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Shasta Dam Raise

No Dam Raise—Chief Caleen Sisk at Westlands Scoping Mtg



Even though it violates state law, is based on faulty science, could contaminate Northern California's water supply and would result in an "ethnocide" against the Winnemem Wintu people, the Shasta Dam raise is being fast-tracked by the Trump administration, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Westlands Water District.

Now is the time to speak up on behalf of salmon and healthy rivers, the Winnemem Wintu and the people of California. Make no mistake, this project is a waste of taxpayer money in order to benefit the wealthy millionaires of Westlands Water District, while sacrificing public trust resources of California citizens and the religion of the Winnemem.

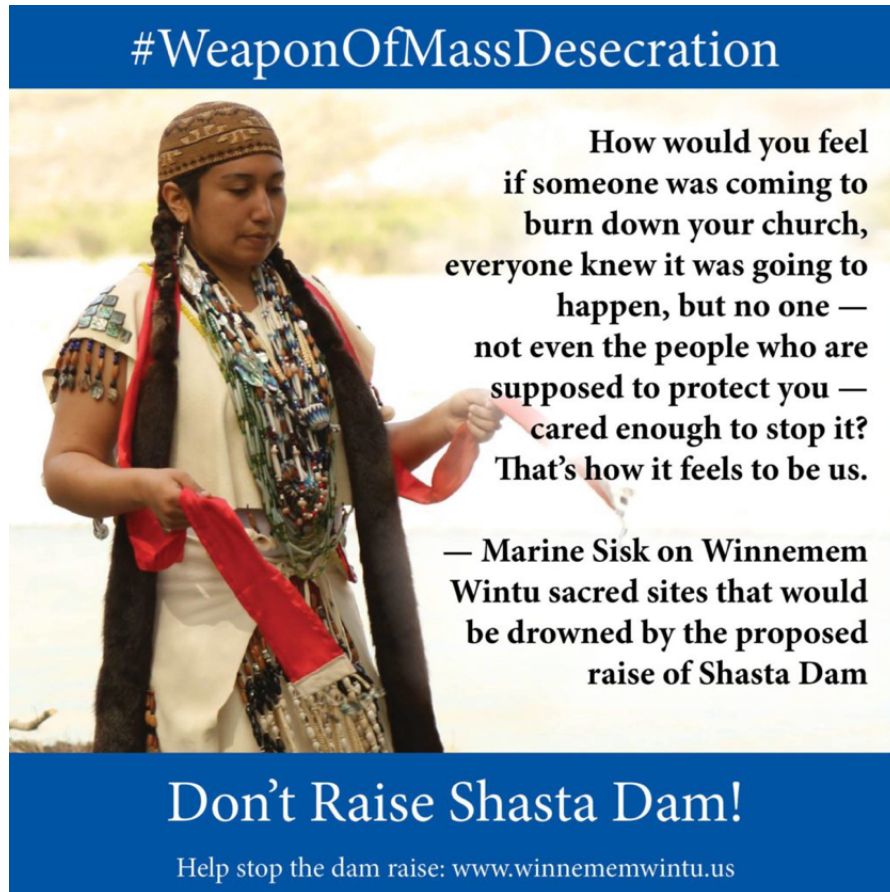
Westlands, the primary beneficiary of the proposal to raise Shasta Dam, is overseeing the state environmental review process and is accepting public comments until Jan. 4.

Email your comments directly to shastadameir@stantec.com or mail them to: Shasta Dam Project c/o Stantec 3301 C St., Suite 1900 Sacramento, CA 95816.

[See what Chief Sisk, environmentalists and other activists said in their comments opposing the dam raise at a Dec. 12 scoping meeting in Redding.](#)

After you write to Westlands, follow up with calls, emails and letters to your representatives in Congress. They will likely vote on funding the dam raise in the near future.

Talking Points



#WeaponOfMassDesecration

How would you feel if someone was coming to burn down your church, everyone knew it was going to happen, but no one — not even the people who are supposed to protect you — cared enough to stop it? That's how it feels to be us.

— Marine Sisk on Winnemem Wintu sacred sites that would be drowned by the proposed raise of Shasta Dam

Don't Raise Shasta Dam!

Help stop the dam raise: www.winnememwintu.us

Here are some talking points to consider when writing your comments.

Erasing Winnemem Wintu Culture

-The dam raise would inundate or impact more than sacred sites integral to the Winnemem Wintu's

culture and history.

-Sites that would be flooded include Children's Rock and Puberty Rock, which are vital sacred sites for the Winnemem Wintu's Puberty Ceremony for young women.

-Anthropologists concluded about the Winnemem: "Through continual interaction with the McCloud River Basin over several millennia, Winnemem Wintu social, medicinal and spiritual activities have become inseparable from the McCloud River itself." Without their sacred sites along the river, Winnemem culture can't exist.

-The Winnemem Wintu were forcibly removed from their homes on the McCloud River during the construction of Shasta Dam. They never received any compensation as required by the 1941 Central Valley Project Indian Lands Acquisition Act passed by Congress.

-The Winnemem Wintu have already survived the Gold Rush genocide, boarding schools, the first dam, de-recognition and other attempts of forced assimilation. Why must we suffer another attack on their culture?

A Tiny Amount of Water for Corporate Interests on the Taxpayers' Dime

-The \$1.3 billion the dam raise will only increase water deliveries by an estimated 51,300 acre-feet. That is less than 1/10th of 1 percent of California's annual water budget.

-The BOR admits there are "significant uncertainties" if the dam raise will even yield this much water.

-Urban water users saved more than 8 times the 51,300 acre-feet amount through conservation in the summer of 2015.

-Taxpayers would be forced to pay for half of the cost because the Bureau claims the project would benefit salmon. However, the US. Fish and Wildlife Service declared in a report, which the BOR tried to suppress, the dam raise would have minimal benefits if any for salmon.

-Most of the water from the proposed raise would be sold to corporate farms south of the Delta, most likely within the Westlands Water District.

-Westlands Water District receives millions every year in federal subsidies.

-Reservoirs the size of Shasta Lake lose significant amounts of water to evaporation. According to data from the California Department of Water Resources Data Exchange Center, the mean monthly evaporation rate for the Shasta Reservoir from May 1984 to August 2013 is already approximately 7,779.5 acre feet.

The Dam Raise and Westlands Violate State Law

#WeaponOfMassDesecration



If they try to raise the Shasta Dam, some of us will go to our ceremony grounds and start dancing. We will keep dancing until they drown us. If they flood our sacred sites and our ceremonies, Winnemem can no longer be Winnemem. That's the definition of cultural genocide.

— David Martinez,
Winnemem Wintu Dancer

Don't Raise Shasta Dam!

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-The dam raise would flood portions of the McCloud River that are protected by the state's The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Under this law, new reservoirs that would inundate the river are prohibited.

– [California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird wrote a letter to Congress](#) objecting to the project because it violates state law. State agencies are not legally allowed to work on the dam raise

-As a state agency, Westlands is violating the law by overseeing the state environmental review process known as CEQA.

It Threatens Endangered Salmon

-A 2009 Biological Opinion required the Bureau of Reclamation to restore endangered Chinook salmon above Shasta Dam in order to help them survive the impacts of climate change.

-A raised dam would inundate some of the prime salmon habitat in these rivers.

-The BOR has already made disastrous mistakes with [using Shasta Lake's cold water pool](#), killing millions of salmon eggs.

-The inundation of uncapped mines and mine tailings could contaminate salmon spawning habitat with toxic chemicals like mercury and cadmium.

It Expands a Toxic Lake

-A 2007 study found that fish in Shasta Lake contain unsafe levels of mercury and other toxic chemicals.

-The Bureau of Reclamation has told stakeholders that there is 60 feet of toxic sludge at the bottom of the lake due to runoff from uncapped mercury, placer and copper mines.

–[The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assessment](#) indicated the dam raise could flood other uncapped mines and interfere with the dilution of the Iron Mountain Superfund site.

The Water Likely Would Be Used to Irrigate Poisoned Land

- Westlands Water District has already bought 3,000 acres on the McCloud River to pave the way for the dam raise. They're the most likely beneficiary/cost-sharer for the project.
- In the San Joaquin Valley, irrigation water accumulates in the soil and natural occurring minerals like selenium accumulate at toxic levels due to evaporation.
- **Thousands of acres of Westlands Water District farmlands are already contaminated by selenium from irrigation. Their irrigation practices have already resulted in a selenium-based Superfund site: Kesterson reservoir.**
- Westlands has already had to retire 40,000 acres of farmland due to selenium poisoning.
- Many advocate that it will be far cheaper to retire much of this farmland or cease water deliveries rather than attempt to find a drainage solution.
- A Westland farmer has reported the district plans to convert most of their farmland into “solar farms” anyway. This is about the water rights and enriching corporate pockets, not about “feeding America”.

The Era of Big Dams Is Over

-Outside the power dynamics of California water wars, the scientific consensus is mega-dams are not worth the investment.

-Dam removal and ecosystem restoration are more effective ways to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

-Groundwater restoration, fixing leaky infrastructure and conservation are more effective investments in increasing the water supply.

-The [World Commission on Dams](#) found 70 percent of water supply dams fail to meet their target for water deliveries.

H'up Chonas (War Dance) Against the Dam

Guided by prayer and messages from the mountain, we held our first H'up Chonas (war dance or dance in the old way) since the late 19th century at the Shasta Dam in Sept. 2004. The dam raise would flood many of our sacred sites that are vital to our religion. Without them, we could no longer be Winnemem.

The War Dance was not a declaration of war against the American people but a promise to resist against the dam raise and the forces that would cause our destruction through it.

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) plans to complete its environmental impact study on the dam raise this year, and the Westlands Water District has [since purchased 3,000 acres of land](#) surrounding the McCloud River in anticipation of a larger reservoir. The H'up Chonas also continues, and we will fight until the end.

From the Sacred Land Film Project, a short film about the Shasta Dam H'up Chonas

Missing Plug-in →

Dam Raise: A Huge Loss for Everyone Except Big Ag

The BOR and supporters of the Dam Raise claim it will provide needed water storage for a growing, thirsty California. They also claim it will be an economic stimulus to the local economy.

Here are important facts they will not say:

- The dam raise would cost the public hundreds of millions of dollars and yield a relatively small amount of very expensive water.
- Because dams don't create water (they merely capture rain and snowmelt), the firm yield that can be reliably produced on an annual basis depends on annual rainfall. The hypothetical firm yield of water produced from the **6.5 foot raise ranges from 20,000 to 72,000 acre feet**. The hypothetical firm yield of **the 18.5 foot raise is 71,000-146,000 acre feet**.
- In comparison, if farmers producing low-value alfalfa were to conserve a mere five percent of the water they consume, it would save nearly **one million acre feet of water**.
- Construction costs for the 18.5 foot raise range from \$408-483 million, with annual costs of \$28-34 million. Therefore, **the cost of the water produced a raise ranges from \$220-270 per acre-foot**. This is not competitive with **the \$50 to \$150 per acre-foot paid by Central Valley farmers**.
- Historically, dam construction provides a temporary boom for the economy, leading to a long-term bust. This is what happened after the Shasta Dam's construction and this is what will happen after a dam raise.
- [Salmon restoration](#) is a far more sensible, cost-effective economic stimulus that will provide long-term rather than short term benefits.



Winnemem War Dancers at the Shasta Dam

Damming a Culture: Then and Now

Millions of people around the world have seen their homes submerged by the construction of dams and their subsequent reservoirs. The Winnemem not only lost our villages on the McCloud River when the Shasta Dam was erected during World War II, we also lost many of our sacred places beneath Shasta Lake. These are places to which we hold an emotional and religious connection, and their loss remains a void in our lives as Winnemem.

In the early 2000s, it started to become evident we might relive the same nightmare as the Bureau of Reclamation started seriously investigating a Shasta Dam raise from 6-feet to 200-feet to increase the supply of irrigation water for large agricultural businesses. The BOR sees this as a viable alternative even though just as much water could be produced through conservation measures or by treating the 60-feet of sediment that has collected at the bottom of Lake Shasta in the past 70 years.

If there were only a few hundred people left who practiced Islam or Judaism, would the country support knocking down the last mosque or the last temple?

That is what a dam raise would do to the Winnemem.

A dam raise of about 18-feet, the most likely scenario, would permanently or seasonally flood an estimated 39 sacred sites along the McCloud River, including [Puberty Rock](#), and would essentially end our ability to practice our culture and religion.

Information on the Shasta Dam raise:

- [Sacred Land Film Project's fact sheet](#)
- ["At War Against Dam, Tribe Turns to Old Ways,"](#) New York Times, Sept. 13, 2004
- [EJCW's Shasta Dam raise analysis](#)
- KQED Forum on the Shasta Dam Raise, featuring Caleen Sisk-Franco, Toby McLeod and Jeff McCracken from BOR

Check out this short documentary on the Winnemem's GPS Project to map sacred sites endangered by a dam

raise.

Missing Plug-in 

View the extended trailer of Dancing Salmon Home, an in-production documentary about our Salmon

14:37 

Ceremony in New Zealand.

[Dancing Salmon Home-Promo](#) from [Moving Image](#) on [Vimeo](#).



A screenshot of a Facebook post from the Winnemem Wintu Tribe. The post features a profile picture of a person in traditional regalia, the name 'Winnemem Wintu Tribe', and '14,037 likes'. Below the post is a video player with a thumbnail showing a protest sign that says '#NoDamRaise'. The video player has 'Like Page' and 'Share' buttons. At the bottom of the post, it says 'Be the first of your friends to like this'.

Blogroll

- [Aqua University](#)
- [California Environmental Water Caucus](#)
- [Dancing Salmon Home](#)

- [Global Village School](#)
- [Hoopa Valley Tribal Fisheries](#)
- [Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages](#)
- [Marc Dadigan](#)
- [Our Linguist's Winnemem Wintu Language web site](#)
- [Sacred Land Film Project](#)
- [U.N Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water](#)

Pages

- [AJR 39 and NAHC Letter](#)
- [Auction](#)
- [Bałas Chonas Letter](#)
- [Benefit](#)
- [BIA](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Ceremony Is Not a Crime; Contribute to Chief Sisk's Legal Defense](#)
- [Coming of Age Ceremony Blog](#)
- [Coming of Age Ceremony Photos](#)
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- [Our Traditional Leader: Caleen Sisk](#)
- [Recognition](#)
- [Sacred Sites Stories](#)
- [Salmon Film](#)
- [Salmon Letter](#)
- [Salmon Return](#)

- [Download Lyla June's "Time Traveler" and Support the Winnemem Salmon Return](#)
- [Run4Salmon](#)
- [Sign up to help close the river for Alicia's Coming of Age ceremony!](#)
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