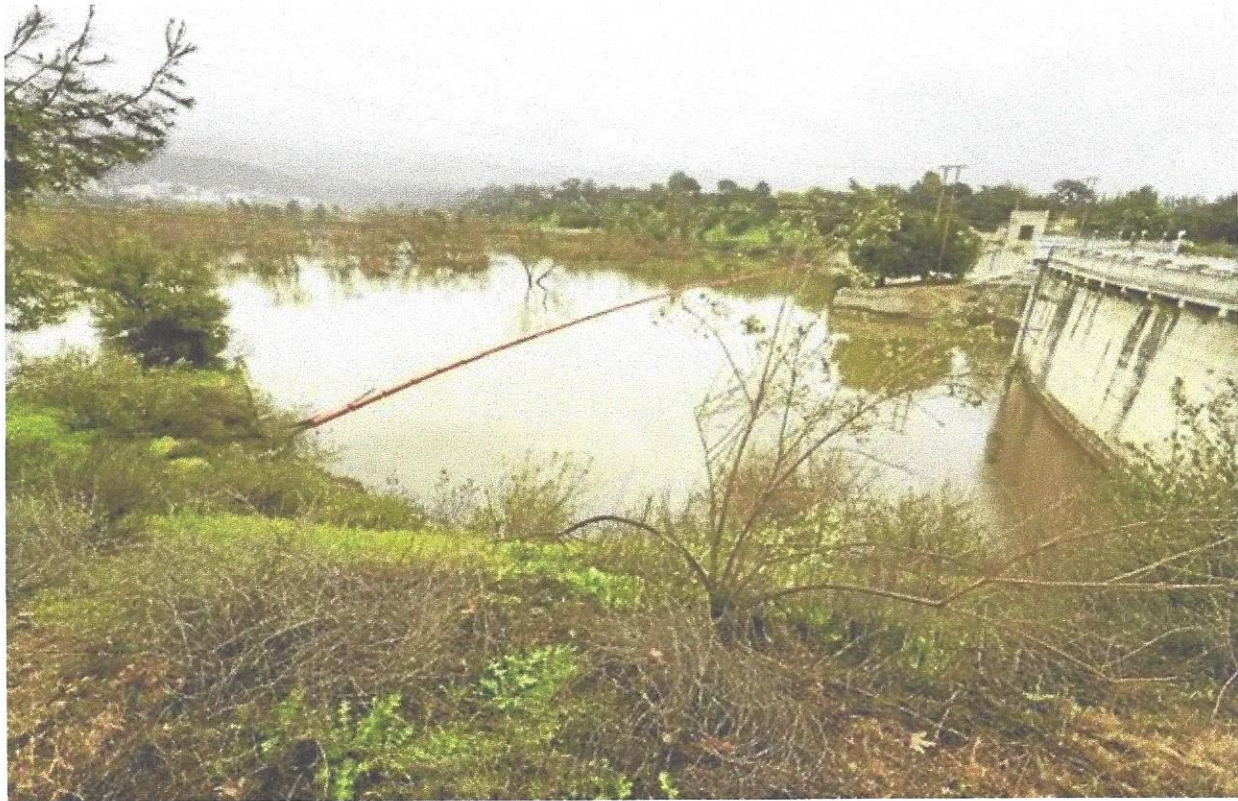


# Devil's Gate Dam project challenged by area environmentalists



A lawsuit was filed by two environmental groups Thursday in Los Angeles County Superior Court challenging the recent approval of the Devil's Gate Reservoir Sediment Removal Project. Walt Mancini

— Staff photographer, File

By **Sarah Favot**, *Pasadena Star-News*

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LOS ANGELES>> Two local environmental groups filed a lawsuit Thursday in Los Angeles County Superior Court challenging the Board of Supervisors' recent approval of the controversial [Devil's Gate Reservoir Sediment Removal Project](#).

The lawsuit, filed by lawyers representing the Arroyo Seco Foundation and the Pasadena Audubon Society, alleges the county violated the California Environmental Quality Act and the city of Pasadena's General Plan and Land Use ordinances in approving the project that will remove 2.4 million cubic yards of sediment accumulated behind the Devil's Gate Dam due to the 2009 Station Fire.

"Now I think we're going to have our say anyway," said Tim Brick, managing director of the Arroyo Seco Foundation. "We'd like to work with the county to develop a stable

program that is future-oriented. We're ready to go all the way, We feel there are several flaws in the environmental impact report and we're ready to expose those."

On Nov. 12, the Board of Supervisors [approved](#) the project by a 4 to 1 vote. Sediment removal from the dam, located in the Hahamongna Watershed Park in the upper portion of the Arroyo Seco Watershed, would take place over five years. Officials said the plan is necessary to protect communities living downstream from flooding.

The lawsuit requests a stay of the project approval pending trial, a temporary restraining order and a preliminary and permanent injunction against the county and for the county to prepare a new Environmental Impact Report.

Tony Bell a spokesman for Sup. Michael Antonovich, who represents the area and filed the motion for the project approval, said the approval was "based on significant public safety concerns over flood risks."

The county disagrees with the Arroyo Seco Foundation and Pasadena Audubon Society, as well as the city, on how much sediment should be removed from the dam to provide flood protection.

The county's plan allows up to 800,000 cubic yards of sediment to be removed each year by up to 400 truck trips a day through the mostly residential neighborhood surrounding the area. Hauling is limited to April to October on weekdays.

A special working group convened by the Pasadena City Council [recommended](#) that taking 1.1 million cubic yards of debris should be sufficient.

In the lawsuit, the groups allege the EIR prepared by the county Department of Public Works Flood Control District for the project doesn't address a number of issues including: proper traffic mitigation, compliance with South Coast Air Quality Management District rules, inadequate analysis of greenhouse gas impacts, doesn't provide substantial evidence to show that 2.4 million cubic yards of sediment removal is necessary to meet flood control needs and the flood district failed to consider feasible reduced rate alternatives proposed by the Arroyo Seco Foundation and the city.

Gary Hildebrand, who manages the county Flood Control District, said the district took into consideration the city of Pasadena's concerns in coming up with its recommendation. It also took input from hundreds others who submitted comments, he said.

"The dam, since it was constructed, was built in size to provide a certain level of flood protection to downstream communities," Hildebrand said. "The quantity of sediment that we're recommending to remove allows us to provide historical levels of flood protection to the downstream communities."

Hildebrand said he couldn't comment on the lawsuit, since he hadn't received a copy.