

State Races Calendar to Bring Water to Southland

1971 Target Allows for No Delays

BY RAY HEBERT
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A crash program is under way to guarantee new supplies of sorely needed water for Southern California by 1971.

From Oroville south through the San Joaquin Valley men are pushing a bewildering array of machines—and themselves as well—to complete the state's multi-billion-dollar Feather River Project on schedule.

It's an exacting timetable. At the sites of giant Oroville and San Luis Dams in Northern and Central California, crews are working around the clock to maintain a pace that allows for no delays.

William E. Warne, director of the state Department of Water Resources, said:

"The schedule has no slack, no time for relaxation. A critical timetable has been set up that will keep us jumping."

Costliest Ever

Planned for more than a decade and under construction since 1961, the water development project is the largest and costliest ever undertaken.

Staggering in scope, it has upset the normally serene pattern of Oroville, Los Banos and a dozen other cities and towns in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

Eventually its economic impact, from direct construction and the water it produces, will be felt in the San Francisco Bay area, Bakersfield, the Antelope Valley and most of Southern California.

The project spans more than three-quarters of the state's length and costs one-third of a million dollars a day.

36 Contracts

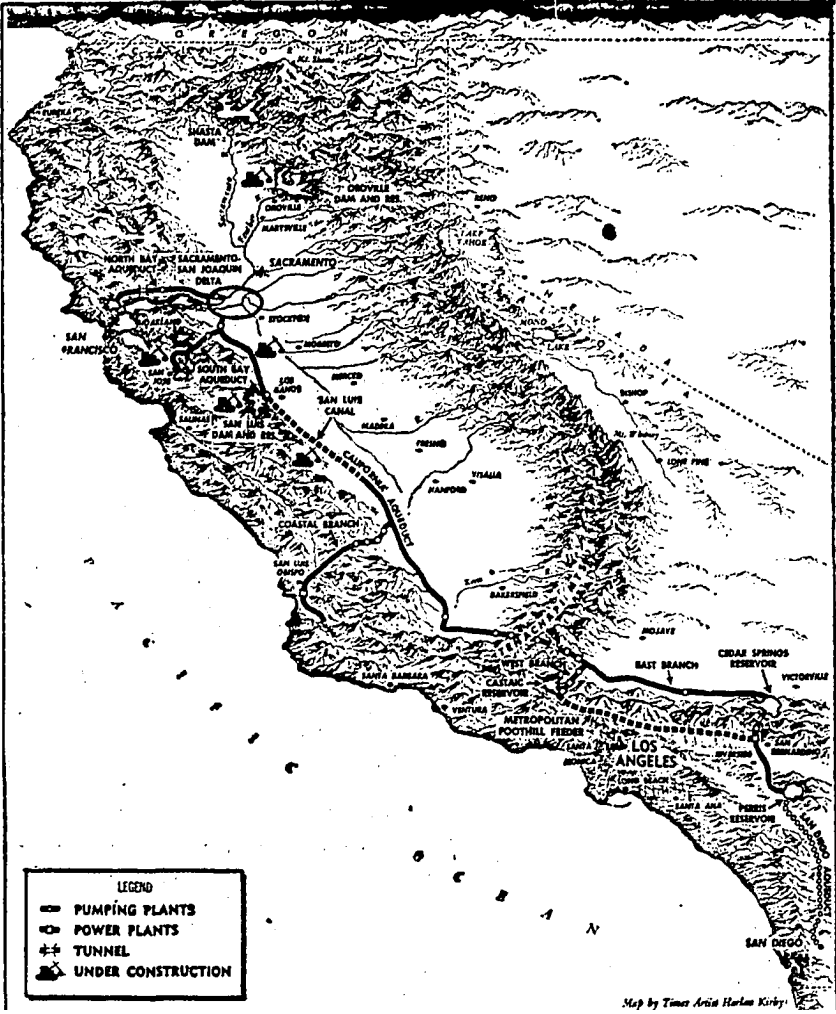
Currently there are 36 construction contracts in force with a total value of \$333 million. Within two years more than 100 other contracts worth nearly \$400 million will be awarded.

Nearly 6,000 workers, from skilled engineers to file clerks, are engaged in planning, scheduling and actually building the monumental facility.

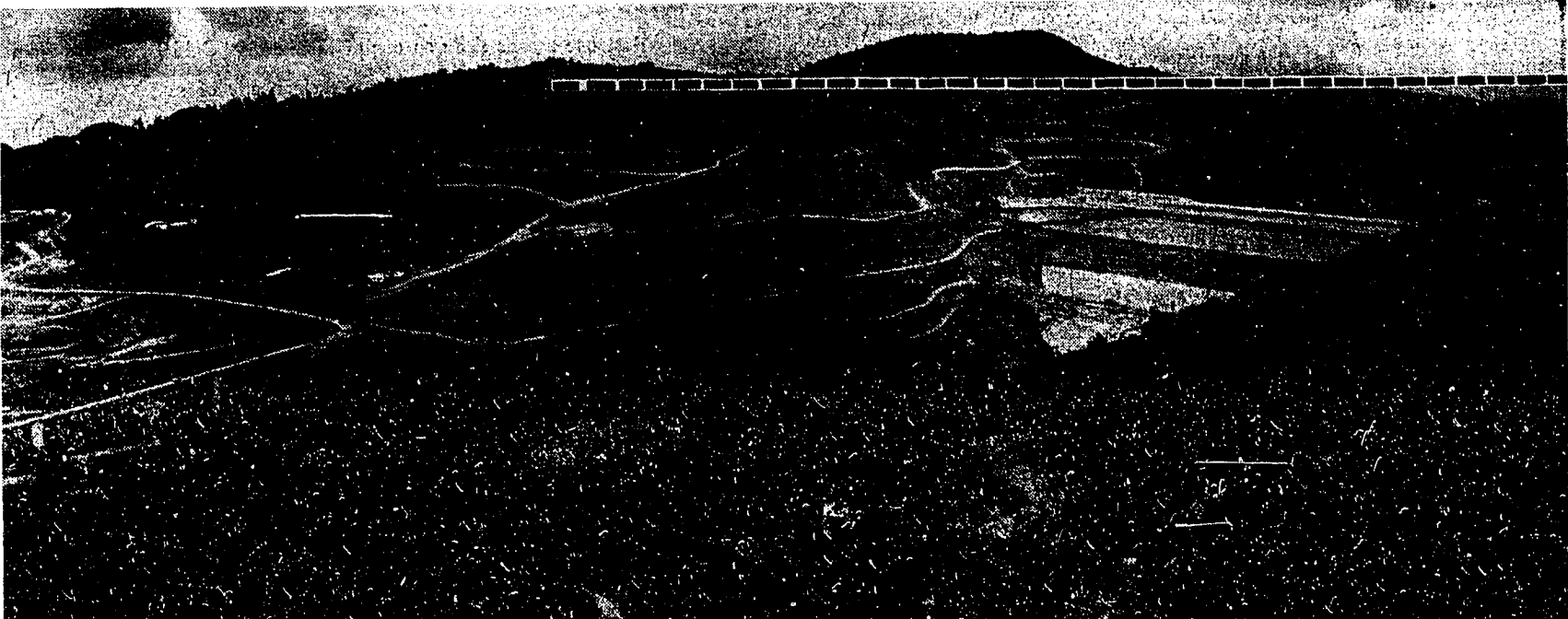
In Sacramento alone, the State Department of Water Resources has 900 men and women — administrators, engineers, scientists, secretaries — working on some phase of the program.

When completed, the project will deliver water that now wastes through San Francisco Bay into the ocean to two of every three Californians in a population and agricultural belt from Butte County, north of Sa-

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WATER PROJECT- From Oroville on the north to San Diego on the south, map depicts the state's Feather River Project with main California Aqueduct. Dotted line indicates the San Luis Canal being built by federal government. The Metropolitan Foothill Feeder will be the principal supply line to serve the Southland.



OROVILLE DAM- Downstream view of Oroville Dam rising in Feather River Canyon as a key structure in state's multi-billion-dollar water project. When completed earthfill embankment will be 10 ft. higher than Hoover Dam as indicated by dotted line. Rock for base is carried by automatic conveyor. Times photo

WATER PROJECT

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cramento, to San Diego at the Mexican border.

The project's cost is estimated at \$2.2 billion—more than five times the outlay for the Panama Canal.

But the ultimate cost probably will run more than that by the time Feather River water reaches the San Joaquin Valley in 1968, the metropolitan Los Angeles area in 1971, Riverside County in 1972 and Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo Counties in 1980.

Paying for 75 Years

Californians who use the water, whether cotton farmers in Kern County or families in Van Nuys, will be paying for the project for 75 years.

Over the repayment period interest will push the cost up to \$5 billion and maintenance and operation will add another \$5 billion.

By far the biggest share—about 75%—will be paid by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the 8½ million domestic and industrial water users in its six-county service area.

At one time Metropolitan considered building the project itself. But instead it became a partner with other regions of the state that need new supplies of water as desperately as it does.

View Unchanged

Southern California's booming population had caused the district to look toward Northern California's full streams to supplement—not replace—the water it receives from the Colorado River. That view has not changed.

But now its tenuous hold on the Colorado, a result of California's loss in water rights litigation before the U.S. Supreme Court last year, has put even greater urgency on the Feather River Project.

Officially the program is

the State Water Project or State Water Facilities, first unit in the long-range \$15 to \$20 billion California Water Plan.

But it is popularly called the Feather River Project because its largest single unit—Oroville Dam in Butte County—will impound waters of the Feather River, a picturesque stream carrying runoff from the Sierra Nevada Range.

Years of debate and argument in the State Legislature, and at long range between Northern and Southern California factions preceded statewide approval of a \$1.75 billion bond issue to finance the water program.

New Arguments

That was in 1960. But new arguments, often as complex as the project itself, are still erupting.

Some Northern Californians still resent the idea of releasing water for use hundreds of miles away. Even in the region that will benefit, disputes have developed over aqueduct routings, water charges and ideological concepts related to the distribution of water.

The project is statistically awesome.

It will have 15 widely-separated dams with a combined length of 20 miles. The reservoirs they create will store 6.6 million acre-feet of water — 1.5 million more than California diverted from the Colorado River last year—and provide a surface

area of 780 square miles, the size of Orange County.

The project's aqueducts will lace the state with 663 miles of canals, pipelines and tunnels. That includes the main California Aqueduct reaching 441 miles from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to Perris Reservoir in Riverside County.

Already under construction, the main aqueduct will carry nearly all the water the project yields each year. The project was originally designed to produce 4 million acre-feet but is being expanded to 4.23 million to provide more water for Southern California.

Following a recent inspection tour, Warne said he was amazed to see the way the project is taking shape.

"I was impressed to see on the ground what looks so good on paper—the fact that we are keeping construction on schedule," he said.

Next — A look at Oroville.

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