

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

February 3, 1982

cc-6
MELONES DAM
LOWERING

Following additional discussion, Council, on motion of Pinkerton, Murphy second, directed the City Clerk to prepare a letter to Governor Brown from the Council regarding his recent position on the lowering of the Melones Dam.

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Presidential aid sought in Melones dispute

By GEORGE HOEPER
Of the Record Staff

Mother Lode officials Friday opened a new front in the local battle over who has jurisdiction in the filling of New Melones Reservoir.

In telegrams to selected federal legislators, the Tuolumne and Calaveras boards of supervisors requested presidential intervention to stay a federal court order that has temporarily slowed the filling of the reservoir.

At stake, say local officials, is a \$500,000 power allocation for Calaveras and Tuolumne counties. The revenues for local entities will not be available

until the project becomes commercially operable.

On Tuesday, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco granted a state-requested temporary injunction to halt the filling of New Melones.

The order is aimed at reducing the water level to an elevation of 944 feet until settlement of the current state-federal dispute over jurisdiction.

The water elevation Friday stood at 938 feet.

A federal judge last year February told the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation could fill the reservoir over the objections of the State Water Resources Control Board and whitewater rafters. If that ruling the state is now appealing

before the U.S. court in San Francisco.

The temporary injunction is to remain until the decision.

The 9th Circuit Court has granted a motion for a quick ruling on the state's request, but there is no indication of when that ruling will be made.

The telegram, as sent Friday by both counties, reads: "Please use your influence to request a presidential executive order to stay the release of water at New Melones for 60 days pending an appeal."

The messages were sent to Congressman Sherman Shumway, R-Stockton; Guy Coombs, D-Merced; Gene Chapple, R-Calico; Charles Pashayan, R-Fresno

and to California Senator S.I. Hayakawa.

Friday afternoon, Calaveras Board of Supervisors Chairman John Lodato said that in order for the counties to realize their power allocations the water level must rise to approximately 960 feet.

"Our people are hurting from energy costs right now," said Lodato. "If the reservoir is held at the 944-foot level, it will destroy our power allocation."

Steve Fette, manager of the Calaveras County Water District, Friday estimated the value of the power allotment to each county would be in excess of \$250,000. The electricity would be used by government agencies.

Members of the local water users' release committee at the dam. The water level is now being raised at New Melones.

Bureau of Reclamation Engineer Buzz Link said water is being released at a rate of 1,700 cubic feet per second.

"I don't see how we can get around water leaving Friday from the dam, but if the reservoir rises and the water level continues to increase, it will be a disaster."

At that rate, said Link, the reservoir would continue rising from its current level, 14 feet above the court ordered limit, at about three inches a day.