

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

August 22, 2017

St. Francis Dam Memorial

The St. Francis Dam, built in the mid-1920s, was located in the San Francisquito Canyon about 40 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and approximately 10-miles north of the present day city of Santa Clarita.

Just before midnight on the evening of March 12, 1928, the dam catastrophically failed, resulting in a devastating flood that caused the immediate death of more than 60 St. Francis Dam workers and ultimately the death of more than 350 individuals as the 55-foot high wall of water moved through the Santa Clara River Valley. The collapse of the dam is considered by many to be one of the worst American civil engineering disasters of the 20th century.

Today, the only visible remains of the dam are weathered, broken chunks of gray concrete and the rusted handrails that lined the top of the dam. The site is often subject to the theft of historic artifacts, graffiti, and vandalism. While the site of the disaster is registered as California Historical Landmark #919, there has been no County recognition of the events of March 12, 1928 nor the devastating loss of life that occurred.

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H.R. 2156, introduced by Congressman Knight and co-sponsored by Congresswoman Brownley, passed the House on July 11, 2017 is pending before the Senate. H.R. 2156 will provide for the establishment of a permanent national memorial and monument to commemorate those who lost their lives as a result of the collapse of the St. Francis Dam on March 12, 1928. It is time we honor those who lost their lives, were injured, or dislocated by designating and protecting this historic site.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct our Washington D.C. Advocates to support H.R. 2156 (Knight) and send a 5 signature letter in support to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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