



Lower Tule River

Irrigation District

LOWER TULE LEGEND

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BOARD CONTINUES TO DEBATE COST ISSUES

RISING WATER COSTS FOCUS OF DISCUSSION

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The Board of Directors continues to review the rising cost of water and how to most equitably distribute those costs to the landowners and water users of the District. As reported in previous editions of the *Legend*, the District is facing increasing water costs which are, for the most part, beyond the District's control. Those costs include fixed charges that total more than \$3 million dollars annually, per acre-foot costs of more than \$35 and an impending capital debt for the Central Valley Project which adds up to \$29 million dollars and is due in full by 2030.

use more than \$5 million dollars from the operating fund to pay for water related expenses. With the ever increasing cost of doing business, the fixed costs as mentioned earlier and the need to have money for capital improvements, something different must be done.

"Not one of us likes to pay more than we have to for water, but we have to manage the increasing costs, most of which are beyond our control. We have to find a way to pay for the water we have, 'cause without the water we have nothing."

-Don MacMillan
Vice President of the Board

Planning for the Future

The Board of Directors continues to look at various options to deal with the cost increases. Some of those options include:

- Allocating some of the fixed costs to a land based charge.
- Allocating water on a per acre basis, essentially

requiring users to pay for water whether they take it or not.

- Adjusting the price of the water annually to cover actual costs of the water.

At present, the Board has directed staff and consultants to focus on the first option, increasing the land based charge to pay for some of the water costs. Doing so will allow increased flexibility in year to year water pricing. In other words, in wetter years, the water could be priced in such a way as to

Status Quo for 20 Years

While the water rates to users have increased on a regular basis, the base assessment rate has not been increased since 1984 and remains at eight tenths of one percent of the valuation of the land. During the 80's and early 90's the District was able to manage revenue and expenditures for both water and operations through a combination of the assessments and the water rates. Times have changed. Since 1998, The District has had to

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WATER SUPPLY

BEST YEAR IN RECENT MEMORY

The winter storms and spring rains ended up providing Lower Tule with its best water supply since 1998. The water deliveries, which began in January, continued unabated into the spring and throughout the summer, coming to completion on September 15th. 2005 was a welcome relief and followed a series of seven below normal years. The dry cycle culminated in 2004 when less than 100,000 acre-feet was brought into the District, the lowest amount in the last 10 years. The wet year also had a significant impact on the District's groundwater, raising the average level by almost 20 feet. Stemming the dramatic decline in groundwater was just one of the benefits of the 2005 water year. Others include:

- 360,000 acre-feet brought into the District since January, more than the last 3 years combined.
- 120,000 acre-feet delivered to users for irrigation.
- 250,000 acre-feet recharged in basins, rivers and canals.

Hopefully, 2005 was a foreshadow of 2006 and beyond and we can put the drought of the last seven years behind us. Stay tuned.

Water Fact:

Precipitation along the Southern Sierras was 152% of average in 2005

LONG TIME BOARD MEMBERS TO RETIRE

FALL ELECTIONS WILL DETERMINE REPLACEMENTS

Long time Board members Ben Serafin and Bob Bowman have decided not to seek re-election when their terms expire this fall.

Serafin, who has been on the Board since 1985, has served as Board President for the past 4 years. Serafin also served as President of the Deer Creek and Tule River Authority as well as the District's representative to the Tule River Association. Serafin represents Division 2 which is the area around Woodville and to the north.

Long time Board President Bob Bowman is actually "re-retiring" from the Board this fall. Bowman had retired in the fall of 2002 only to be temporarily reappointed fol-

lowing a Division 5 vacancy last year. The Board appointed Bowman in-lieu of having to have a special election. It was Bowman's intention to serve out the remainder of the term and then step down. Division 5 covers the southwest portion of the District.

Serafin and Bowman have more than 43 years of collective service on the Board. The landowners of the District are going to miss their wisdom and thank them for their many years of dedication and hard work.

Several landowners have filed papers for election to the vacancies and their names will appear on the ballot in November.

DISTRICT NEWS & NOTES



SUCCESS DAM RECONSTRUCTION

The Corps of Engineers continues to make progress towards the eventual reconstruction of Success Dam. Work continues on foundation exploration and design as well as preliminary environmental review. Based on foundation exploration to date, it appears the new dam will end up being an earthen dam. The Corps had originally planned to construct a concrete dam to replace the old dam, but the foundation materials do not appear to be strong enough to support a concrete dam. The next several months will be critical in determining final design criteria as well as acquiring funding in the President's 2007 Budget. District staff continue to monitor the project making regular trips to Sacramento and Washington D.C. It is estimated that construction will begin in 2007 or 2008 and take upwards of 3 years.

Until the project is completed, the lake level will continue to be kept at 30% of normal capacity. The storage restriction is estimated to cost Lower Tule more than 40,000 acre-feet of 2005 summer irrigation water.

MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UNDERWAY

The District has commenced work on Phase II of the Westside Intertie Project. Phase II calls for construction of 1 mile of new canal and expansion of 4 miles of existing canals. The expansion includes the installation of new headworks and road crossings on the

expanded portions. The total project cost is estimated at \$1.5 million dollars. To help offset some of the costs, the District applied for and received a \$700,000 grant from the State of California which will be used to pay for almost half of the Phase II costs.

Once completed, the Intertie project will increase the system capacity by 500 cfs and alleviate capacity problems on Laterals 1,2, and 3. It is anticipated that most of the work will be done with District crews and equipment. Preliminary work has already begun with dirt moving and demolition expected to begin within the next 30 days. The current construction schedule calls for the project to be completed by late spring of 2006.

NUNES INTRODUCES CVP REFORM BILL

Congressman Devin Nunes has introduced legislation designed to overhaul the now decades old and seriously flawed Central Valley Project Improvement Act. HR 3691, also known as the Central Valley Project Reform Act of 2005, is a comprehensive and well written bill that will correct many of the oversights and flaws of the original CVPIA which was passed in 1992. Congressman Nunes is to be commended for the foresight and courage he has demonstrated in taking on an issue that is the modern day "third rail" of California Water law. A copy of the bill, and a report on its progress can be viewed at www.nunes.house.gov

Check out the great things going on at the California Farm Water Coalition.



www.cfwc.com

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*New Website
Coming Soon!*

The District has received a \$25,000 Federal grant to upgrade our website. The new site will allow users to access account information, place water orders online and view a variety of water related information. Look for the new site to be ready in early 2006.



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

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encourage use of surface water and preserve the groundwater for dryer years.

Landowner Input Critical

Regardless of the option chosen, the Board and staff have sought, and will continue to seek input from the landowners and water users. The primary tenant of the discussion is to design a cost recovery system that places priority on equity and efficiency, in that order. By law, if the Board decides that an increase in assessments is the most equitable way to distribute the costs, the matter will then go to the landowners for approval. The vote would be based on landholding, not by

individual. In other words, someone owning 100 acres would have ten times the vote as someone owning 10 acres. Before any election is held, the District will sponsor landowner meetings to discuss the concerns and answer the question of those affected by the change.

We will continue to keep you updated and answer any questions you may have. To that end, please feel free to attend the Board meetings or call the District office for further information.



Visiting Dignitaries—In early May the District hosted a visit by the Assistant Secretary of Army, the Honorable John Paul Woodley. Mr. Woodley came at the invitation of Congressman Nunes to see and tour Success Dam and discuss the dam safety issue. ASA Woodley spent the day meeting with District representatives and local officials.



ASA Woodley and Congressman Nunes take press questions at the viewing area near Lake Success



ASA Woodley meets with local officials and Corps of Engineer staff over lunch at the District office in Tipton.

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