



## Butte County Administration

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## BUTTE COUNTY CELEBRATES EARTH DAY BY HIGHLIGHTING ONE OF THE MOST VITAL RESOURCES: WATER

**BUTTE COUNTY, Calif.** — This Earth Day, Butte County is highlighting one of the most important resources on our planet: water. Water is so fundamental to everyday life that we often take its availability for granted. However, behind every drop of water in California lies a complex network of infrastructure, environmental considerations, and community impacts that enable its delivery from Butte County to the southern arid municipalities and industries of the State.

In an effort to provide broader education on the topic, Butte County has launched a new informational website, **[ourwatertheirpower.org](http://ourwatertheirpower.org)**, to provide the public with a clear, transparent overview of the Oroville Dam, including the massive benefits it provides to the State of California, and the heavy burden it has placed on Butte County.

The Oroville Dam is the cornerstone of California's State Water Project (SWP), which captures water from the Feather River, stores it in Lake Oroville, and sends it hundreds of miles south to provide water to 27 million Southern Californians and irrigate 750,000 acres of farmland in the Central Valley. The Dam also generates approximately 2.2 billion kilowatt-hours of hydroelectric power annually, enough to power hundreds of thousands of homes. While this water fueled California's rise to the 4th-largest economy in the world and the most populous State in the nation, Butte County faces an estimated annual loss of over \$20 million due to the Dam.

When proposing the Dam, the State offered Butte County a vision of mutual gain. They proposed a recreation plan that would transform Lake Oroville into a recreational wonderland akin to Lake Tahoe, complete with campgrounds, marinas, a 250-seat restaurant, a snack bar, a visitor center with gift shop,

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two auditoriums for audio-visual presentations, a monorail, trackless train, steam train, tours of the powerplant through an open 40-seat bus, 5 beaches, day-use areas, picnic facilities, walking trails, and shoreline access would attract visitors from across California. The State touted that the robust shoreline development would transform the lake into one of the greatest recreation areas in the nation, thereby presenting the reservoir as the economic engine that would replace what the Dam had taken away.

Fast forward to today, the State still has not completed the promised recreation development, and as a result, Lake Oroville receives less than one-sixth of the visitors the State had projected. The State has used the lack of tourism as justification for not building the very recreation facilities intended to attract tourists. This has left Butte County with the financial burdens, while the water and the prosperity continue to flow to the Central Valley and Southern California.

“Earth Day is a reminder to think about the systems that make modern life possible. This website sheds light on the complexities around one of those systems,” says Butte County Board of Supervisors Chair, Bill Connelly. “The Oroville Dam generates enormous value for California, and also places an enormous burden on Butte County. Our goal is to ensure that the full picture is understood so future decisions can be more balanced and sustainable.”

The website compiles historical records and planning documents to tell the story that many residents may not be aware of: the story of our water and how it’s used to power California. Residents are encouraged to visit the website to learn more and explore the history and context of California’s most significant water infrastructure project.

Visit [www.ourwatertheirpower.org](http://www.ourwatertheirpower.org).

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