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# California

## Congressman questions plans to lower Lake Oroville for project

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

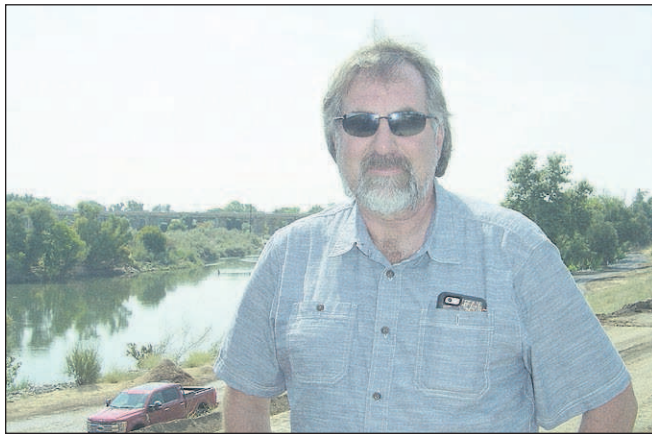
OROVILLE, Calif. — A California congressman is questioning the degree to which state officials want to draw down Lake Oroville this winter, but the officials say it's necessary to accommodate continued work on the dam.

Rep. Doug LaMalfa, R-Calif., whose district includes the Oroville area, argues it would be unnecessary for officials to drain the lake to as low as 640 feet of elevation by Dec. 31, as one Department of Water Resources scenario outlines.

Draining the lake that low would only leave 850,000 acre-feet in the lake with only about 100 days left in the winter to fill it, he contends. The spillway gates aren't touched by water until it reaches 813 feet, which is 2.35 million acre-feet of water, he said.

"Construction won't be affected by lake water if it's a dry winter, and if it's wet, they won't be doing much anyway," said LaMalfa, a rice farmer from nearby Richvale, Calif.

DWR spokeswoman Erin Mellon said the plan to lower the lake's surface is based on federal "guidance" and weighs



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

U.S. Rep. Doug LaMalfa, R-Calif., stands on a levee next to the Feather River in Yuba City, Calif., downstream from Lake Oroville. LaMalfa questions the state's plan to draw down Lake Oroville this fall and winter to accommodate work on the dam.

the need for adequate storage space if a big storm comes early with other uses of the lake.

"If weather hits there is enough space" for rain and runoff without interfering with construction, Mellon said.

State water officials want to bring the lake's surface down to 700 feet elevation to enable crews to work past Nov. 1, which was their self-imposed deadline for getting the dam's spillways ready for next winter's rain and runoff. Officials insist the project hasn't fallen behind schedule.

With guidance from the

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the agency has established a projection schedule to draw down the reservoir's elevation to enable late-season work and to provide some wiggle room if it starts raining.

The schedule calls for the lake to be taken down to 670 feet on Nov. 1 if inflows are low and 700 feet if they are high. By the end of December, the plan calls for a surface elevation of 640 feet to 680 feet.

Among the anticipated winter projects is construction of an underground cutoff wall

for the emergency spillway, which has a targeted completion date of late December or early January.

While it's "highly unlikely" the emergency spillway will be needed by November, lowering the surface "will allow us to keep a safe level" of the lake, said Jeanne Kuttel, a DWR chief engineer.

LaMalfa said that the lake's lowest elevation last year was 725 feet, in December. If it's dropped to 640 feet this winter, that would be 600,000 fewer acre-feet stored in the lake, he said.

Asked if it's possible the DWR could stop at 700 feet rather than draining the lake further, Mellon said it "all depends on downstream requirements. We are going to meet all our requirements this year."

Their remarks came during an Aug. 9 update on the \$275.4 million effort to repair and rebuild the nation's tallest dam, whose spillways nearly failed in February.

Lake Oroville is the main reservoir for the State Water Project, which irrigates more than 600,000 acres of Central Valley farmland and serves 20 million urban customers in the San Francisco Bay area and Southern California.

## New trial ordered in city's water contamination lawsuit

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

A new trial has been ordered in a lawsuit that seeks to hold a fertilizer company financially liable for contaminating a California city's groundwater.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled the case should be retried because a federal judge's decision to exclude certain expert testimony was prejudicial to the plaintiff, the City of Pomona.

Pomona's problems came to light in 2007, after California established "maximum contaminant levels" in water for the chemical perchlorate, which disrupts hormone production.

Perchlorate levels were found to be excessive in 14 of the city's groundwater wells, which Pomona blamed on applications of sodium nitrate fertilizer imported from Chile by the SQM North America Corp. from the 1920s until the 1960s.

The city filed a complaint in 2010 seeking \$32 million from SQM to compensate for investigative and remediation costs. Last year, SQM reported a profit of \$278 million on total revenues of \$1.9 billion.

The lawsuit claimed that chemical signatures from

perchlorate in Pomona's wells matched the perchlorate found in Chile's Atacama Desert, where SQM's fertilizer was mined.

This conclusion was based on studies by Neil Sturchio, who heads the University of Delaware's geological sciences department.

Before the case originally came up for trial in 2012, though, U.S. District Judge Gary Klausner excluded Sturchio's testimony for being based on limited data and not being substantiated by other laboratories.

The 9th Circuit reversed that decision in 2014, ordering Sturchio's testimony to be included in the trial.

However, when the lawsuit ultimately ended up before a jury, the judge did not permit Sturchio to update his testimony with information gathered since the case was originally filed.

After the jury ruled against Pomona in 2015, the city challenged the judge's decision before the 9th Circuit.

The appeals court has now again overturned Klausner's decision to exclude Sturchio's testimony, deeming it "illogical" because the new findings refuted SQM's attacks on the scientist's conclusions.

## Speakers lined up for Glenn County's second growers' conference

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

ORLAND, Calif. — A local fair is lining up speakers and taking registration for a revamped November conference that will feature remarks by state Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross.

North State Innovations in Agriculture 2017 will be

Nov. 7-8 at the Glenn County Fairgrounds and include talks on cutting-edge technologies, product demonstrations and a trade show.

The conference has taken on a new format after last fall's inaugural Precision Ag Expo and Farm Business Forum offered two tracks of speakers and presentations

over two days.

This year's event will have a single schedule and cover a wider array of innovations "from the seed until it reaches the consumer," fairgrounds manager Ryann Newman said.

"This is kind of a make-or-break year for us, so we're trying really hard" to generate

interest, she said. "We've got 4,000 mailers going out."

Newman started the conference last year to engage growers in the mid-Sacramento Valley region, some of whom told her they'd like to learn more about all the new ag-related technology in California.

Capping off the day-and-a-

half event will be comments by Ross, who will discuss innovation in ag, Newman said.

Other speakers will include David Shabazian, program manager for the Sacramento-based Rural-Urban Connections Strategy; Pam Marrone, chief executive officer of the Davis-based Marone Bio Innovations; and Bill

Reiman, West Coast representative for Gladstone Farms in Camarillo, Calif.

The agenda also includes panel discussions involving technology experts and Northern California producers.

Registration is \$74.99 for the full conference or \$49.99 for a single day. Visit [www.glenncountyfair.org](http://www.glenncountyfair.org).




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## Quincy FFA Learns By Doing And Serving

By Bethany Safe  
*Quincy FFA Chapter Reporter*


"Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve." Since 1928, this phrase has been the motto for all FFA chapters throughout the country.

The Quincy, Wash., FFA chapter is no exception! Founded in 1954, the Quincy chapter from District 9 has had an active role in the local community. From putting on baby animal fairs, to participating in CDEs (Career Development Events), and cleaning up portions of the highway, the Quincy FFA chapter lives to fulfill this motto.

In the classroom, FFA members are taught skills such as welding, taking apart and rebuilding small engines and learning about food safety and quality. These skills can later be used in CDEs such as Ag Mechanics and Food Science. This information is good to know and could even help in future jobs.

In the Quincy FFA chapter, many of the members show animals at local events such as the Adams and Grant County Fair. By learning how to take care of and work with animals, students' work ethics begin to grow and skills like patience, leadership and teamwork are practiced and learned. These essential skills are needed in any and every aspect of life.

During the fall, the Quincy FFA chapter cleans up the highway, which includes taking trash and



*The Quincy, Wash., FFA sponsors community fairs, such as the Baby Animal Fair, at which children can view farm animals upclose. The fairs are among the many community-related activities the organization sponsors.*

litter off the sides of the road and disposing of it properly. This service project helps establish a sense of respect and responsibility for the members' community along with making the roads look nice and removing sometimes harmful debris from the highway.

The Quincy FFA chapter is very involved in its community. On the second Saturday of September, the city of Quincy puts on an event known as Farmer Consumer Awareness Day, or FCAD. During FCAD, Quincy FFA puts on a Baby Animal Fair, where little kids can come and look at agriculture-related animals, such as pigs, cows, horses, and rabbits. During the spring, another fair is put on by the club. The kids come to look at animals, tractors and the even get to plant flowers to take home.

The Quincy chapter is a firm believer in the FFA motto and shows that they can: Do, by participating in CDEs, Learn, by retaining information learned in school and using it in possible careers, Live, by helping others and the environment, and Serve, by being involved in their community.



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