

1st Quarter 2008

# TID TIDINGS

Newsletter of the Tulare Irrigation District



## Board of Directors

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*The Board of Directors holds regular public meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 9:00 am at the District office in Tulare.*

## FRIANT REALITY CHECK OVER SAN JOAQUIN FISHERY AGREEMENT

The plan to restore a salmon fishery on the San Joaquin River inches closer to reality with negotiations wrapping up on a federal bill which will authorize its implementation. The plan emerged out of a settlement of a lawsuit Friant has been struggling with for 20 years now, a lawsuit which challenged the validity of Friant water contracts and demanded water flows down the river to bring back salmon up river from the ocean and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The carefully negotiated settlement calls for a companion effort to make up for the Friant water losses to the river; however, there emerged doubts that the looming water losses could really be compensated for. Complicating the issue has been the inability of Congress to quickly come up with the money to initiate the plans.

The final form of the bill before Congress – an improvement over the original settlement agreement – contains the following new USBR commitments to:

- Expand the Friant-Kern and Madera canals, enabling districts like TID to import more San Joaquin water in wetter years
- Build interconnection facilities in Kern County, the final linkage on any future recapture plan for water sent down the San Joaquin for the fish
- Contribute federal dollars for up to 50% of cost for local projects to improve water management, groundwater recharge and banking.

These new programs are on top of the original provisions in the settlement obligating the USBR to implement a plan to recapture or recirculate water released down the river back to Friant users and to make available water at \$10 per acre-foot as payback for water contract reductions when needed for fishery releases.

Further, Friant districts will be given the opportunity to convert their limited-term contracts to perpetual contracts with no excess acreage limitations, things that will provide more water security and flexibility in water deliveries to Friant farmers. This opportunity comes with an obligation to pay off the capital debt owed to USBR up front rather than the current pay-off in the year 2030. This debt is now free of interest, and USBR has agreed to a reduction in future water charges to offset the financing costs needed to borrow funds to pay the capital off now. This up-front pay-off creates an infusion of money to jump start the settlement plans for both the river restoration and water make-up projects for Friant.

A pessimistic – some might say realistic – point of view might suggest that none of the above pluses, nor the settlement process itself, are an absolute guarantee. For starters, Congress must first pass the bill, and then there's the risk that federal funds will continue to be in short supply or that other disputes might yet arise in the ongoing efforts to keep the settlement on track. Virtually all of the Friant districts are well aware of these unknowns and yet they continue to feel that this uncharted course of action still beats the alternative of handing the matter back to the judge who by all accounts was getting ready to order water releases down the river in excess of what's called for in the settlement.

The TID board listened to all sides of the debate and its collective decision was not easily made. TID's legal counsel opinion, echoing all the other attorneys within the Friant Division, was to stay the course and support the legislation to enact the settlement. The Board felt this was in the best interests of TID landowners and, moreover, helped to keep the Friant family of districts intact. In the end, the east-side farming interests and urban communities have more to gain by sticking together and much to lose if they cannot act under a common cause and unifying goal. Having taken this stance, TID will strive to ensure that we do all we can to provide continued water service with the least amount of adverse impacts as a result of committing to this settlement plan.

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## New Office Location Confirmed

New Buildings - After selling our current property last fall on San Joaquin Ave. to the City of Tulare's Redevelopment Agency and thus committing to moving away, we found a suitable site and have begun the planning process for construction. TID has purchased 40 acres west of town situated on the northeast intersection of W. Prosperity Ave. and Road 68, and our administrative and O&M facilities are being sited on about 5 acres right at the corner. This site sits just about in the middle of the District and provides good passage to most of our service area and ready access to routes to our upstream diversion system in the Woodlake area. We anticipate a two-year effort to plan, design, obtain permits and build the new facilities.

The TID Board is looking to the future in this endeavor and is mindful of the costs involved. We had reached the point where, after getting nearly 60 years out of our current location, it was time to move with the idea of investing money now to buy another 60 years or more at a new location. We've agreed with the City to raze this site and leave nothing standing. With completion of a future developer's plans to build residential dwellings here, TID will be nothing but a memory after so many years on the corner of Cross Ave. and West St., the one-time edge of town. What we can take with us in terms of equipment and furnishings we will, but due to age much will be hauled away or sold.

The net cost of our new construction will be \$1.7 million, after applying the profit from the sale of our current 4-acre lot. TID has accumulated reserves of this magnitude earmarked for this purpose, and the Board is therefore confident that neither water sale rates nor assessments need be increased to cover this planned budget.

The Board selected Taylor-Teeter Partnership in Visalia as the architect to assist in preparing the facility site plan and design of buildings. In selecting this firm, the Board is assured that the relocation project can be completed on time and within budget. Just as important, the Board feels that this firm can produce a utilitarian design that is functional and appropriate for the farmer public who pays the bills and is served by the District.

Sale of Surplus Property – There is a house and associated buildings and acreage fronting Prosperity Ave. that is surplus to TID's needs. This 10 acres or so with the house is planned for resale as a separate parcel in the near future. Income from such a sale will help in further defraying the cost of new construction.

New Recharge Basin - The remaining 25 acres or so occupying the northern portion of the property is planned for the construction of a water regulation and groundwater recharge basin. We have taken soil borings on this property and a percolation basin at this site appears feasible. The new basin will be served by the Area 10 pipeline. We are looking at extending the pipeline to the south, under Prosperity Ave., into the Rocky Ford Canal and adding a new connection to the pipeline from the lower end of the basin. This will allow the basin to aid in ditch system water regulation by providing for water diverted into the basin to be reddiverted into the canal. TID staff is applying for a state grant to help fund this new basin project.

By capitalizing on an opportune time to sell our present property, combining the relocation project with the creation of a new water recharge/regulation project, and utilizing revenues from reselling a portion of the new parcel, we feel that these related efforts will lead to improved service to our landowners at the least cost. It won't be long before you might see signs of this historic transition – pulling up stakes here in town and construction underway at our new home.



TID's New Property—Looking NE from Corner of Prosperity & Rd. 68

*“We anticipate a two-year effort to plan, design, obtain permits and build the new facilities.”*

Overall, this winter's snow pack – which will generate our summer run supplies, looks pretty good. It's staying slightly above average for this time of year and that's a major improvement over last year, where the snow melt runoff was under 40% of average in the southern Sierra watersheds. Each of the first three winter months, December through February, produced decent storms with cold conditions resulting in a solid snow pack as of March 1<sup>st</sup>. We've had an ideal situation in these months in that rainfall in the foothills has tracked just under average, while the more-valued snow pack has been above average. March, however, is so far a duster and hopefully we can finish the month and move into April with some late-season storms. Not the kind that produce rain on snow already on the ground, but rather colder storms with at least some snow at higher elevations. This will help shore up the already promising winter season experienced so far.

Water has been drained out of Lake Kaweah several times this winter as required to main-

tain storage space for flood control purposes. Each drain down has lasted around 10 days and TID's share of water forced out of the lake has been small – about 8,700 AF in total. Once these releases are over and filling of the lake commences with the coming snow melt, we anticipate having about 70,000 AF of Kaweah water for TID's summer run. Couple that with at least 40,000 AF of Friant water and we'll have a total of 110,000 AF or more to divert into our canal and ditch system. Friant allotments declared by USBR are still on the conservative side, and we may receive another 20,000 AF from the Friant-Kern Canal, depending on unfolding conditions in the San Joaquin River watershed.

All in all, we're in good shape water supply-wise, considering that many folks were predicting another dry year on the heels of last year. Looking back over many years of history, records show that a single dry year is followed by another dry year more often than not, so it looks like we dodged the bullet this time around.

TID welcomes Marcia Bessinger as our Administrative Assistant. The wife of TID's O&M Superintendent Gene Bessinger, Marcia has been working as a temporary employee since last April. Marcia brings with her a previous stint in the water business, having worked as an executive secretary at the Friant Water Users Authority in Lindsay from 1987 through 1995. With this and her time as a temporary employee here, Marcia is hitting the ground with her feet running and is accomplishing much for us! In her free time Marcia enjoys spending time with family and friends. We wish success to her in her second "water career" and you'll no doubt be greeted by her on the phone or in person should you come to our office.



**JOINT PROJECT WITH TULARE**

TID and the City of Tulare have been working for awhile now on cooperative ways to deal with the expansion of town and its impacts on canals and ditches and underground water supplies. Farm ground previously using both TID water supplies and groundwater pumping when necessary are converted to lands with a permanent draw from the underground when urban development takes place. The City has been keen on assisting in projects and programs which will mitigate for this impact. For the first time, the City and TID have come together to purchase property that can be developed into a groundwater recharge basin providing benefits to both entities.

The property, some 155 acres, is located about 5 miles east of town, very near TID's existing Creamline Basin along Ave. 256. One of TID's two larger waterways, the Main Canal, runs right through the property and can provide plenty of water when available to deliver to the future ponding basin. Both the City and TID moved swiftly last fall in securing the land, knowing that one of the challenges in building recharge basins is finding sizable acreage in the right locations that are up for sale. Harold Swall, a former director of TID from 1937 to 1950, used to reside on this property. Mr. Swall was instrumental in TID's negotiations in the 1940's with the U.S. to secure a contract for Friant water, no doubt to be the key supply source to be delivered to this new water recharge acreage.

This property met ours and the City's objectives, which are sites providing recharge benefits to City and farmer water wells, access to a TID canal, good soil percolation characteristics, and affordable pricing. The City possesses a major interest in the property and future project, committing to paying for 75% of all related costs. We and the City are seeking state grant funding for this joint project utilizing our respective contact points within state agricultural and municipal grant funding sources.

When ample water is available, TID plans to send water to this basin along with others that ring the City. Having more such basin sites in which to direct wet-year water will increase the amount that TID is able to percolate to the underground – the source of the City's municipal water supply. It is TID's benchmark to recharge at least 10,000 AF per year in this and the other targeted basins, and the City intends to point to such water added to the groundwater aquifer as a mitigating factor as new City wells are added with urban expansion in the area.

TID and the City working together on this endeavor represent an urban/agricultural partnership not often found here in the San Joaquin Valley. In many areas, agriculture and growing towns are at loggerheads, often fighting for limited water supplies and other growth-related issues. TID lauds the City for its vision as well as its awareness of the importance of water to our area. The City Council and TID Board are ever mindful of the need to sustain underground water supplies for future generations of both urban dwellers and farmers alike. We trust this productive partnership will continue long into the future.



New Basin Site (outlined in red)

*Tulare Irrigation District  
1350 W. San Joaquin Ave.  
Tulare, California 93274*

*LOOK INSIDE...*

*Friant Reality Check Over  
San Joaquin Fishery  
Agreement  
New Office Location  
Employee News  
Water Supply Shaping Up  
Joint Project with Tulare*

*Visit Us At...[www.tulareid.org](http://www.tulareid.org)*



Founded in 1889, Tulare ID was one of the first irrigation districts in California. Its purpose is to serve the water supply needs of the greater Tulare area, a rich and agriculturally diverse region within the Southern San Joaquin Valley. The water provided comes locally from the Kaweah River and is also imported from the Federal Central Valley Project.

### Important Dates to Remember

April

May

June

1<sup>st</sup>—2007-2008 Tax Assessments Mailed

20<sup>th</sup>—Second Installment Tax Assessments Due