

## Lake County, Yolo Flood craft agreement to work together for watershed

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson  
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LAKE COUNTY &ndash; An agreement pledging cooperation between Lake County and Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District for future Cache Creek watershed projects has been reached, and will be presented to the Board of Supervisors next month. {sidebar id=104}

Supervisors Ed Robey and Anthony Farrington, along with two members of the board of directors of Yolo Flood, Erik Vink and Bruce Rominger, have been taking part in &ldquo;two by two&rdquo; meetings for about four years in order to build rapport and reach the agreement.

Meeting in Brooks at Cache Creek Casino, the group has finally crafted a five-page memorandum of understanding (MOU) that all of them approved, which Robey and Farrington will bring to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Dec. 9. Tim O'Halloran, Yolo Flood's general manager, will attend that meeting.

&ldquo;I'm hoping that the board will agree to participate in this and authorize the chair to sign,&rdquo; said Robey.

Robey, who is board chair, promises to sign the document on the spot and hand it over to O'Halloran to take to Yolo Flood's board meeting later that same day. Or, he added, he and Farrington might jump in the car and take it to Woodland themselves.

The document essentially says that it's in the two groups' interest to work together on an ongoing basis, said Robey. &ldquo;It's formalizing what we've been doing in a way already.&rdquo;

He said the county and Yolo Flood recognize the benefit of having a process that represents both of their interests.

Thanks to old legal decrees, Yolo Flood owns the water rights to Clear Lake. However, those water rights, long a concern for Lake County, are not an issue in this document, said Robey.

&ldquo;It doesn't do anything to change the water rights at this stage of the game,&rdquo; said Robey. &ldquo;This is just a first step.&rdquo;

Farrington said he's optimistic the MOU will be approved by both Yolo Flood and the Board of Supervisors. &ldquo;It's really a historic foundational document.&rdquo;

The Board of Supervisors approved a document very similar to this one in concept last year, said Farrington.

At that time, he and Robey took to the board two documents, one an MOU and another an amendment to the contract between Yolo Flood and Lake County Sanitation District. That contract calls for taking 7,950 acre feet of surface water from Clear Lake and using it to complement the volume of wastewater being piped to The Geysers.

Farrington said the result of taking those documents to the board was a communication breakdown with Yolo Flood.

O'Halloran said Yolo Flood was taken by surprise when the documents were presented, because they felt it was unilateral.

The talks took about a two-month hiatus, said O'Halloran, before they got back on track. &ldquo;We always enjoyed the dialog with each other, we always considered it productive.&rdquo;

O'Halloran said they're putting the misunderstanding behind them and focusing on the future. &ldquo;In California water, we've all got to be working together.&rdquo;

He agrees with Farrington that the new document hasn't changed dramatically from the one presented last year.

&ldquo;Now we have a document that I think marks a new era of cooperation between our two entities in order for us to move forward and collaborate,&rdquo; said Farrington.

O'Halloran said the MOU formalizes the relationship between Yolo Flood and the Lake County Watershed Protection District, and outlines shared goals with a view to eventually creating lists of projects.

One of the projects they've already identified is the Middle Creek Restoration and Flood Control Project, which is meant to reclaim some lands on the Northshore and put them back underwater with the removal of levees.

The county and Yolo Flood would work together to rally for Middle Creek and seek out grant funding, said O'Halloran.

The project will make the lake larger and affect the Solano Decree, which specifies how much water is available to Yolo Flood and its customers, he explained.

The decree allows Yolo Flood to take its full annual allocation from the lake of 150,000 acre feet if the lake is at 7.56 on the Rumsey gauge on May 1. With a larger lake, the entitlement will fall at a different number that's lower than the current one.

&ldquo;We think it's a good project,&rdquo; said O'Halloran, adding that Yolo Flood and the county want to work together to adjust the Solano Decree in order to preserve Yolo Flood's entitlement and still benefit the project.

Incidentally, Yolo Flood hasn't been able to draw its full allocations this year or last due to dry water conditions.

O'Halloran said the last time Yolo Flood didn't receive its full allocation was the mid-1990s.

O'Halloran said a tentative project list also includes invasive species programs. Yolo Flood will contribute to hydrilla eradication and work with Lake County to prevent the quagga mussel from invading Clear Lake, a development which could have serious implications for not just the environment but also for Yolo Flood's and Lake County's water systems.

Lake County and Yolo Flood have an existing MOU for the maintenance of the Grigsby Riffle, a geological hardpan formation that needs to be kept at a certain elevation for water flow and flood control purposes, said O'Halloran.

He said they want to revisit that MOU in order to conduct regular surveys of the formation and prevent gravel buildup.

Groundwater recharge, total maximum daily loads for nutrient levels and other topics will be considered in an effort to protect the watershed, said O'Halloran. Just as Yolo Flood would give moral support and rally to help Lake County projects, Lake County would offer Yolo Flood its support.

Yolo Flood has been collaborating for four years on the development of an integrated regional water management plan

&ndash; which looks at a region's water resources and how they're linked &ndash; as part of the Water Resources Association of Yolo County.

&ldquo;We call it a living document,&rdquo; said O'Halloran, explaining that the plan, which is subject to regular modifications, has categories including water supply, flood management, water quality, recreation and aquatic habitat, and a list of more than 200 projects.

Lake County is now looking at creating its own plan, and O'Halloran said Yolo Flood can share its experience with Lake County in order to make its process more efficient.

Farrington said the two by two meetings will continue in the future, with the next meeting scheduled for January.

Robey, whose term on the board ends next month, said he hopes to stay involved in the county's water issues as a private citizen.

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