



# 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 2nd Tuesday of every month at 9:00 am at the District office in Tulare.*

## WATER FOR MOONEY GROVE PARK

**W**e're all familiar with Mooney Grove, the 150-acre park nestled in between Visalia and Tulare and top spot for many a picnic, birthday party and the like. Big and exciting changes are in store for this picturesque site, beginning with the County's use of state grant funds for a complete reconstruction of the park's museum and plans for many other park improvements.

The park is about 100 years old, and the large variety of trees throughout the park are nearly as old too. The numerous trees and grass landscaping are all irrigated with one well located within the park. The well fills the duck and recreational boating pond, and from there water is fed into the park irrigation system. Like many older wells in the area, this one at times cannot keep up with the thirst gen-

erated by the extensive vegetative area. Skirting across the southeasterly portion of the park are two of TID's water channels - Cameron Creek and the North Branch Canal. It seemed a natural for TID and the County to explore ways in which surface water could be delivered to the park to step up its irrigation capabilities as well as provide for enhanced water recharge to the underground for the area.

It turns out that TID in fact did, on a rather informal basis, deliver water to the park many years ago and older turnouts to Mooney Grove remain in the Cameron/North Branch system still today. The County and TID discussions of resurrecting this practice got going and then other possibilities surfaced which bore the makings of a multi-agency program for

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## RESTORATION OF THE SAN JOAQUIN— STILL IN FLUX

**F**or over two years, the fate of the Friant water contracts and future supply has been in the hands of the U.S. Congress, where a bill to implement the settlement of the underlying lawsuit remains in the wings awaiting a House and Senate vote. Procedural delays in D.C. and further refinements to keep all the involved parties at home on board has resulted in an ongoing delay in moving the river deal forward. Having much bigger financial crises to deal with, the Congress didn't address the so-called omnibus bill (containing some 150 separate pieces of legislation, including the Settlement bill) in its lame-duck session held shortly after the Presidential election. How quickly the bill surfaces for a vote next year is not known. It could happen in early January, under the new Congress and prior to President-elect Obama taking office on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. Or, any action could be held off until later in the year.

Anxiously awaiting the outcome the Friant districts, by in large, have remained steadfast in their support of the Settlement and implementing legislation. However, a few



*Waterway in Mooney Grove Park*

*The picturesque waterway is TID's North Branch Canal which runs through Mooney Grove Park. The North Branch Canal delivers water to various ponding basins and farms on the north and west of the District. The beautiful, old concrete bridge pictured was in place by 1915. The land for Mooney Grove Park was donated to Tulare County by Hugh Mooney in 1909. Mr. Mooney stipulated that the land should be maintained as a public park for the enjoyment of everyone.*

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mutual water benefits. First off, the Kaweah Delta WCD, during the near-flooding conditions experienced in the winters of 2005-06, was looking to Mooney Grove as a place to lay off potentially damaging flood waters when sent downstream from Terminus Dam. Secondly, the City of Tulare was actively working with TID in finding new ways in which water could be recharged into the aquifer that is tapped by the City's growing well field. These efforts merged into a five-agency water project at Mooney Grove. The project eventually unfolded to provide:

- ⇒ Ditch water for the County to be delivered for park irrigation when available.
- ⇒ Annexation of the park into TID, allowing for the sale and delivery of water to the County.
- ⇒ Financial contributions by the City of Tulare to cover TID taxes and a portion of County water purchases.
- ⇒ Development of a 5-acre water recharge basin at the east end of the park for additional water recharge.
- ⇒ Engineering and financial contributions by TID and KDWCD for turnout and delivery facilities to the park.
- ⇒ Delivery of flood release waters to the park by KDWCD and TID when possible.

While this creative project is relatively small and adds only a fraction of what will be needed to fully offset regional overdraft, it does demonstrate that multiple agencies can cooperate and work together for the common good when the opportunity presents itself. The project too may be a catalyst for other large-scale plans to achieve additional recharge in ways which will be of benefit to the County at large as well as the cities of Tulare and Visalia by the water agencies which manage this limited but important resource for the area.



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districts are having reservations to one degree or another and have evidenced this by giving notice of an intent to void the Settlement. Madera ID had done so last spring but later withdrew, and more recently Chowchilla WD and Tulare ID followed suit. Both expressed concerns that the legislation was being rushed through without adequate funding protections and was alienating some other agricultural districts on the west side. Most of these concerns have since been resolved with a new amendment to the bill and TID, as a member of the Friant Water Users Authority, recently upheld its previous vote to support the Settlement legislation as amended. Chowchilla withdrew its membership in the FWUA some months ago and thus didn't vote.

On top of rumblings within Friant, some of the local agricultural community have been voicing opposition to the Settlement. Letters of concern have been put out by the Tulare and Kings county farm bureaus and groups of notable farmers in Tulare, Kings and Fresno county areas expressing criticism of the Settlement and questioning Friant's unyielding determination to move the bill through Congress. Given the needed action in Washington, local congressmen play a role as well. Senator Costa and Rep. Radanovich, sponsors of the bill in their respective houses, remain in support of the bill but continue to gage the support of the local Friant family of districts and surrounding communities. On the other hand, Rep. Nunes, representing the Tulare County area heavily dependent on Friant water imports, has remained an opponent of the current form of Settlement, stating that it is woefully underfunded and won't make good on its promises of return water to Friant.

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#### **ROGER HORTON CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT**



Roger Horton started his career with a bang on July 4, 1983! Positions held have included ditch tender, equipment operator and currently weed department head.

Roger was born in Lindsay, California. His family includes his wife Sandy, four children and four grandchildren. In his spare time, he enjoys archery, camping, hunting, fishing and he has a history of motor cross.

**Thanks for your 25 years of dedication and hard work for the Tulare Irrigation District, Roger!**

## *Employee News*



Roy Bell started his career with Tulare Irrigation District on August 4, 2003. Positions held have included equipment operator and ditch tending for Evans Ditch Company, Tulare Irrigation Company and upstream of TID.

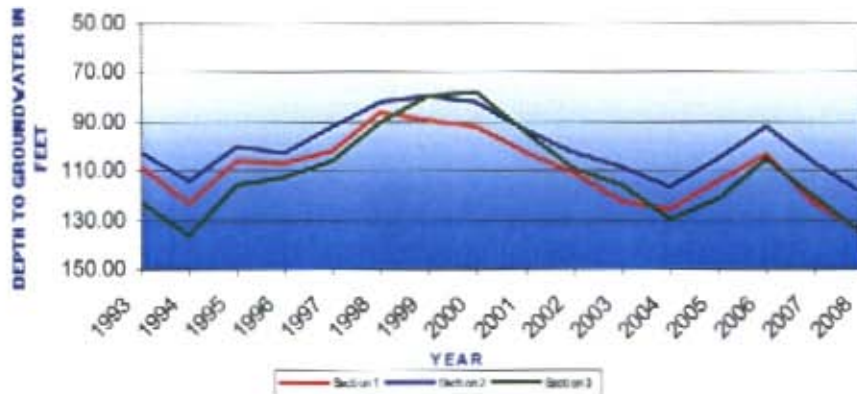
Roy was born in Commerce, Texas. His family includes his wife Karen and two sons. In his spare time, he enjoys camping and house boating.

**Thanks for your 5 years of dedication and hard work for the Tulare Irrigation District, Roy!**

#### **ROY BELL CELEBRATES 5 YEARS WITH TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

# GROUNDWATER REPORT

DEPTH TO GROUNDWATER  
Fall Measurements



Our fourth quarter issue of TID Tidings has been reporting on groundwater conditions and changes from a year ago. No surprises here - levels have dropped once again in this below average year water supply-wise. Across the District, levels are about 13 ft below what they were last fall. This is on the heels of last year's drop of 17 ft. So, the two dry years of 2007 and 2008 and associated pumping to meet farm and urban demands have more than wiped out the gains in groundwater storage achieved in the two previous years which were very wet. Not a record we would like to see newly established, but this year's levels are at an all time low, dropping just below the previous low set in 1994.

Bear in mind that Sacramento has been watching groundwater management at the local level for some time. During the last several years, legislation has been put forth that would require unregulated groundwater basins such as ours in Tulare County to measure groundwater pumping and report the data to the state. Further, some bills would have required that local basin managers determine pumping rates would need to be throttled back to return their basins back to sustainable levels and begin the steps to bring that about. Due primarily to resistance from the agricultural sector in the San Joaquin Valley, this legislation has not gone forward, at least not yet.

The current drought, urban growth, the push for more surface water reservoirs by the water community, plus the fact that California is one of only two states that does not regulate groundwater usage, these are all pressure points urging Sacramento lawmakers to step in and do something. Without some evidence that local groundwater managers are addressing the problems, we will not be successful forever in keeping the state out of local groundwater controls. When ditch water is scarce, TID farmers are admittedly part of the problem, particularly with demands for water increasing due to upward trends in double and triple cropping. However, we can point to TID's foresight decades ago in contracting for imported water from the CVP to deal with overdraft, its ongoing partnership with the City of Tulare in aiding the City in offsetting its increased urban pumping, and its recent planning to expand groundwater recharge capabilities which will be tapped more aggressively in wet years.

Also, TID staff are involved in both local and state levels in the development of local policies and state legislation which may address groundwater management in a balanced manner. By interacting in this way, we help ensure that any new policies or regulations involving groundwater management will be reasonable and allow for practical measures which both help the groundwater basin as a long-term resource and preserve the productive agricultural economy of the region as well.

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There are generally three camps within which the opinion makers and activists, both within the Friant fold and without, can be identified. They encompass, one, those who support the Settlement and implementing legislation as is; two, those who want to bolster the Settlement and make it better for Friant and the east side; and three, those who have apparently reached a level of frustration to suggest the notion that Friant should force a return to the court for a trial and judge decision.

The support camp feels strongly that, despite its apparent shortcomings, this negotiated Settlement deal is better than the alternative of going back to court and facing a ruling by the judge. Largely at the counsel of the Friant attorneys, they felt that Friant's legal strategies for success have been largely shot down during the 18 years of incremental court decisions and the ultimate trial could result in the final death knell for Friant. They opine that Friant has little influence in the court process and a court ruling is likely to put in place a river watermaster which may make river flow decisions in a vacuum without interaction by Friant and with little involvement by USBR, the dam operator. They feel that if fish don't appear then the court will continue to intervene and call for more water. Further, while the judge cannot order the Friant districts to fund any river restoration, he could require USBR to undertake the project. It is argued that USBR would then in turn fund the massive effort as a reimbursable cost from the Friant contractors, if not the entire CVP. Lastly, the supporters point to the water management goal of the Settlement and improvements to it provided for in the legislation as well as the opportunity to improve upon some of the terms of their contracts. While the water management goal of restoring water losses back to Friant isn't perfect, it's not something the judge would reckon with given that the sole focus of a judgment would be on water flows for the river.

The camp urging improvements to the Settlement want more time and are uncomfortable with the latest rush to get the bill passed in D.C. They are uneasy with the latest changes that would pay for river improvements and water management goal projects based on future congressional appropriations. They point back to the original provisions that would have authorized all funds up front rather than doling them out over the next period of years. Perhaps more significantly, this group has awakened to the reality of Friant's dependence on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the current limited ability to recapture or recirculate Friant's river releases to recoup Settlement-required water losses. Until the means by which the key water management goal provisions speaking to this recapture/recirculation plan are better articulated, this

group wants the Settlement negotiators to go back to the table and work this out with the NRDC plaintiffs and USBR.

Lastly, the camp urging perhaps a return to court feels that the whole restoration plan will be a boondoggle for the record books. They feel there's little chance for salmon to sustain themselves in the warm waters of the San Joaquin and that the up to \$1 billion and maybe more of public funds spent in an attempt to accomplish this will be colossal waste. Not to mention the impacts within the Friant service area, where some of the most productive irrigated lands in the nation have prospered for decades thanks, in part, to Friant water supplies. Having little or no faith in the water management goal, they point out the absurdity of taking water away from a prospering and growing region already struggling with groundwater overdraft conditions which will worsen with the giving up of water for the river program. While they are unable to provide a "Plan B" to the predicament Friant faces in front of the judge, the group speculates that, sooner or later, reason will prevail and public opinion and perhaps the federal government will step in and override a court process gone awry.

Where does the TID board stand in all of this? First of all, they acknowledge that the three camps all have made some good points worthy of consideration. In the end, let's not forget that all three really are striving for the same outcome—to retain as much water as possible for the Valley's future. However, not feeling comfortable with the judge lowering the boom so to speak on Friant, TID's vote at Friant board meetings has been to stick with the Settlement course along with the vast majority of the member group.

Not forgotten in this decision is the hope that, whatever course Friant charts for itself, the member districts will move forward in lock step, for our collective influence will be far more successful than for each district to seek its own destiny alone. Likewise, the three divergent camps need to cooperatively work with each other and within the framework of whatever action is ultimately taken in this important issue, whether it be a court struggle or a tedious process of implementing a settlement of the case outside of court. As we all know, continued bickering among ourselves will not be for the region's betterment and will, instead, result in further fragmentation of a region urgently needing to show solidarity in the face of increased infighting for a limited but precious resource—our Valley's water.

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**LOOK INSIDE...**

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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**

January	
February	10-12—World Ag Expo
March	Bureau of Reclamation landholder forms must be on file before receiving federal water