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COSTS SPIKE FOR PROJECT AT PARK IN TIBURON

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DEVERS ON HOT STREAK OF HISTORIC DIMENSIONS

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VERY WARM **High:** 92 **Low:** 61

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NICASIO

Dam repairs at reservoir estimated to cost $50M

Rehabilitation project mandated by state safety agency

Water flows over the spillway at the Nicasio Reservoir on Dec. 18, 2024. **ALAN DEP — MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL**

By Adrian Rodriguez
ARODRIGUEZ@MARINIJ.COM

The estimated cost to rehabilitate Seeger Dam at Nicasio Reservoir is about $50 million — an expense that the Marin Municipal Water District hadn't expected.

The estimate was reported as the district board authorized spending up to $5.57 million to deliver a project work plan to the state by a Dec. 1 deadline.

The California Division of Safety of Dams, or DSOD, set the due date when it ordered the district to repair the dam because a recent analysis showed declining performance.

The contract with Black and Veatch also will buy the district a project alternatives analysis comparing different designs to narrow down a preferred option. Funds will be drawn from the approved capital improvement program and allocated over the next two-year budget cycle.

At their meeting on Sept. 1, members of the district board expressed concerns about the cost. Board member Larry Russell asked staff whether it was confident the project would "satisfy the dam safety folks."

Alex Anaya, director of engineering, said yes.

"Because, during this process, we're going to be working closely with DSOD," Anaya said, noting there will be check-ins at specific milestones — at 30%, 50%, and 70% of the design.

"So, there's going to be many opportunities to get feedback from DSOD, which we will incorporate into the final design," Anaya said.

The reservoir is part of the Marin Municipal Water District storage system. **ALAN DEP — MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL**

A project of this magnitude was unplanned, but the district has known for a while that some scale of rehabilitation was possible.

The district began coordinating with the dam safety division in 2017 after the failure of the spillway at the Oroville Dam in Butte County.

The state agency ordered other dams of similar earthen construction to be evaluated. In addition to Seeger Dam, Peters Dam at Kent Lake and the dam at Soulajule Reservoir have been under investigation since then.

The first phase of the evaluation was conducted between 2017 and 2021. The work involved data review, boring logs, reviews of previous inspection reports and repairs, in addition to inspections of the spillway conditions of the three dams, said Elysha Irish, engineering manager at the Marin Municipal Water District.

That analysis resulted in the repair of spalls, surface defects, offsets and subdrain cleaning, as well as crack and joint sealing.

A second phase, approved in March 2022, involved a deeper structural evaluation of spillways, using imaging techniques such as ground-penetrating radar to investigate their integrity.

The resulting report was submitted to the state agency last year. The state dam safety division informed the district in May that Seeger Dam was downgraded to a "fair" rating from "satisfactory."

There is no immediate threat of failure. However, the earthen dam's underdrains, water stops, spillway

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MMWD

New fee could hit wireless holdouts

Charge proposed for analog meter checks

By Adrian Rodriguez
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Marin Municipal Water District customers who choose not to upgrade their analog water meters to wireless "smart" technology could end up paying bimonthly fees under a new proposal.

The district is in the beginning stages of its 10-year rollout to the new meters known as advanced metering infrastructure, or AMI. The transition aims to improve conservation, lower customer bills and reduce the staff time and costs involved in reading meters.

For customers who opt out of the switch, the district is proposing a fee rate of $40 to offset the cost of in-person manual meter reads. With installation preparations underway, staff wants to get the policy on the books soon.

"AMI is the most important modernization project we have undertaken in a long time," said Jed Smith, president of the district board. "The agency will now have data to be smarter, our customers will be able to detect leaks earlier, and research shows we should be

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ANTHROPIC

Authors tussle with publishers over AI payouts

By Neil Vigdor
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The sum is gargantuan: $1.5 billion.

But as thousands of authors wait for their cut of the largest copyright settlement in U.S. history from Anthropic, the tech giant that used pirated books to train its artificial intelligence chatbot, some are accusing the publishers of their books of trying to squeeze them out of a percentage of the payout.

The haggling is coming into plain view as a settlement administrator attempts to clear up who owns the rights to some of the more than 482,000 books covered by the agreement in the class-action case, which was approved in July by a judge in the U.S. District Court in the Northern District of California.

For many of those titles, ownership is undisputed, but on repeated occasions,

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NORTH BAY

Plan for new 'oligarch city' in Solano County runs into wall

By Conor Dougherty
THE NEW YORK TIMES

California Forever, a company backed by Silicon Valley billionaires, calls its proposal to build a city in the Bay Area a remedy to the state's biggest problems.

California needs homes; the company aims to put several thousand of them about an hour's drive from San Francisco. The state is desperate for middle-class jobs; California Forever would create a shipyard and manufacturing center ready to hire. The plan is well funded, is backed by labor unions and has the implied support of Gov. Gavin Newsom.

And yet a move that would have given the project a definitive push died quietly in a behind-the-scenes scramble during the final days of California's legislative session, which ended last week. Although not before a stuffed monkey made an appearance and protesters delivered public comment in song.

California Forever hasn't given up. The company and its army of consultants will almost certainly be back to lobby state legislators in 2027. But by then there will be a new governor with new priorities. Whatever the project's future, its failure in this legislative session is another proof point of how hard it remains to build in the nation's largest and richest state — and why a growing backlash against the billionaire class could make it even harder.

"It's just incredibly hard to do large projects in California," said Ben Metcalf, managing director of the Terner Center for Housing Innovation at the University of California, Berkeley.

Metcalf listed some of the many examples: A high-speed rail line that voters approved in 2008 but that has yet to lay a track. A large housing project outside Los Angeles and the redevelopment of a Navy

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A residence and barns in rural Solano County, where a group of real estate investors bought some 70,000 acres. **AARON WOJACK — THE NEW YORK TIMES**

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