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## **Could this ... become this?**

### **Proposal would turn undeveloped land into Stockton lake**

STOCKTON -- Someday, children may splash the summer away in the now-dusty Calaveras River channel in central Stockton.

Stockton East Water District General Manager Kevin Kauffman is proposing that his agency and the city team up to create a seasonal lake at the confluence of the Stockton Diverting Canal and the old Calaveras River channel.

Stockton East would benefit by having a place to let water percolate into the ground, putting as much as 13,000 acre-feet of water each year back into the depleted water table under Stockton, Kauffman said.

Stockton residents would benefit by having a place to picnic, swim, boat and fish, similar to Lodi Lake Park and its seasonal impoundment operated by the Woodbridge Irrigation District.

"It is something to certainly look at," said Pamela Sloan, director of Parks and Recreation for Stockton. "It may have some value to the citizens of Stockton. I know that the setup in Lodi is very accommodating and inviting."

Lodi Lake is a hit with residents, serving as a summer swimming hole and as host to events ranging from fireworks to wine festivals.

"It's very popular from a rental perspective," Lodi Parks and Recreation Director Tony Goehring said. "It is really a venue that we can host a lot of special events."

The site sits in the middle of northeast Stockton's housing boom. The plywood of unfinished roofs on new homes is visible north and south of the proposed lake. And Stockton already owns a slice of undeveloped park land on the north shore of the Calaveras channel just west of the proposed site.

Kauffman said the water district would install the dam around April 10 each year and keep water backed up behind it until Oct. 15. During the winter, the river channel would be left open to allow flood water to escape.

"We get recharge, and we can design it in such a way that it is fish friendly," Kauffman said.

Fish are an issue because steelhead and sometimes salmon travel up the river to spawn, especially in high-flow years. Stockton East is preparing a habitat conservation plan to protect steelhead, and federal authorities recently designated the Calaveras as habitat critical to the steelhead's survival.

Officials with both agencies have only just begun to consider the idea and don't know how much such a park would cost or who would pay for it.

A study of groundwater problems now under way has already determined the Calaveras River channel is an effective route for putting water back underground.

San Joaquin County cities and farms are pumping water out of the ground faster than it's replaced. The sinking groundwater table is sucking salt pollution eastward from the Delta, threatening well water quality.

Stockton Mayor Ed Chavez said he's well aware of the need to replenish the aquifer under Stockton and is willing to explore creating a park.

"We ought to take a close look at whatever cost-benefit analysis is done," Chavez said. "Just on the surface, it has potential."

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Lodi Lake Park would serve as a good study for the proposed Stockton venture. Residents use the lake for a variety of activities such as swimming, fireworks displays and special events

Credit: DAVID FINCHhe Record



Where the Stockton Diverting Canal and the old Calaveras River channel converge in east Stockton is where Stockton East Water District General Manager Kevin Kauffman proposes creating a Stockton lake

Credit: DAVID FINCHhe Record

## Proposed Stockton Lake Park

Stockton East Water District General Manager Kevin Kauffman has proposed that his district and Stockton collaborate to create a seasonal water park in the middle of Stockton. A temporary dam would back up water from April through October to help recharge the groundwater table.



Source: Stockton East Water District RICK HUDOCK/The Record