

The Editor,
Oroville Mercury-Register

August 3rd 2018

Dear Sir,

Risa Johnson's informative article (August 1 2018) on the four-person Independent Review Board's (IRB) first report on the DWR's plans for the dam may have given some false impressions to the casual reader.

First, the IRB is hardly independent. The members were appointed by the DWR, paid by the DWR and their report was to the DWR, subject perhaps to editing by the DWR.

Second, the members of this Board do not appear to be experts in what needs to be done to properly address the root causes underlying the gated spillway failures and the related other developments: emergency spillway, gated spillway headworks, leaking through the dam and the organizational issues at DWR pointed out in the Independent Forensic Team's comprehensive report on the spillway.

Third, the report only deals with the DWR's plans and their chosen priorities. This is hardly a comprehensive report on Dam safety nor on the DWR's selection of priorities.

The report, far from being independent or comprehensive, is evidence of a continuation of the chronic inward-looking approach taken by the DWR to its operation of the Dam which brought us the broken spillway.

A proper understanding of this report gives little comfort to those of us who believe that a comprehensive independent forensic assessment of the risks associated with the Dam is essential to the establishment of trust in the DWR by the downstream communities. Thousands of citizens signed a petition asking for such an assessment. Dianne Feinstein has made provision for an independent assessment in the 2019 Federal budget. But, the DWR continues to resist truly independent professional commentary.

Only four of the five proposed members of this Board have been appointed. The fifth member should be selected by the truly independent local oversight committee recently formed by James Gallagher and Jim Nielsen. Perhaps they would appoint a genuinely independent forensic engineer. The DWR has asked this Ad Hoc Committee to comment on the IRB report. It will be interesting to learn what they have to say.

Sincerely,

Robert Bateman
Feather River Recovery Alliance