

# LOWER TULE LEGEND

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The Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 9:00 a.m. at the District office in Woodville. The public is invited to attend.

## ASSESSMENT 2001

### THE WHAT, WHY & WHEREFORE OF DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS

Next month most of you will receive a statement in the mail notifying you of the due date of the first installment of the 2001 assessment and the amount you owe for your respective property. The second installment, due in June of next year, represents the balance of the 2001 assessment approved by the Board of Directors and levied by the District. This *Legend* cover article is intended to help explain the District assessment, under what authority it is levied, and how we put your money to work for you.

The assessment levied by the District is authorized under the California Water Code. The Water Code is the state code that allows for the formation of water and irrigation districts and empowers legally organized districts with a number of rights and abilities including the ability to assess its members in order to obtain funding for operation of the District. The Bureau of Reclamation Land Classification Maps are the basis for how much the land is assessed. When the District was formed in the 1950's the first assessment was levied by the original landowners on themselves in order to fund their new District. That is an important point that deserves more attention. The Lower Tule River Irrigation District is not some government imposed organization that takes your money into a huge bureaucratic pot without any substantive return. The District was formed by the good people who make up the District for the express purpose of providing a viable water supply and water delivery system. The original members recognized that in order to be successful in that venture they would have to generate revenue for the service they wanted to provide. The money that is collected through the assessment process comes to the District office in Woodville with all determinations on how that money is spent being made by the District Board and staff. Lower Tule is defined as an independent District which means it is entirely self-funded.

creases in the assessment occurred during the 1970's when the District incurred a bonded indebtedness to pay for the construction of the Cross Valley Canal. Those bond payments were completed in 1995 at which time the money collected through the assessments for the bond payment was channeled to cover capital improvements to the Districts delivery and recharge system.

During September of each year the Board of Directors meets as a Board of Equalization to review the assessment rolls and make the determination as to how much the District should assess its landowners during the next calendar year. In September of this year the Board of Equalization met, reviewed the assessed value of all the lands within the District and determined the landowners would be assessed at a rate of 0.80 percent of the aggregate value of all lands. The rate of 0.80 percent has not changed since 1988, and given the recent passage of Proposition 218, a change in the assessment rate would likely require a vote of the District landowners thereby taking the autonomous power of assessment out of the Board's hands.

How is your money spent?

At the September meeting, the Board of Equalization adopted Resolution 2000 - 9 - 1 directing that the assessment revenue be spent as follows:

**0.20 percent** be directed to partially defray the monetary obligation the District has to pay the USA for the capital costs associated with the construction of the Central Valley Project.

**0.125 percent**, which was formerly used to make the bond payment on the Cross Valley Canal, is now used to construct new canals and recharge basins. Past editions of the Legend have illustrated how that money has been used.

Over the last 13 years, the District assessment has remain unchanged. One of the last in-

*Lower Tule  
Water Year 2000  
Information in Acre-feet*

*Friant Kern: 176,000*

*Tule River: 54,000*

*Sales: 155,000*

*Recharge: 9,500*

*Channel Loss: 64,000*

## CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

### IMPROVEMENTS TO WESTSIDE RESERVOIRS

The end of the water season typically begins a flurry of construction activities and this year is no exception. In conjunction with J.G. Boswell, the District has begun making improvements to



Pipe Replacement at Creighton Ranch

the Creighton Ranch facilities. The Creighton Ranch is owned by J.G. Boswell but has long been an integral part of the District's water management

system. Three of the District's four main laterals terminate into two large storage reservoirs within the Creighton Ranch where the water is then stored for recharge or further distributed

to three other District owned facilities. In addition, the Creighton Ranch serves as a vital link between the District and the Lake Bottom interests for the purpose of joint water management programs. The construction work, which involves the replacement and reconstruction of the two main water control facilities within the Ranch, is being done entirely by District staff and equipment. The financing for the project is being provided by J.G. Boswell and Lower Tule. Work is scheduled to be completed



Completed Structure Project

by January. The District continues to do maintenance and construction work in other areas of the District simultaneous to the work being done at the Creighton Ranch.

## CONTRACT RENEWAL

The process of getting long term water supply contracts has moved to eleventh hour make-or-break negotiations. The work to obtain a long term water supply contract for the District began almost two years ago and has seen a number of strange twists, turns and tumultuous moments. Both sides have agreed that in order to get a contract this year the negotiations must be completed by early November so that the public comment period can run and the contracts signed before a new administration takes office in January. If the contracts are not completed by then it is likely that a new administration would want to restart the process virtually from the beginning.

The latest twist in the negotiations saw the Bureau of Reclamation reneging on agreed to language, most specifically language that protected our water rights. At that point it appeared as though the process was headed for certain failure. Since then the Bureau has again moved toward the contractor's position on several of the key issues. Sessions are now scheduled for the first week of November in Visalia in an attempt to close the deal. In order to be successful, satisfac-

tory language must be negotiated on a number of issues including:

- Water Rights - Having a clear right to the water under State Rights.
- Right to Renew - Insuring that the District has the right to continued water supply and project ownership.
- Tiered Pricing- Allowing for economical water pricing .

Look for a report on contract progress is the next edition of the *Legend*.

**WESTLANDS PLOWS  
AHEAD WITH  
FRIANT WATER  
GRAB**



As reported in a special August edition of the *Legend*, and as updated regularly in the local newspapers, the Westlands Water District continues with it's hostile attempt to steal your Friant Water Supply. While no formal action has yet been taken by the State Board the Friant water users charged the Westlands Board with Brown Act Violation for the manner in which they filed their application for San Joaquin River water (The Brown Act in the code by which public boards must conduct their sessions). Friant asserted that Westlands did not conduct their

*(Continued on page 3)*



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(Continued from page 2)

Decision process with proper agenda notice nor did they allow for proper input from the public.

In a feeble attempt to right that wrong, the Westlands Board reinstated the filing at their October meeting, which in their opinion corrected the Brown Act mistake they made. It was hoped that the Westlands Board would use their October meeting to reconsider their attack and take the first step toward making some semblance of peace in the water community. That turned out to be wishful thinking. After attempting to convince the public in attendance that they meant no harm to Friant, the Westlands Board continued

***“We are in a water supply crisis, and it is the duty of this board to do whatever is within its means to correct that crisis.”***

**Ross Borba Jr.**  
Board Member  
Westlands Water District

down their path of ignorance and voted unanimously to re-file their application to appropriate the life blood of East Side agriculture, the Friant Water Supply. There are a multitude of issues that have yet to be played out, but of one we can be certain. The decision by the Westlands Board will continue to force the farmers on the Eastside of the Valley into spending significant amounts of time and money to defend themselves and their livelihoods.

Keep posted to local news channels and newspapers for updates on the Westlands action.

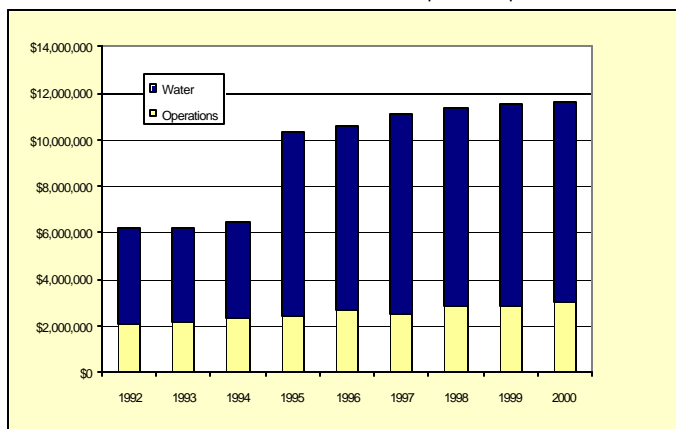
**Did you know?**  
  
**Since 1950 twenty-one different landowners have served on the Lower Tule Board of Directors.**

(Continued from page 1)

tively put to work for the District landowners.

**0.10 percent** is directed to offset the costs associated with purchasing water under the District’s Cross Valley Canal contract. The CVC contract is in addition to the District’s Friant supply and typically costs more to manage.

**0.275 percent**, the largest portion, is used to fund the operations and maintenance of the District. This includes all the staffing costs along with the maintenance and repair of District facilities. The District covers over 100,000 acres and maintains almost 200 miles of canals and rivers. In support of those facilities the District has administrative and shop buildings, 28 employees and a wide variety of heavy and light equipment.



chase water and help to further defray the costs associated with groundwater recharge.

The Board of Directors and the staff of the District work hard to try and keep costs level while not comprising the service provided to our landowners and water users. The chart on this page shows the entire District budget by year breaking out the general operation cost versus the cost of water. Since 1992, the overall budget has increased significantly, but we have been able to keep our operations costs within the standard

rate of inflation. The same cannot be said for our water costs which have gone up more than 200 percent since 1992. That increase translates into an increase in water related activities including reporting and accounting. The water business is not a simple business, with the demands

on the District increasing every year. The challenge for the Board and the staff is to see that the Lower Tule River Irrigation District operates at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness making the most out of the assessment revenue.

The next time your assessment statement arrives in the mail, you can look at the numbers on the front and better understand where your money is going and how it is being spent. As with anything, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the District for further assistance.

In addition to the regular assessment there is a \$5.00 per acre charge that goes directly to help pur-

**2000 District Crop Survey Rankings:**

1. Alfalfa
2. Silage
3. Cotton
4. Corn
5. Prunes/Plums

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Irrigation District

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

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**Factoid:**

Over the last two  
years 43,000 acres  
of San Joaquin  
Valley farmland was  
developed for  
urban purposes.

**Address**

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**REMINDER: The District cannot accept dairy wastewater at any point in our system. We realize that the winter months often mean extra waste water and empty canals seem to be a good place for disposal. However, state regulation prohibits the dumping of waste water in public water ways. If you know of waste water being dumped into the District's system please call the District office.**

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**DISTRICT NOTES**

Joint Operations

The Board of Directors continues to discuss the merits of more formal operations with the Pixley Irrigation District. The Board and staff are carefully planning a process that would allow for a trial program involving only the District's maintenance and construction activities. That program could begin in January of 2001 and is expected to have no negative impact on District services.

Gary Perez Resigns

Long time District employee and watermaster Gary Perez has resigned from the District to take the position of Water Operations Superintendent with the Friant Water Users Authority. The Board and staff of the District thank Gary for his 27 years of service and wish him well in his new position.

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**IMPORTANT DATES TO  
REMEMBER**

- November 23rd - Thanksgiving (Office closed 23—24)
- December 20th - First Installment 2001 Assessment Due

**Basin Project Completed**

The last regular edition of the *Legend* contained a lengthy story about the construction of the Deer Creek project. District staff completed all phases of the project in early September. The ponds were constructed

for groundwater recharge with an emphasis on being habitat enhancing. The picture to the right shows how one of the areas is fed by meandering sloughs making the ponds look more



natural while still achieving the desired benefits of the project.

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The *Legend* is published quarterly 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 Daniel G. Vink, General Manager. 559-686-4716