given year.

"The big fights are over," Matsui said. "This puts in place a specific plan we need to get 213-year protection to make the people of Sacramento safe."

The deal emerged after Doolittle, long a proponent of building a multipurpose dam at Auburn, agreed to not hold up the last elements of flood protection sought by the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.

In exchange for that pledge, Matsui helped Doolittle win support among Democrats for spending \$135 million on unspecified water-supply improvements throughout Doolittle's district.

When the pact ran into trouble in Congress, the two influential congressmen maneuvered it into a must-pass spending bill for water and power agencies when that measure was undergoing final revisions before a House-Senate conference committee.

The House approved the compromise spending bill Tuesday on a 387-36 vote, and the Senate approved it on voice vote Tuesday night.

Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson, who sits on the flood control agency's board, called the deal's rapid progress "a crucial step in achieving adequate flood protection for Sacramento."

The deal authorizes completion of levee improvements and a 7-foot addition to the height of Folsom Dam. These projects, combined with work under way to add more and larger gates to the

face of the dam, will make it possible to rapidly lower the reservoir behind the dam upon warning of an approaching giant storm.

Dickinson said enough work should be completed on the levees for Sacramento to reach the key 100-year flood-protection level by next fall. That should allow the city to appeal for certification from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to lift the requirement on businesses and homeowners that they buy expensive federal flood insurance.

Also included in the funding bill is nearly \$20 million for flood-control and other work already under way. This includes \$3.5 million for projects on Morrison, Unionhouse, Florin and Elder creeks, and \$300,000 to remedy riverbank erosion at Sand Cove Park.

About the Writer

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