

Why is funding for repair of Oroville Dam included in the Water Supply and Water Quality Initiative?

The Corps of Engineers paid for the flood control elements of Oroville Dam in the 1960's. Including flood control at Oroville was detrimental to the State Water Project (SWP). From the point of view of the SWP, keeping Oroville full (no flood reservation) would improve water supply, energy production, recreation and fish and wildlife preservation (improved cold water pool). Including flood control was something Pat Brown insisted on, after his experience with the Feather River flood of 1955.

The State Water Project contractors were never responsible for flood control, since they are actually harmed by its inclusion in the Oroville project. There is no logical reason they should have to pay for flood control at Oroville.

The state's failure to properly design and maintain the flood control features (spillway and auxiliary spillway) should not impose costs on the State Water Project contractors. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will pay for part of these costs, but the rest will be state costs. The final cost of flood control repairs will be around one billion dollars. The State Contractors will be forced to bear part of these costs, but it is certainly reasonable for the state general fund to share some of these costs. In many previous bond acts, the state general fund has always been the source of state flood control money.