Lower Tule River Irrigation District

LOWER TULE LEGEND

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WATER COST DEBATED

DISTRICT HOLDS LANDOWNERS MEETING TO DISCUSS COST OF WATER

A general landowner meeting was held on the 4th of March at the District office in Tipton. While a number of activities were reviewed, most of the Discussion focused on the cost of water and long-term solutions for managing the ever increasing costs. Several important points were made:

-The cost of District operations are not included in the cost of water charged to the users.

-The cost to build the new office has been amortized over 15 years with the annual cost representing less than 1% of the budget.

-Lower Tule pays annual fixed costs associated with the delivery of water in excess of $3 million dollars.

The chart in the middle of this page represents a breakdown of the annual and per acre-foot costs. As a point of reference, the annual costs 5 years ago were less than $2 million and the per acre-foot cost was $20. In order to recover all the costs during a normal hydrologic year, the water rate must average $55 per acre-foot. The following is a more detailed explanation of some of the costs:

Cost of Water

Annual Fixed

Friant-Kern O&M:	$1,300,000
State Fees / Litigation:	$325,000
Capital Repayment:	$1,100,000
Tule River:	$300,000
Total:	$3,025,000

Per Acre-Foot Costs

Storage:	$5.93
Federal Overhead:	$6.61
Environmental Fees:	$14.93
Total:	$27.47

Friant Kern O&M—The amount paid annually by the District to have its water delivered through the Friant –Kern Canal.

State Fees / Litigation—Cost to fund the San Joaquin River litigation, and fees charged by the State to operate the State Water Rights Division.

Capital Repayment—The District owes the federal government $29 million by 2030 to pay for the construction of the Central Valley Project. The money needs to be collected now in order to avoid a huge "balloon payment" in future years.

Environmental Fees—Under a law passed in 1992, all water users in the CVP must pay into a fund for restoration of the "environment." These charges escalate every year. To give a good explanation of where the money goes and what the government does with the money is not possible. It's a giant boondoggle designed to placate the environmental community.

Those attending the meeting where unanimous in their view that our water

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2005 Water Supply

Better Than It Has Been

After 5 consecutive below normal years, we can finally look forward to a decent runoff season. Snow water content on most of the Southern Sierra courses is running 20-40% above normal to date.

The big rainfall month was January with December and February offering a decent amount of support as well. The balance of the precipitation year (March—May) typically gets about 25% of the overall yearly totals. Accordingly, it will be important that we stay out of prolonged hot and dry spells this spring if we expect to reap the rewards of the snow pack to date.

At present, the District is running a combination of water from Millerton Lake with the Tule River water mixed in. As the year progresses we will know more relative to timing and length of the season, but as of now it looks like we should have water from May 1st through the majority of the summer months.

These wetter years provide us with an opportunity to rebuild a groundwater supply that has been severely tested over the last 5 years. The best way to preserve and enhance the groundwater is to shut off the wells. Accordingly, you are encouraged to use surface water whenever possible.

Water Fact:

In 2004 only 98,000 acre-feet was brought into the District, the lowest amount since 1994

Water Management Programs

District Continues to Develop Parternships

As part of its on-going effort to develop strategic partnerships in the water supply community, Lower Tule has entered into an agreement with water supply interests in Fresno County to supply a fixed amount of water to the County each year. In exchange for 2,000 acre-feet annually to the County, Lower Tule will receive considerations that will allow the District to make improvements to its distribution system and more importantly bring in significant amounts of water for delivery and recharge in normal to wet years.

Once completed, this agreement will be the third in a series of agreements that provide resources to Lower Tule in exchange for delivering a small amount of firm water supply. To date, the District has reaped the benefit of these programs through political alliances, money for system improvements, and in the future will benefit even more by being able to bring in water to recharge the District's aquifers.

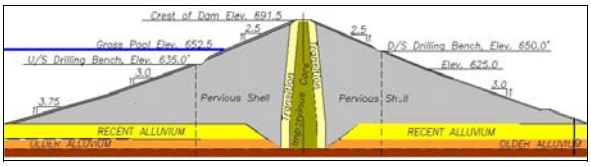
The Board considers all the agreements in the context of long-term water supply stability and the benefit of forming partnerships with other agricultural and urban water supply interests. The criteria for approving these agreements remains constant: There must be significant benefits to the District that include an enhanced overall water supply.

SUCCESS DAM RECONSTRUCTION

MONEY FLOWS FOR INTITAL STAGES

Success dam is an earth fill type dam with construction completed in 1961. The dam was properly constructed to engineering standards of the time, but much has been learned, or has changed, since 1961:

- In the event of a major earthquake, the material in place under the dam is subject to "liquefaction." The diagram above illustrates a profile of the dam. The yellow recent alluvium is the material in question.



- The City of Porterville located downstream of Success dam has grown in population, increasing the level of consequences of dam failure.
- The potential for earthquake shaking at the site has increased.

Based on these facts, it is necessary to remediate, or "fix" the dam so that it can withstand shaking from earthquakes that are expected to occur during the lifetime of the dam. Numerous alternatives and combinations of remediation methods were looked at, finally distilling them down to 4 primary alternatives. These alternatives then were subjected to a detailed analysis, taking into account factors such as cost, economic impact, environmental impact, ongoing function of the dam, and engineering and construction requirements The remediation alternative selected was the Roller Compacted Concrete option. The cost of the RCC dam is estimated at approximately $170 million. While the overall costs are slightly higher than some other alternatives, the constructability, speed of construction, and verifiability of the final results lead to the RCC as a superior remediation method. Currently, the planned alignment of the RCC dam is just downstream of the crest of the existing embankment dam (see illustration below).

While the funding requirements are considerable, the project is off to a good start. The 2005 (current) federal budget included $5M for the project and the proposed 2006 budget includes the entire $8M requested by the Corps. District staff and members of the Corps from Sacramento traveled to Washington D.C in December to meet with members of Congress and the Bush Administration to highlight the importance of completing the project as soon as possible. The real challenge will come in the next few years when appropriations in excess of $50M are required. The project is estimated to take at least 5-years to complete. As a result of the seismic problem, the enlargement project has been put on hold.

Until the new dam is constructed, a tem-

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Visit the Corps of Engineers Website to learn more about their operations

www.spk.usace.army.mil

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

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supply is the key to sustaining land values and the farming economy in the District. The state of landowner wells last year is the best example of the value of the water. The challenge now is how to pay for the supply.

Land or Water Based Charges?

The Board of Directors has engaged in a great deal of discussion and analysis as to how best cover the cost of the water. There are several options: (1) Analyze the available supply every year and establish a per acre-foot price for that year only. Doing so would price the water at around $30 in wet years and over $100 in dryer years. (2) Average the deliveries and costs over a 5-year period and develop an average annual cost. This is the current methodology in place which results in the need to collect $55 +/- each year. (3) Charge some of the fixed costs to the land and reduce the water rate. This option was discussed in great detail at the meeting. Implementing a land based charge would increase the assessment by $10-$20 per acre and would require approval by a majority of the landowners.

Clearly some tough choices are going to have to be made relative to paying for our water supply. The Board of Directors is committed to a process that will engage the landowners and water users at every step along the way. Your input is valuable and appreciated. To that end, please talk to your Board members and/or provide the District your comments (ltrid@ltrid.org).

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porary pool restriction of 29,000 (out of 82,000) acre-feet has been imposed. This restriction only applies to storage for irrigation purposes. The entire space in the reservoir will be available to handle rain flood events, however the storage level must be decreased to the 29,000 acre-foot level as soon as reasonably possible. The impact to Lower Tule will be felt the most in dry to average years when snowmelt is typically stored behind the dam for summer irrigation. In the critically dry years the restriction impact will be less severe in that the snowmelt typically does not reach the 29,000 level in those years. In wetter years the run of the river in the summer months will augment the loss of storage, mitigating some of the impact.

Review the Material from the Landowner Meeting and Other District Information

www.ltrid.org

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