



## Akin questions Bass Lake, Clear Creek water use

By Michael Raffety | Editor | February 24, 2009 15:27

Richard Akin, after whom the El Dorado Powerhouse is named, came back to the El Dorado Irrigation District Monday to question the use of treated water to fill Bass Lake and to keep water flowing in Clear Creek year-round.

Akin, who was instrumental in getting EID to buy the powerhouse, alpine reservoirs and canal system from PG&E when he was on the board from 1994-2003, scolded the current board for wasting water by filling up Bass Lake.



Bass Lake Reservoir has a maximum capacity of 745 acre-feet and covers 97 acres.

Akin is concerned that it loses a lot to evaporation in the summer because it has an average depth of only 7 feet. The reservoir is 140 years old and was originally built for the Prairie City Water Co. as the terminus for the Crawford Ditch, according to Akin, whose great-grandfather on his mother's side, a Veerkamp, had lost money investing in the company.

"We've missed your history," said EID Director John Fraser.

"This is a tragic history," Akin responded. "I can't imagine to waste water in a (low water) year like this."

Akin said he happened to drive by Bass Lake in November and saw to his "great disappointment and shock" that there was "a head of water in that ditch from the bell house. I couldn't understand why that was occurring."

"The time has long since passed (in November) to supplement recycled water," Akin noted.

A letter in response to a query from Akin said, "...members of our maintenance staff were working on the system in early November conducting annual maintenance on the flow control valve and flushing remaining dechlorination chemical from the day tanks in preparation for winterizing the facility," wrote Dana Strahan, EID drinking water operations manager.

Akin later responded to the Mountain Democrat by saying, "Three to four days (of spillover) was more than flushing equipment."

Strahan wrote that in 2008 555 acre-feet were sent into Bass Lake for drinking water supplement and 128 acre-feet as a supplement to the recycled water system.

"Water from the potable water system was diverted into Bass Lake from Feb. 20, 2008, to May 1, 2008, in preparation for the irrigation season. Additional potable water was diverted from July 21, 2008, to Aug. 11,

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2008, as a precautionary measure to back up recycled storage supplies due to scheduled construction outages for the El Dorado Hills Wastewater Treatment Plant, which supplied the majority of recycled water to the system,” Strahan wrote.

There are 3,751 residential recycled water accounts below Bass Lake, including 164 commercial and public space accounts, according to EID spokeswoman Deanne Kloefer in response to an e-mail query from the Democrat. Public space accounts include the Serrano Country Club.

At the Monday meeting Akin noted the fullness of the lake in November and said he was concerned that it was being kept filled “so as not to offend the aesthetic sensibilities of lots of good people who live in Bridlewood” near Bass Lake.

Akin also noted the lake is fenced off, whereas when he was in high school the seniors held their graduation picnic there and one could rent a row boat and fish in it.

“The water is taken from Sly Park down here (to Bass Lake) where we’ll never get it back,” Akin said.

He suggested instead of using Bass Lake to back up the recycled water used for landscaping when there is not enough that EID could use the 4 million gallon Bridlewood Tank of the 2 million gallon Village Tank to provide backup water to the recycled water.

Akin was also critical of sending EID water down Clear Creek, which starts in Sierra Springs and flows along Clear Creek Road and Sly Park Road in the Pleasant Valley area.

Akin calculated that in 2008 1,910 acre-feet of Jenkinson Reservoir water was sent down Clear Creek. By comparison, Akin said, the city of Placerville used 1,710 acre-feet.

EID sends water down that creek at the rate of 3 cfs, according to Akin, as part of an agreement with Improvement District 97 formed in 1974 “to maintain the quality, beauty and other intangible assets of the Clear Creek area by maintaining a certain minimum flow down Clear Creek channel throughout the year.”

EID Counsel Tom Cumpston noted that the original agreement called for 5 cfs and that he negotiated a reduction to 3 cfs in 2005.

All but 0.5 cfs of the water is diverted into the Crawford Ditch.

To abandon the agreement with the approximately 80 property owners in ID 97 would require the district to hold a Proposition 218 hearing, which would mean that if a majority of property owners protest, the effort would end.

“We made the best of a difficult situation,” Cumpston said.