

Matilija Dam Water Problems Discussed

Visitors before Ventura county flood control district supervisors yesterday afternoon let it be known they believe plenty of confusion exists in the district's efforts to line up Matilija dam water users.

And the supervisors answered that they are trying to work out all the problems and clear up any confusing points but that problems can not be solved overnight.

Lynn Rains and Ray Bower, directors of the Rancho Ojai Mutual Water company, and P. J. Johnson of Ventura, who reportedly is planning a subdivision development in the Ojai valley, were the ones who charged everything was confusion.

Rains started by telling supervisors, who had spent most of the afternoon in executive session that he and Bower, after waiting around all day, had found their problems had been discussed in a private session by the board. This, supervisors denied, saying they did not know what problems the mutual water company has.

Rains said county representatives had urged them to give an immediate answer on how much dam water the mutual water company wants to buy and had urged that a water-buying district be formed. He said his company and its stockholders could not give an answer and could not figure out what to do about forming a water district unless certain problems are settled. He said the company mainly wants to settle the question of its riparian water rights.

The mutual company owns water rights on 231 miner inches, Rain said. He wanted to know if some arrangements could be worked out to exchange the water rights, if the mutual company could trade the district its water for a continuous flow of water from dam, if there could be some negotiations on the subject.

The water company wants to do what is best for its stockholders and if going into a water district seems the best solution, the company would want the district formed, Bower said. He and Rains both declared, however, that company directors can take no action until they find out where they are going.

Supervisors seemed dubious about a water rights exchange, but they referred the matter on to Harold Conkling, hydrologist, for answer. They also informed Rains and Bower that they are sending Neil Stiver, zone one manager and Don Roff, deputy district attorney to San Bernardino and other counties to inspect operations of water works under flood control acts.

if the runoff during the rainy season could be obtained. He wanted the board to take options for water use, and he protested storing of water to be sold in only one reservoir.

Stiver tried to clear up the confusion. He told the board he had appeared before the Rancho Ojai Mutual Water company to discuss how a water district could be formed because one of the members had asked him to do so. He said he didn't say the company members had to form the district but had asked only how much dam water the company wanted.

The zone one manager also tried to explain why Johnson thought only one water district is being formed and only one reservoir is to be used. Stiver explained that a meeting to discuss Matilija water had been held and that at that meeting groups of people not in any water district or company decided to get together to try and form a district that would include their properties so that they could buy dam water as a group.

This group, residents between Sunset tract and Henderson airport, now is circulating petitions as the first step toward formation of a district. It does not preclude other districts being formed or other groups being eligible for dam water, he said. No such representation ever was made, Stiver declared. He said Johnson might have got the idea there was to be one storage reservoir for dam water because one of the men interested in the formation of the water district had offered to give a reservoir site if one was wanted.

The county has nothing to do with the formation of the proposed water district, Stiver declared. He and Roff merely have given information on how such a district can be formed, Stiver asserted.

Stiver said he has just been trying to find out who wants dam water and approximately how much they want.

After this inspection tour, more answers probably will be available, supervisors said. They also pointed out that Stiver had been asked to get a general idea of what groups wanted dam water, how much and for what purpose. That the preliminary survey and the inspection trips could help supervisors set a policy about use and sale of dam water. Nothing definite however, has been decided yet, they said. They

is in charge.
Knights are planning
dinner-dance at the
Saturday evening

s of the L. A.
quad were guests of
their meeting this
pictures of football
the Don

Warren Defends Handling of Matilija Dam

August 25, 1948

Donald R. Warren, former engineer for the county flood control district on the Zone 1 dams, sought to justify his handling of the project in a talk made last night before a dinner meeting of Ventura county men at Pierpont inn.

About 20 representative citizens were Warren's guests at the dinner. They included Supervisors-elect R. E. Barrett and Ed Pierce, Grand Jury Foreman Henry Borchard, and County Clerk Ted Halowell. Others were men active in business and civic activities. Warren's associates, John Hallock and Donald F. Warren, also were present.

PRESENTED DATA

Warren presented a great deal of documentary, photographic, and engineering data. He showed plans of some 16 dams of varying types which he said he had designed or in whose construction he had previously been engaged. He told of engineering and geological specialists whom he had consulted on the Matilija project and read excerpts from their reports.

He traced the construction steps and the obstacles encountered and declared that, had he the work to do over, he felt he would follow the same course as was pursued. He defended his choice of an arch type dam as the most economical for the site. The site itself he pronounced one of the best ever utilized in southern California. Foundation and percolation difficulties, he said, were not unusual nor alarming. The costs involved, he admitted, ran disappointingly away from the estimates.

SAYS DAM IS SAFE

Warren assured the gathering that the dam is sound and safe, and declared he would stake his professional reputation on its security. He demanded that the county request state permission to store water to capacity, and predicted that if this is done the state authorities, who have the responsibility for dams' safety, would grant such permission.

In closing, Warren said that he felt a lawsuit brought by the county, demanding heavy damages for asserted negligence, and declining to pay additional claims of his amounting to \$179,000, might be settled out of court.

Warren Files Denial to Charges

August 25, 1948

Further denials of charges of the Ventura county flood control district in its Matilija dam suit have been made by the Donald R. Warren company through a demurrer filed in superior court.

The demurrer of the Warren company, once engineers on troublesome Matilija dam, again goes into the matter of damsite foundation, foundation explorations and other matters. It denies that the dam was built on marginal foundation or that the company was required to make foundation explorations, as contended by the district in its action to obtain damages from the Warren company.

The district's suit to obtain damages and the Warren company's counter request for funds is due to go before superior court either the latter part of October or the first part of November.

August 30, 1948

SHOULD WARREN SUIT BE TRIED?

A movement to settle out of court the big damage action brought by the flood control board against the Donald R. Warren Co., engineering firm on the Zone 1 dam project, broke into the open last week. Should the case be compromised? Here are a few pros and cons:

Lawsuits are expensive. This one will cost the zone a tidy sum in attorney fees, etc. Ditto for the Warren Co.

The trial will be long-drawn out. The engineering firm naturally abhors the prospect of devoting four or five months' time of its executives to attendance in a Ventura court. The suit likewise will absorb a good deal of attention of county officials, and might operate to some extent to delay the progress of the zone water development.

On the other hand, how would any settlement, especially one involving the payment of additional money to the engineers (They are asking \$179,000 more) be received by the people of the county? Bear in mind that the present board is a "lame duck" board. Its two members directly representing the zone districts have both been decisively beaten for reelection on the direct issue of bungling the dam project. Would a settlement which they helped reach satisfy the people?

The bungling of the water development program, whoever did the bungling, has set in motion a deep-cutting controversy and a bitter countywide reaction. Might not the public welfare be better served, whatever the costs, by a court determination of the issues? Might such an action with all pertinent facts presented clear the air, answer many of the taxpayers' questions, establish a new starting point for the project? Might not a settlement in private simply perpetuate an unhealthy public situation? Several leading Zone 1 taxpayers and citizens with whom we have discussed the subject answer all of these questions in the affirmative.

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