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Rich Pedroncelli/Associated Press

In this Feb. 28 photo, a small flow of water goes down Oroville Dam's crippled spillway near Oroville, Calif. California is asking the federal government to pay for 75 percent of the cost of repairing the badly damaged spillways at the nation's tallest dam, a state water agency spokeswoman said Monday. The repairs will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, she said.

State asks federal taxpayers to fund Oroville Dam repairs

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California is asking the federal government to pay 75 percent of the cost of repairing the badly damaged spillways at the nation's tallest dam, a state water agency spokeswoman said Monday.

The total bill could be hundreds of millions of dollars, she said.

The question of whether taxpayers or the water contractors that get water via the Oroville Dam would foot the biggest share of the bill has been one of many contentious ones in the aftermath of this winter's damage at the dam, which is an anchor of the state's water supply system.

Heavy flows of water in and out of the half-century-old structure in February gouged massive holes in both of the dam's water-release spillways, forcing the evacuation of 188,000 people downstream for two days. The state Department of Water Resources is rushing to strengthen the damaged main spillway before the next rainy season.

The state has begun applying to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to ask for federal funds to cover 75

percent of all construction work there, water department spokeswoman Erin Mellon said.

President Donald Trump agreed to designate the dam crisis a federal disaster earlier this year, making it eligible for federal financial assistance.

As far as state officials are concerned, the "construction work is all considered emergency work because of the public safety concerns," Mellon said.

State water contractors who get water via the dam's Lake Oroville, the state's second-largest reservoir, would pay for whatever remaining costs that "FEMA and other sources like FEMA" don't, Mellon said.

FEMA has not yet told California whether it agrees that all of the repairs planned at the Oroville Dam site are an emergency that qualifies for the federal disaster funding.

Last week, the Department of Water Resources obtained a \$500 million letter of credit to finance the repairs ahead of any reimbursement.

Repair costs so far come to about that same amount, including a \$275 million contract awarded last month.

Trump announced \$274 million in funding for the dam repairs last month.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Hot saw operator Loren German talks to fifth-graders from Cottonwood Creek Charter School in Cottonwood, Calif., during a logging education day May 3 near Viola, Calif. The Sierra Cascade Logging Conference hosted the field trip.

Logging education day touts technology, vocational training

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

VIOLA, Calif. — High school junior Jose Soto was amazed to see how advanced technology has revolutionized the logging industry.

His father and uncle were loggers, and they "used to do it the old-fashioned way with chainsaws," the student from Corning, Calif., said as he watched a tree delimeter and a track skidder work together during a field trip to a logging site.

"It's interesting to see how far it's gone since the early days," Soto said.

His friend, junior Jose Cruz, noted that timber harvesters are paid well.

"It's a good job," he said. "It pays good and it's out in the woods.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

High school students from Corning, Calif., watch a worker from Creekside Lumber Co. uses a delimeter to take bark and small limbs off a log. Some 600 elementary through high school students were given a tour of an active logging site.

The intersection of science, technology and vocational training was a key fo-

cus of the annual education day in the woods May 2-3, hosted by the Sierra Cas-

cade Logging Conference.

Some 600 Northern California elementary through high school students were given a tour of an active logging site near Viola, about 40 miles east of Redding, to engage them about the industry.

The students stopped at about 15 stations as presenters taught them about such topics as water quality control, fire prevention and forest replanting.

In recent years, presenters have stressed the industry's technological advancements as a way to attract tech-savvy youngsters seeking careers in computers. Loggers talked about how vocational education in the industry can lead to rewarding careers.

Timber jobs are a way Northern California youngsters can stay in the region and do something they'll enjoy, said Chris Pope, an instructor for the heavy equipment program at Shasta College in Redding.

Salaries can start at about \$17 an hour and work up to as much as \$50 an hour plus benefits, he said.

"Operators have become a lot more skilled at what they do," Pope said. "It's not just pulling levers with hairy knuckles anymore."

Patty Franks was among a team of Shasta College students showcasing a front-line fire bulldozer. She said she was drawn to consider a career in heavy equipment operation by the money that can be made.

"Everything's hands-on," she said of the college's vocational program. "It's great."

Like many of his classmates, Soto found the idea of working in logging appealing.

"It's really interesting, and you get really captivated by all they're doing," he said.



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Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Students Patty Franks, above, and Heather Boswell, who are in the heavy equipment program at Shasta College in Redding, Calif., showcase a front-line fire dozer at a logging education day May 3 near Viola, Calif. The students say advances in computer technology in equipment helped draw them to the program.

