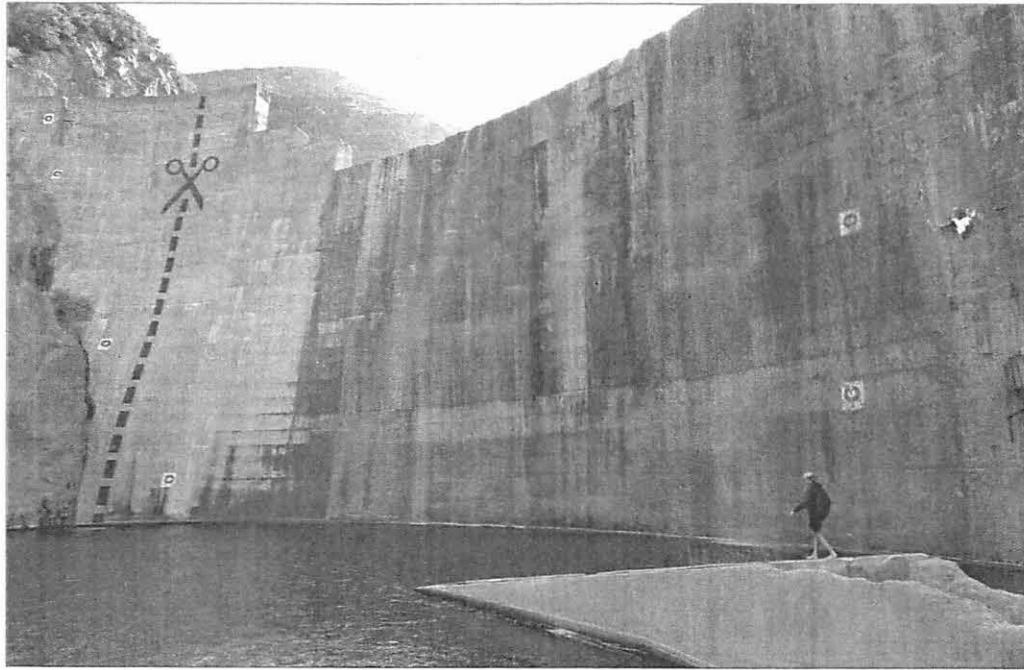


AN ARTSY SOLUTION FOR DAM'S ENIGMA



Paul Jenkin walks below Matilija Dam, where an anonymous graffiti artist recently painted a pair of scissors on the defunct dam that needs to be torn down.

■ **Graffiti**
draws grins
as few doubt
barrier's fate

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Exactly how to tear down Matilija Dam has been a debate for years.

But some enterprising graffiti artist has a simple solution: Use a pair of 28-foot-tall scissors.

Sometime around Sept. 7, a gi-

ant pair of scissors was painted on the face of the 200-foot dam along with 8-foot-tall dotted lines guiding where the massive shears should go.

It was no teenage kid with a spray can who pulled this off.

The dotted line runs from the top of the defunct concrete dam down to the waterline. It likely took at least two people rappelling the face of the

dam — one to hold a stencil, another to spray the black paint that forms the images.

"It took some planning, for sure," said Paul Jenkin, director of the Matilija Coalition, who first saw the painting last week. "I thought it was pretty cool."

See **SCISSORS, 2A**

Ventura County Star
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SCISSORS from 1A

Nobody has taken credit for the graffiti, which is in the same vein of Earth First! or other environmental groups that use guerilla techniques to promote their ideals.

"It's completely humorous," said Jeff Pratt, director of the Ventura County Public Works Agency. The county owns the dam and has been part of the long process to get the silt-choked dam removed.

"There is no doubt that the dam has lost its utility and needs to come out," he said. "How it is going to come out is the subject of conversation."

The suggestion of scissors won't be going away anytime soon.

Pratt said the county likely won't try to remove the graffiti and isn't investigating who did it.

"I think everyone thought it was funny, and I can't see the harm in leaving it there," he said.

There is a series of anchors and bolts at the top of the dam that fire depart-

ments and police agencies use to practice rappelling, so whoever painted the dam likely used those, he said.

There is widespread support to tear down the dam — Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard appeared in a Super Bowl halftime commercial a few years ago advocating it — but the problem is agreeing on how. The challenge is what to do with the fine particles of sediment that have built up behind the dam.

The fines, as they are called, could muck up the water supply for the Casitas Municipal Water District downstream.

Pratt, Jenkin and others are meeting today to talk about the newest idea, which involves drying up the creek behind the dam and digging a trough through the dirt. The removed sediment would be placed in piles and covered with vegetation for a mile along the creek in hopes of creating a natural stream contour.

If this becomes the agreed-upon solution, there is still the question of how to pay for the project, now estimated at more than \$140 million.