

California might be in the dam-building business

By Tara Lohan, Huffington Post

Historically speaking, when the going gets tough, California builds more dams. “If you look at the history of California since the 1930s, every time there has been a drought people have been interested in expanding surface storage,” said Jay R. Lund, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UC Davis.

When it comes to water, things have been pretty tough in California for the past four years. So bad, in fact, that in 2014 California voters passed Proposition 1, a bond to funnel \$7.5 billion to water projects, including \$2.7 billion that would go to the California Water Commission to dole out specifically for storage-related projects.

During the 20th century “storage” was virtually synonymous with dams. The construction of big dams is what shaped the West, California especially. Dams gave us water and power and propelled development. We later learned they also gave us spoiled rivers, silted reservoirs and devastated fisheries. For decades, it was a trade-off we were willing to make.

Dams are undoubtedly an important part of our history. But what’s their place in our future?

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