

# LOWER TULE LEGEND

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Division 5

Ben Serafin—Vice President

Division 2

Don MacMillan

Division 3

Tony Simonich

Division 1

Gary Fernandes

Division 4

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.

## DISTRICTS MOVE TOWARD JOINT OPERATIONS

### Boards believe efficiency can be achieved

Historic discussions are underway between the Lower Tule River Irrigation District and the Pixley Irrigation District that may lead to a higher level of cooperation between the two neighbors. Lower Tule and Pixley have a long history of working together in many areas including the sharing of personnel and equipment. Discussions currently underway would formalize that cooperation more than it is now. Believing that the future lies in becoming more efficient, the District Boards have been meeting jointly over the past year to discuss and review possible scenarios of joint operation. In February of this year, the Boards appointed an Ad-Hoc committee consisting of two members of each Board along with the General Manager (who works for both Districts) to explore the issues in more detail. At the outset of the discussions both Boards committed that any activities undertaken involving joint operations and/or any new office construction would be guided by three principles:

- The Districts will not be legally merged and will maintain separate water supply, assessment status and separate Boards of Directors.
- None of the activities will result in cost increases to the landowners either through water costs or assessment rates.
- A commitment to keep the Districts' landowners fully informed throughout the process.

The common theme in analyzing joint operations between the two Districts was the belief that certain efficiencies could be achieved by combining the resources of the Districts. Those efficiencies could then be passed on to the landowners in terms of better services and po-

tential costs savings. The Boards looked at the three departments of their current operations and reviewed the benefits and pitfalls of joint operations as they pertained to each.

#### Administration

Under joint operations the Districts would function from a central location to provide coordinated support services to landowners and streamline administrative activities. The Districts would then be able

to provide Reclamation Law, billing and accounting services from one office. Doing so would cut down on much of the duplicity that occurs by providing identical services from separate locations.

#### Maintenance & Construction

Joint operations would enable the Districts to pool their outside personnel and equipment to provide a more powerful workforce. Unlike many irrigation districts, Lower Tule and Pixley do almost all of the maintenance and construction work with their own crews and equipment. In addition, the Districts provide many related services to the landowners in and around

the District. Coordinated operations between Lower Tule and Pixley would increase the size of the workforce and the equipment available to perform the maintenance and construction functions of the Districts and would enable the Districts to provide better services to the landowners.

#### Water Operations

While the Districts have similar systems and methods of operation relative to water runs, rates and delivery, they are also different in many ways. Combined operations would be designed in a manner that would allow for more efficiency in areas of commonality while protecting the individuality of the Districts. As an example, under joint operations, one individual would be charged with the oversight

### Public Meeting Scheduled

**June 25  
6:30 p.m.**

**SCE Ag-Tac Center  
Tulare**

#### **Items for discussion:**

**Joint District Operations  
New Office Construction  
Water Supply  
Financial Reports**

**Please Plan On Attending**

## Did you know?

West-wide summer energy shortages could reach up to 7,000 megawatts.

The maximum output of the SPP is 1.4 megawatts.

Interested in the view from the other side?

**Read about what Westlands Water District has to say:**



**[westlandswater.org](http://westlandswater.org)**

## LOWER TULE ONLINE - DISTRICT OFFERS WEB-SITE & E-MAIL SERVICES

In an effort to keep up with 21st century information and technology, Lower Tule has installed wireless high-speed internet and email access. The signal is fed from Lewis Hill in Porterville to a dish atop the office in Woodville. The system allows District staff instantaneous internet access and messaging service. With the advent of e mail, internet purchasing and information exchange it was decided that the District could provide and receive information quicker and more efficient with the wireless connection.

Part of the decision for the change was so that the District could provide web-site access for constituent use. Initially the web-site will provide information including:

- Water Supply News
- Board Minutes
- Links to Water Related Sites
- Contact Information
- Project Updates

Eventually the District will provide a fully interactive web-site that will enable users to order water

and access real time delivery and account information on-line. In addition, landowners who are required to file Reclamation Law forms will be able to do so on-line and submit the forms to the District office for processing.

The District website will be on-line by June 1, 2001 and can be accessed at:

**[www.ltrid.org](http://www.ltrid.org)**

To email District staff use the first letter of the first name and the last name prior to @ltrid.org As an example, you can reach the General Manager via [dvink@ltrid.org](mailto:dvink@ltrid.org)

To receive the water supply updates via e-mail please send your e-mail address to:

**[ltrid@ltrid.org](mailto:ltrid@ltrid.org)**

**Attn: Water Supply Updates**

## OREGON LAWSUIT IMPACTS LOWER TULE

A lawsuit involving the Talent Irrigation District in Oregon will have a big impact on how Lower Tule controls weed and algae problems in the Districts canal system this summer.

In 1998 Headwaters Inc, a group of environmentalists who made their name through the spotted owl lawsuits, sued the Talent Irrigation District claiming that the routine treatment programs used in the Talent canals killed fish and violated the Clean Water Act. Both the local court and the 9th Circuit Court in San Francisco ruled in favor of the environmental community and accordingly stuck Talent ID with huge legal bills and case law that now restricts, and in many cases prohibits, how irrigation districts can treat their canals with aquatic herbicides. Throughout the water season, Lower Tule routinely uses copper sulfate to manage the moss and algae that, left untreated, can choke the Districts delivery system. The Talent case means that, at least for this water season, Lower Tule is prohibited from applying copper sulfate treatments to our canal system. The moss and algae problem is most prevalent on the canals that are served primarily from

the Tule River system. Those canals include the Tipton Ditch (#2) and Wood Central Ditch (#3). Water users on those parts of the system are asked to pay special attention to the moss growth and the problems it creates in plugging irrigation pumps and turnouts. The District, along with other state and national interests are pursuing ways to seek exemption and/or permitting on a broad level. Please contact the District office if you need assistance or additional information.



### Friant Manager Dick Moss Resigns

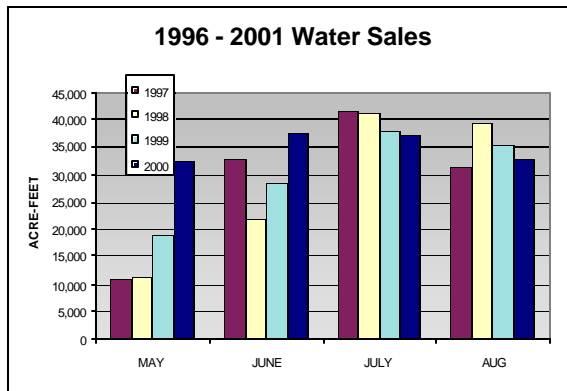
Friant Water Users Authority General Manager Dick Moss announced his resignation at the Friant Board meeting in April. Moss served as the Staff Engineer for Lower Tule from 1980 until his departure in 1983 when he left to manage the Orange Cove Irrigation District. Moss's first contact with Lower Tule was in 1975 when the District funded his Cal-Poly senior research project involving low head hydro turbines at the Districts check structures. "My stay at Lower Tule was short but it got my career off to a great start" said Moss. "It was a great place to work." Following his departure from Friant, Moss plans to start his own engineering firm in the area.

# WATER SUPPLY NEWS

The 2001 water supply and water run is taking final shape and it looks better now than it did earlier in the year. While the total precipitation and overall water supply is still 25% below normal, Lower Tule hopes to be able to deliver water to users into the first part of August. To accomplish that goal the irrigation run may be broken into on/off runs later in June and July. That decision will be made sometime in June and will be dependent upon gross sales in May and June. The 2001 water run began the week of May 14th with full deliveries to all parts of the system.

### Changing Times

The chart on the right shows how the District's water sales have changed over the last few years. In the past, water use increased significantly as the cotton irrigation began in June with gross sales always peaking in July. The growth of the dairy industry and the increase in permanent plantings within Lower Tule changed the curve in the District's water sales dramatically. There is now a much larger demand for water earlier in May with sales in July being less than what they historically have been. In addition, water sales stay much more constant through August and well into September. As a result, the



Board tries to plan a water run that begins earlier in May and extends as long into the summer as possible. As an example of the change, in 2000 gross sales for the months of May and June exceeded gross sales for July and August.

### Water Rate and Costs

The Board has set the 2001 water rate at \$35 per acre-foot. It is the strong consensus of the

Board to try to keep the water rate as economical as possible in order to offset the higher energy rates and stagnant commodity prices that the farmers are experiencing. The up-front cost per acre-foot that the District will pay for the water this year is estimated at \$34-\$36 per acre-foot.

That cost includes payment to the Bureau of Reclamation for the water, the Federal Government for environmental fees (\$15 per acre-foot) and a flat rate of 1.1 million dollars for access to the Friant-Kern canal. In order to cover actual costs of the water including the loss factor, the water rate would have to be set at almost \$45 per acre-foot. However, Lower Tule has a long history of being pro-active in water programs and other opportunities that allow for other sources of revenue that is used to offset the cost of water that is charged to the end user.

Any changes in the status of the water run or rate will be brought to your attention immediately. Should you have any questions please contact the District office.

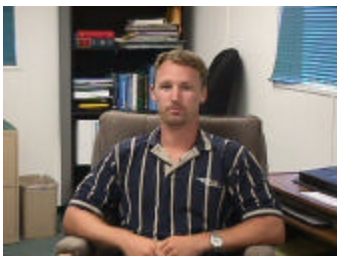
Lower Tule River Irrigation District provides one irrigation pump test per pump per year to water users free of charge.

The most recent pump test is used for water billing rates.

The pump test service is available by contacting the District office.

## MEET THE STAFF

The District has hired a Water Resources Engineer to take the place of departed Watermaster Gary



Perez. Kevin Fellows began work in March after moving to the area from Southern California. He was born and raised in the Salinas area and comes

from a family with a strong farming background. Kevin has an engineering degree from Cal-Poly and spent the past several years working for a consulting firm in the Pomona area. His responsibilities at the District will involve overseeing all water operations including deliveries, orders and billing. In addition Kevin will be involved in the engineering and construction projects of the District. Kevin, his fiance Jennifer and their family live in Visalia.

## NEWS & NOTES

### SPP Begins Generation

The last edition of the *Legend* covered Lower Tule's ownership in the Success Power Project. The power plant began generation in the morning of May 16 delivering 1.1 megawatts into the Southern California Edison system. The plant is expected to be running through July paralleling the District's water run. The District has also received indications that, despite their credit problems, SCE intends to honor its contract with SPP and continue to pay the price required by the contract. That price is estimated at 10-15 cents per kwh.

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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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Address

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**REMINDER**

**THE POTENTIAL FOR ROLLING BLACKOUTS OR DISRUPTED POWER SERVICE THIS SUMMER POSES A SERIOUS THREAT TO WATER SUPPLY MANAGEMENT. THE DISTRICT IS WORKING WITH LOCAL AGENCIES TO DETERMINE WHAT AREAS MIGHT BE EFFECTED BY ROLLING BLACKOUTS. LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.**

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**IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER**

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- June 12—Lower Tule Board Meeting
- June 20—Second Installment of 2001 Assessment Due
- June 25—Public Meeting 6:30 SCE Ag-Tac Center

*(Continued from page 1)*

the water operations of both Districts thereby eliminating the need to have two people perform similar roles in different locations. That said, the delivery systems would stay separate and the individual Boards would maintain discretion over water runs and rates.

Need for New Office

In order to implement joint operations, the Districts would need to purchase or construct a centrally located office. The Districts are both facing the need for office construction and/or expansion of existing facilities so the discussion

of new office construction is timely. The Districts have begun the preliminary step of working with an architect to determine the cost and feasibility of new office construction.

Both Boards are very interested in landowner input and as such have **scheduled a public meeting for June 25th** (see front page) to answer questions and get feedback from their constituents. Please attend that meeting to assist us in planning the future of our Districts.



**Follow the Talent Irrigation District case and many other family farming issues through the Family Farm Alliance web site:**



[www.familyfarmalliance.com](http://www.familyfarmalliance.com)

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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 Lower Tule River Irrigation District. 559-686-4716