



Lower Tule River

Irrigation District

LOWER TULE LEGEND

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Water News</i>	2
<i>Enlargement</i>	2
<i>Board Info</i>	3
<i>Staff Info</i>	3
<i>Back Page News</i>	4

LONG TERM FISCAL ISSUES

BOARD CONSIDERS VARIOUS COST RECOVERY METHODS

Faced with the increasing cost of water, the Board of Directors is conducting a detailed analysis of the best way to provide a viable water supply to the farmers in Lower Tule.

While the District has been very successful in holding, and in some cases reducing, internal operations costs, the price of acquiring a water supply has increased substantially over the past 10-15 years. Whether it's new fees imposed by the State or increased environmental and operations charges from the federal government, the District's cost of water rises each year. While some of those costs are collected through the water rate, the District often charges far less than what it actually costs to bring the water into the District, particularly in dryer years. As an example, in 2004 the water rate would need to be set at \$70 per acre-foot (instead of \$45) to recover all the costs the District has to pay for the 2004 water supply.

Over the past several years, the Board has relied on other sources of revenue to make up the difference. In most years the District can exchange or transfer water which brings in supplemental revenue. In addition, the District has invest-

ments in the Success Power Plant and the Cross Valley Canal, both of which provide money to offset the cost of water to the growers. These measures, while effective, are still only "stop-gaps" to the larger issue facing the District. How valuable is the water?

That question was asked at a landowner meeting held in late April, and the resounding response was that water is the lifeblood for the farmers in Lower Tule and must be preserved. There also appeared to be a willingness, by those in attendance, to consider different methods for cost recovery some of which may differ from past practices. For instance, would it be better to increase the water rate, or perhaps have a standby charge of some amount to cover the fixed costs incurred every year? Is there a major urban player with whom the District could partner in an effort to stabilize rates? Perhaps some combination of the three might be the answer to long-term fiscal stability.

The bottom line is that the Board will be discussing and taking action on this issue over the course of the next year. You can be assured that no final decision will be made without further input from the landowners in the District.

WATER SUPPLY NEWS

FIVE DRY YEARS AND STILL COUNTING

What was originally shaping up to be a respectable water year, ended up being significantly below average. The runoff on the Tule River was a paltry 22% of average, while the San Joaquin (the source of 75% of the Districts water) was 55% of average.

Once completed, the District will have delivered less than 100,000 acre-feet for irrigation during the period of May through August 2004. By comparison, the chart below shows the amount of water brought into the District each year since 1996:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Acre-Feet</u>
1996	304,000
1997	278,000
1998	343,000
1999	180,000
2000	228,000
2001	102,000
2002	129,000
2003	188,000
2004 <i>(est.)</i>	94,000

An average water supply should provide the District with approximately 250,000 acre-feet of

schedulable irrigation water. As you can see, we have only gotten close to that number once in the last six years.

The water supply, or lack thereof, is having a significant impact on the groundwater levels within the District. The spring 2004 measurements indicated a district average depth to groundwater of 125 feet, with some areas measuring as deep as 225 feet. With the inevitable decline of groundwater during the summer months, we can be certain that our groundwater levels this fall will be the deepest they have been since the District was formed.

The District works hard to provide as much water as possible to our growers each year. Even during the latest dry cycle we have brought in an additional 100,000 acre-feet by making purchases and exchanges with other Districts throughout the state.

Here's hoping that 2005 ends the current drought cycle and yields a bountiful water supply.

Visit the Irrigation Training and Research Center for the latest in irrigation management practices



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ENLARGEMENT PROJECT FACES HURDLES

The much debated and long anticipated enlargement of the Success Reservoir is once again facing some temporary, albeit significant, obstacles.

The enlargement project, which

began the paperwork phase in the early 1980's, has been authorized by Congress for construction, and when completed, will increase the storage level in the lake from just over 80,000 acre-feet to 120,000

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

acre-feet. It was anticipated construction would begin this spring and be completed in 2005. However, two new hurdles are now challenging the project. First, the State of California's 2004/05 Budget did not include any money to cover the State's share of the project cost. This is expected to be a short term problem and is largely a reaction to overall state fiscal issues. The State had provided construction money in the three previous years.

The larger issue of concern relates to the seismic stability of the dam. While they have been aware of the problem for many years, the Corps of Engineers is now in the final stages of identifying the best form of remediation. It should be noted that there

is no imminent problems facing the dam. The seismic issue was raised as part of a broader review of all Corps projects nationwide. The concern is related to the stability of the dam in the event of a major earthquake. While the dam would not fail, it could "slump" which would increase the chance of failure at a later date. Until the Corps identifies the solution to the problem, they have suspended work on the enlargement project. It is expected that the preferred repair method will be selected in late summer of 2004. At that time work will again resume on the enlargement project. Both the seismic remediation and the enlargement should be completed by 2007 or 2008.

BOWMAN RETURNS

Following the resignation of his daughter, Diane Bowman-Friend, long time Director Bob Bowman has returned to his old seat on the Board. While there were several landowners interested in the open seat, the Board selected Bowman with the understanding that he did not wish to seek re-election upon the expiration of his term in November of 2005.

The Board decided that instead of holding a special election or appointing one landowner over another, the wise thing to do was ask Bowman to fill out the term and let the landowners choose their representative at the next election scheduled for November of 2005.

BURTON RETIRES

Long time Maintenance Superintendent James "Pat" Burton has retired from the District. Burton began his employment with the District in 1960 working as a ditch-tender. Following a brief stint with Cal-Trans, he returned to work for the District in 1972 and stayed until his retirement in March of this year. All told, Pat worked for the District longer than any other employee in our history, more than 42 years. The District thanks Pat for his many years of hard work and dedication and wish he and his wife, Doris, many happy days ahead as they enjoy traveling and the peace afforded those in retirement.

Representing our
area in Congress

Track farming and
water issues with
Congressman
Devin Nunes



www.nunes.house.gov

*"Water is the true
wealth in a dry
land; without it,
land is worthless or
nearly so"*

-Wallace Stegner

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Working together to meet your water needs now and into our future

**Administrative Assistant
Leaves District**

Long time Administrative Assistant Rena Ballew has accepted a job with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Fresno working in their Reclamation Law Department. Rena had been with the District since 1987 working

directly with landowners and farmers on their water bills and Reclamation Law forms. Nancy Soto will be taking care of most of the duties previously handled by Rena. The District thanks Rena for her hard work and wishes her well in her new employment with the Federal Government.

*Updates
Board Minutes
Construction Info
Contact Info*

www.ltrid.org



On a beautiful spring day in May a large group of employees, their families and other friends of the District gathered in Mooney Grove Park for the 3rd annual Friends and Family Day Picnic. Folks got a chance to visit, play horseshoes and baseball and eat plenty of good homemade food and barbequed tri-tip and sausage. A good time was had by all in attendance.



The *Legend* is published by the Lower Tule River Irrigation District. Questions about articles and items appearing in The *Legend* are encouraged. Readers are welcome to submit information they feel should be included. Both may be submitted to Lower Tule River Irrigation District. 559-686-4716