

A massive lake will grow as Calaveras Dam takes shape

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IF you happen to be flying over Milpitas some five or 10 years from now, you'll see a major change in the landscape from what it is today. It is all due to the work that began last week on restoring what was once the world's tallest earth-fill dam. Fraught with fears about earthquake hazards, the dam was lowered gradually over the past years and the amount of water it held back was likewise reduced.

It is all part of the giant \$4-billion rebuild project going forth across Northern California for San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy water system which taps Yosemite National Park's watersheds for the benefit of 28 cities including Milpitas. We rely on this high quality water source for almost all residential water. The original dam and reservoir date back to 1925. It gathered up 7 million cubic yards of rock and gravel to create the monster structure. Half of it will get re-used. When completed three or four years from now, it will begin holding back about the same amount of water the original did. At almost 100,000 acre feet, it will be among the Bay Area's biggest lakes. Although it is built to hold back the Alameda Creek, most of the water will flow in from the Sierra Nevada and Yosemite through the 72-inch pipeline.

You can get a look at Calaveras Reservoir today by driving up Calaveras Road into the hills east of Milpitas. But it will look rather skimpy for the simple reason that we are situated at the rear end of the lake. The dam itself is farther north in Alameda County. The reason the dam was lowered in the past was that a strong shake could give residents in Fremont a dunking.

The new dam will be built slightly downstream of the existing dam which will be partially removed when the new facility is completed. When done, it will link up the dual pipeline and storage system by which Hetch Hetchy can serve its 2.6 million customers around the bay either through pipelines through Milpitas around the south edge of the bay toward San Francisco or through another which is buried beneath the bay.

Few remember that it was the presence of this reliable high quality water supply that stimulated the location of a large industrial park atop the hay fields of Milpitas back in the early 1950s. That may have been the key factor in developing a balance between industry, commercial development and homes that gave the city its economic viability. Ironically, most of the city's industry today is served by the South Bay Aqueduct portion of the state's water system through the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which provides about a third of Milpitas' water.

Although San Francisco has held fast against any use of its water surfaces for recreation, technology could possibly induce changes in that regard. But in

the meantime, anglers will be happy that the new dam will be designed with flexibility in its water release systems to enable a steelhead trout population to rebound in the Alameda Creek watershed.