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TULARE COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL

BACKGROUND:

In 1969, District Act 8706 allowed counties to establish and maintain their own flood control districts. Tulare County Flood Control District was created to construct, maintain and operate facilities for control and disposition of flood and storm waters.

Scientists are aware of the impact climate change is having on California's water. Increases in temperature deepen the California water crisis by reducing the amount of precipitation the state receives, whether in the form of snow or rain. Furthermore, warming temperatures may increase the likelihood of severe storms and flooding.

The snowpack in California's mountains has long been a source of freshwater, but warming temperatures and the heavy runoff generated by that warmth place cities and homes at risk and threaten the cleanliness of California's water supply. The state's reservoirs and flood control facilities were built to handle the much slower runoff of melting snow. Runoff created by rain falling in the mountains will easily overwhelm the reservoirs.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The Grand Jury initiated an investigation per its mandate in California Penal Code §925.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED:

1. Interviewed relevant witnesses
2. Reviewed relevant documents
3. Toured Terminus Dam
4. Toured three pending flood control projects

FACTS:

1. Tulare County Flood Control District provides for the control of flood and storm waters.
2. Tulare County Flood Control District provides for the protection of watercourses, watersheds, public highways, life and property from damage or destruction from flood waters.
3. Tulare County Flood Control District is authorized to issue the sale of bonds for future flood control projects.
4. Tulare County Flood Control District is authorized to levy and collect taxes and assessments on property within said district and in the respective zones.
5. Tulare County Flood Control District encompasses the entire county in addition to portions of Kings and Fresno Counties.
6. In 2001 work began to enlarge the Terminus Dam spillway channel. Between 2003 and 2004 six fuse gates were installed in the spillway channel, raising the maximum elevation of the reservoir by twenty-one feet.

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7. The Board of Supervisors appoints the Flood Control Commission of seven who determine which projects have the highest priority.
8. In 2012 the Flood Control Commission submitted fourteen proposed projects to the Board of Supervisors for approval.
9. Out of the fourteen projects, the Board of Supervisors approved the following three flood control projects for design and construction:
 - a. Yettem-Button Ditch – Estimated Cost of \$415,000 – Yettem-Button Ditch starts in the northern foothills and runs through Yettem. The objective of the project is to widen the ditch to alleviate flooding in residential areas in Yettem.
 - b. Cottonwood Creek – Estimated Cost of \$950,000 – Cottonwood Creek starts in the higher elevations of Fresno County and winds its way through Tulare County into Kings County. The objective of the project is to restore the natural flow of the creek and the avoidance of sensitive environmental areas. The hydrology and hydraulics report were updated to reflect the design changes.
 - c. Seville-Sontag Ditch – Estimated Cost of \$430,000 – Seville -Sontag Ditch starts in the foothills and runs into Seville. The objective is to connect it to Seville’s water system and alleviate flooding in the low lying areas of Seville.
10. The Tulare County Flood Control District underwent reorganization in 2013 and was renamed the Developmental Services Division. The reorganization integrated seven different agencies promoting more collaboration and timely cost efficient efforts.

FINDINGS:

1. Accomplishment of the objectives of the Yettem-Button Ditch, Cottonwood Creek Ditch and Seville-Sontag Ditch Projects is pending.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. None.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. None