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Decisions on Lake Hodges Dam will affect region for decades to come



This shows the Lake Hodges Dam on Aug. 13. (Ana Ramirez / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



Re “Lake Hodges advocates want 13-foot water level increase for fire protection” ([Aug. 11](#)) and “Hopes for a Lake Hodges Dam replacement dim, despite safety concerns” ([Aug. 14](#)): It’s simple math — by keeping the level of Lake Hodges at 293 feet, utilizing the hydroelectric pump system and using the least expensive water in North County, the dam will more than pay for itself by the time it is completed (if approved) in 2030.

Restoring full capacity would revive the \$209 million hydroelectric and transfer system, providing sustainable “free” power to more than 26,000 homes — power that ratepayers already paid to build but cannot use as intended.

— *Joe Dundas, Toyon Canyon*

The delays on the Lake Hodges dam project resulted from poor and deferred maintenance on the dam, poor due diligence and a lack of strategic planning (e.g., how much did that now-useless pipe, pump and generator system between Hodges and Olivenhain cost?) and nonexistent leadership by the City Council, successive mayors and regional resource managers. We deserve much better.

Lost in the discussion, however, is the increased risk to the surrounding neighborhoods, which, in addition to the loss of recreational activities associated with a full lake, must now contend with the substantial increase in wildfire fuel that has resulted from the unmanaged growth that has occurred on the now-dry lakebed. This will no doubt result in increased fire risk as well as insurance costs to the surrounding neighborhoods — provided one can even get insurance in the area going forward.

— *Stephen Balcomb, Rancho Bernardo*

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San Diego is at a crossroads on Lake Hodges, and the decision we make now will affect water rates, public safety and our environment for decades to come.

The stakes go beyond economics. Keeping the lake low has turned 500 acres of lakebed into a tinderbox — dry invasive grasses with moisture content under 5% — directly in the path of Santa Ana winds.

A single wildfire here could cost billions in property loss, burn through the San Dieguito River Valley, destroy thousands of homes and devastate habitat for 26 endangered species.

This isn't a theoretical risk — it's a proven fire corridor, as the Witch Creek and Cocos fires showed.

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— *Kelly Doan, Rancho Santa Fe*

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