

Tri-Valley Herald

Legislation in pipeline for water

Dredging in the Bay would keep cargo moving inland as far as Stockton

By Matt Carter
STAFF WRITER

Tuesday, July 06, 2004 - Legislation making its way through Congress would provide money to recycle sewage waste water to irrigate golf courses and parks in the San Ramon Valley.

The Energy and Water Appropriation Act -- passed June 25 by the House of Representatives -- would also pay for additional study of a proposed expansion of Los Vaqueros Reservoir in Contra Costa County, and provide millions for dredging Suisun Bay and Pinole Shoal. The dredging will keep oil and cargo moving through San Francisco Bay as far inland as Stockton, Bay Area legislators said.

The bill would provide no money for Cal-Fed, a program aimed at improving the environmental health of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The program hasn't received federal funding in four years, said Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo.

"I am glad to get funding for several important projects in this bill, but I am very troubled that Cal-Fed fell victim to partisan politics," Tauscher said in a written statement.

Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, said the programs slated to receive money if the act emerges intact from the Senate "will ultimately enhance commerce, create jobs and improve water quality."

Included in the act are \$4.6 million to maintain the depth of the Suisun Bay and New York Slough channels at 35 feet. Pombo said the dredging is needed to allow ships to continue transporting crude oil and bulk cargo up the Delta through San Francisco Bay.

The act would also provide \$1 million for dredging Pinole Shoal, a route for tankers that supply oil to five refineries in the East Bay.

Locally, the act would provide \$750,000 for the San Ramon Valley Recycled Water Program. A partnership between the Dublin-San Ramon Services District and the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, the project will provide water for landscaping at schools and offices, golf courses and parks in Blackhawk, Danville, Dublin and San Ramon.

Now under construction, beginning next year the project will recycle up to 5.7 million gallons of sewage waste water a day using filters, ultraviolet light, and chemical disinfectants.

Another project that could get federal money is a study that's already under way to explore the feasibility of expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir.

Expanding the 100,000 acre-foot reservoir by up to five times is one of several water storage projects identified by the Cal-Fed program as a way to protect the Delta from growing demand for water.

Although critics say additional water storage could be used to increase exports of water to southern California, voters in the Contra Costa Water District's service area in March approved an advisory measure permitting further studies of the Los Vaqueros expansion.

The Energy and Water Appropriation Act would provide \$500,000 for the studies.