

TID TIDINGS

Newsletter of the Tulare Irrigation District

MAJOR STATE WATER LEGISLATION PASSES

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The Board of Directors holds regular public meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 9:00 am at the District office in Tulare.

It's been a long time since our state legislature has focused on water issues, at least long enough to produce legislation that addresses them in any serious way. As you've probably heard, that happened in early November after months of intense negotiations largely along partisan lines. Heralded as the most significant water legislation to be signed by a California governor since the State Water Project was authorized in 1960, what is now law includes five bills which entail (1) a process to proceed towards construction of a peripheral canal around the Delta to move water exports, (2) authorization to spend \$3 billion on water storage projects, (3) advances in water conservation, (4) requirements for groundwater supply monitoring, and (5) stiffer water rights enforcement provisions; and an upcoming bond measure to issue \$11.14 billion to pay for the water storage and other water-related projects throughout the state.



Major Water Legislation Emerges from Sacramento

How might we in this agricultural area expect to be impacted by this sweeping legislative package? While there are a lot of implementation details yet to be worked out over time, here's what bill analysts are saying:

The Delta – Assuming the peripheral canal is built someday, we can expect that the Friant supply will be less at risk to being diverted down the San Joaquin River to meet historic water rights holders on the lower river. Moreover, some of Friant's objectives in the NRDC v. USBR Settlement will be more feasible with the canal in operation.

Water Storage – The bill dealing with storage includes surface reservoirs, and the Temperance Flat site on the San Joaquin River is recognized in the bill as one potential site out of three front runners for funding. Competition for the funds from other regions with their own surface or groundwater storage sites, however, will likely be fierce.

Conservation – Ag districts like TID with CVP contracts will be essentially grandfathered in terms of compliance with the water conservation provisions of this bill. Our USBR-mandated water conservation plan will suffice to meet the bill's requirements.

Groundwater – We, and other districts in the Kaweah basin, already conduct extensive data-gathering to track depth to groundwater. We will need to present to the state our protocol in this regard and submit the data directly to the state. With this in place in a fashion acceptable to the state DWR, we should not see any major change in the current course of business regarding groundwater compliance as specified in the bill.

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GROUNDWATER REPORT

It's that time again where we provide information on what's happening to our groundwater levels in and around TID. They're still headed south, probably to no one's surprise. Maybe it is of little comfort, but the drop from the fall of last year to this year averaged about 6 ft, a lesser change than the 13 ft drop from 2007 to 2008. The prior year's interval was a drop of 17 ft. The accompanying chart shows these changes as well as the individual changes within the three portions (easterly, middle and westerly) of the District. These data correlate generally with each year's rain and snowfall amounts. This year averaged about 85% in precipitation in the Fresno and Tulare County areas, last year the average was 85%, and the year prior was even drier at 60%.

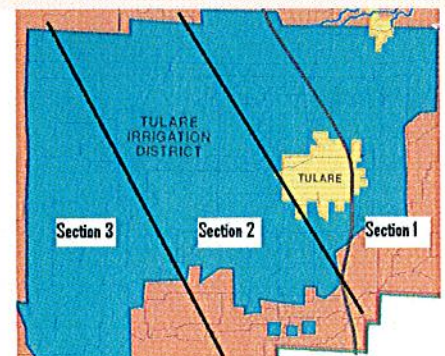
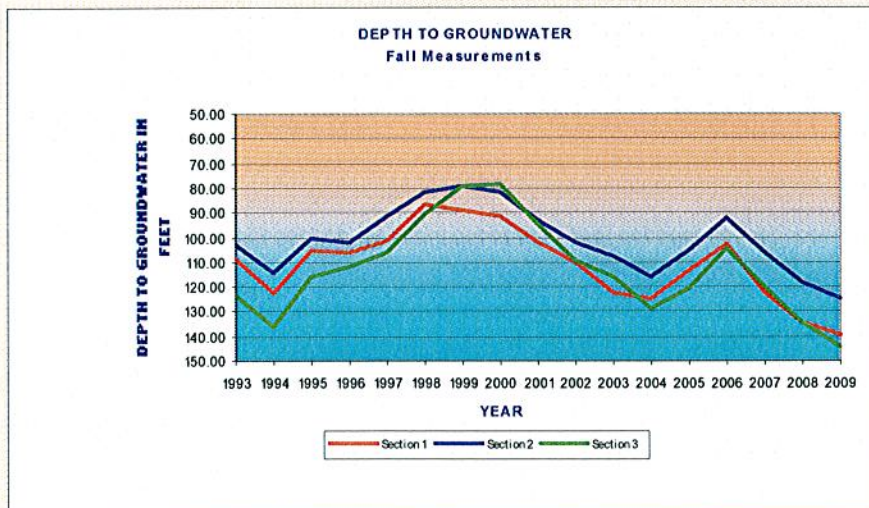
TID is certainly not alone in this trend that seems to be spiraling downward without end. While depths to groundwater here are around 130 to 140 ft, other areas of the San Joaquin Valley are staggeringly lower – many hundreds of feet in some cases. In such areas, well drilling and deepening costs, as well as power costs to run pumps, are likewise much higher. However, if our downward trend is not abated, these neighboring areas with higher pumping costs portend what TID growers will at some point down the road be facing with their own well operations. Unlike other parts of the Valley where groundwater is essentially being mined without any means of replenishment, the Kaweah Basin can be readily restored – if we have sufficient surface water to do so. Depths to water are such that the numerous recharge (percolation) basins and earthen delivery channels throughout the area can provide a direct and immediate benefit to our vast underground reservoir.

As we've reported in past issues, TID is doing all it can to

sustain local and imported water deliveries to this region and is taking strides to expand our recharge capabilities. Grant monies have been secured for two new recharge basins, one in partnership with the City of Tulare. We are initiating an extensive study, also with grant funding, of our entire water conveyance system from its head works along the Kaweah River and Friant-Kern Canal down to our most westerly basins to determine bottlenecks and other operational limitations. We are well aware of the need now to capitalize even more than we have in the past on the infrequent wet seasons to bring in as much surface water as possible to replenish the underground.

Despite these efforts, many water officials in the Valley don't see any major reversal in the downward trend in groundwater levels. Recent history suggests we'll see slight recovery in periodic wet years, but not enough to supplant the declines in the average and drier years. History tempers the view of this being an unprecedented occurrence. The struggle for adequate water supplies in this region has been playing out for over a hundred years or more. A fully reliable water supply for agriculture and city demands was never assured in the past and neither is it today.

So, what do we do? Above all else, we keep trying. Staying aggressive in importing water to the region to recharge groundwater and offset pumping is a must. Just as important, our region needs to become very proactive in demonstrating active groundwater programs via our local authorities – to wit TID's Groundwater Management Plan – which can show improvements in the long run. If we don't, then we can anticipate that the state might step in and ultimately implement the only solution remaining, that being to restrict groundwater pumping to amounts that put the brakes on our basin overdraft.



EMPLOYEE NEWS

The District welcomes its new ditch tender/ditch maintenance worker, Joe Mello. Mr. Mello was raised in Tulare and was previously employed by Christiansen Group Architects. His family includes wife Monique, Alexandria 5 and Joseph 2 years old. In Joe's spare time he enjoys quad riding at Pismo dunes. Welcome aboard, Joe!



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Water Rights – The water rights bill impacts primarily the Delta region, where in-Delta diverters currently do not have to report their water usage as other areas in the state (including the Kaweah River) do. We do not anticipate any significant impacts as a result of this particular bill.

Water Bond – The bond measure, which will likely be placed on the November 2010 ballot, contains many components which can provide funding for water projects and programs for the Kaweah basin as well as Friant districts. TID is prepared to develop and submit proposals in conjunction with other regional water districts to secure some of these funds for projects which will enhance our water supplies and water management capabilities.

As with all major legislation, this package of bills has not been universally supported. While the Friant Water Authority worked closely with the bill sponsors to shape the bill and thereby ultimately supported its final form, others did not. The Delta and Sacramento regions remain skeptical that their water rights will remain unfettered as the implementation process unfolds. Others feel that the bill didn't go far enough in mandating the peripheral canal or new water storage. Some feel too that the myriad of projects and programs spelled out in the \$11 billion bond package represent typical "pork" and may wind up as unnecessary expenditures just to get buy-in for the whole package. Some are wary of the new bureaucracy that's been created—there are numerous new oversight entities, plans to be developed, and state policies to be written—and the red tape that will go with it. Still others on the environmental side think the bills don't go far enough in terms of mandatory water conservation or reservation of water for the environment.

Regardless of varied opinions at this point, the five bills are now the law of the land. TID will be doing what it can to be in an advantageous position to secure funding and to comply with bill provisions and requirements in the most efficient manner possible. The biggest concern now is securing passage of the bond measure. There is by no means any guarantee that it will pass in this economic climate and with the state's budget deep in red ink. A huge public education effort is being planned to steer the state's population towards a favorable vote. A sobering final comment: Should the bill not pass, we could be left in a situation with new laws and mandates to comply with and no state funding to help us do so at the local level.

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Grant Money for Farmers

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Want help in making your farm operation more efficient? TID is making available \$4 million in federal grant funds from the NRCS over the next 5 years for District farmers. The funds are for on-farm projects to advance water conservation or improve water quality. Project categories include micro or sub-surface irrigation systems, tail water recovery, pipeline installations and other water management projects. The NRCS funds will pay for one-half of the project's cost. A letter detailing the program has recently been mailed to all TID water users. Call Aaron Fukuda at the District office for more information.

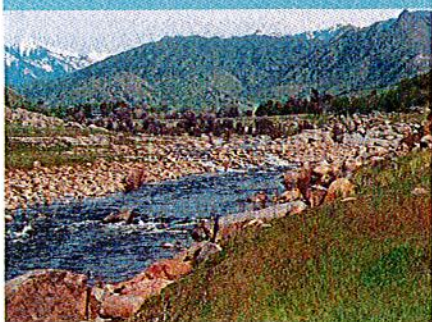
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF OF THE TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT WISH YOU AND YOURS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!

*Tulare Irrigation District
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LOOK INSIDE...

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Groundwater Report
Employee News*

*Visit Us At...
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

January	12th-Tulare Irrigation District Board Meeting
February	9th-11th World Ag Expo
March	Bureau of Reclamation landholder forms must be on file before receiving Federal water