



South San Joaquin Irrigation District
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Providing Water Since 1909

SSJID Fall 2012

Irrigation Newsletter

October 2012



Points of Interest:

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SSJID Programs and Growers Assist with Conservation During Dry Irrigation Season

The harvest season is nearing an end, signaling the conclusion of another successful water year for SSJID customers. At their meeting on September 25, the Board of Directors determined that the 2012 water season has come to an end on Thursday, October 18.

In a report to the Board, SSJID General Manager Jeff Shields said that the District will be ending a rather dry season with approximately 70,300 acre feet (AF) of conserved water into our conservation account with the Bureau of Reclamation. This deposit is critical, assisting with making water available to supplement the District's dry year

supplies in the event that inflow into New Melones Reservoir drops below 600,000 AF in any given year. (SSJID and Oakdale Irrigation District have rights to the first 600,000 AF of inflow into New Melones.)

Part of this year's conserved water, approximately 4,700 AF, is the result of 2,000 AF of conservation gains made through the District's Division 9 Irrigation Enhancement Project, and an additional 2,700 AF from the On-Farm Water Conservation Program that the Board has implemented during the last two years. Although the District had its first ever January irrigation deliv-

ery, we were fortunate that rain came in March and April in the valley, reducing the amount of water needed for spring irrigation.

If you observe leaks or see any vents down throughout the winter, please call Water Operations Superintendent Joe Catanzarite at (209) 249-4634, or Field Maintenance Supervisor Ron Strmiska Jr. at (209) 249-4631, during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 7:30AM-4:30PM).

The District thanks all of our growers for joining us in conserving water for our future!

How Volumetric Pricing Will Affect You District Required to Implement New Rate Structure

On Tuesday, July 31, a public hearing was held at SSJID headquarters to discuss and vote on a new rate structure required by state law SBX7-7. After considering customer comments, the Board unanimously voted to hold the flat rate of \$24 per acre and to adopt a \$3 per-acre-foot water rate, but to suspend collection of the volumetric charge in 2013 in order to ensure accuracy of the meters that will be installed to track water usage by growers. The Board also decided not to adopt an annual rate increase based on the Consumer Price Index

(CPI). About 30 water customers were in attendance at the hearing, which was held to consider protests made by customers. In order to not adopt the new rate structure proposed by the District, 51% of parcel owners needed to submit a written protest. Each customer was given the information to do so when the public notice was sent out in June. Out of 3,038 notices, only 45 protest letters covering 85 parcels were received.

After the meeting was called to order, General Manager Jeff

Shields reviewed a detailed outline regarding the new volumetric charges and water measurement requirements. He also discussed capital investments made to date related to volumetrically measuring water. Shields explained Prop 218 requirements and why compliance with SBX7-7 is mandatory. Following Shield's presentation, the podium was opened for public comment.

A majority of attendees shared the common concern of the proposed annual adjustable rate increase based on the CPI. Some

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SSJID Steps Ahead in Compliance with SBx7-7 Water Supplier Legislation

Several years ago, our state legislature instituted SBx7-7, which includes new requirements for both urban and agricultural water suppliers. SBx7-7 requires agricultural water suppliers to prepare, adopt and periodically revise Agricultural Water Management Plans, implement Efficient Water Management Practices, adopt a pricing structure for water customers based at least in part on quantity delivered, and measure the volume of water delivered to customers with sufficient accuracy.

The District's efforts to comply with SBx7-7 are evident in our projects and programs:

- Flow Measurement Plan: Regulations requires accurate measurement of water—this plan inventoried the existing delivery measurement infrastructure and determined whether it would meet accuracy requirements. A pilot test on the Qk lateral during the 2012 irrigation

season was conducted. A customer delivery measurement plan is also being developed. To implement volumetric billing, the District will use SCADA data as well as True Point data to comply.

- On-Farm Water Conservation Program: this program complies with the efficient water management practice of facilitating financing of on-farm improvements, and it will continue as long as it is financially feasible.
- The Division 9 Irrigation Enhancement Project is compliant with the water measurement regulation through its flow meter installations as well as its volumetric pricing element.

SSJID Improvement Projects: the efficient water management practice calling for the expansion of lines or pipe distribution systems, and construction of regulatory

reservoirs to increase distribution system flexibility and capacity, and to decrease maintenance and reduce seepage, is continually being met through the many improvement projects completed over the years.

SSJID replaces and repairs existing infrastructure each year. The District has completed five years worth of maintenance in the past two years and is now ahead of schedule. SSJID also converted the majority of the original canals to pipelines in the 1960's. Seepage from remaining unlined canals provides beneficial groundwater recharge.

The District's Urban Water Management Plan was adopted and submitted to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in August, 2011.

The Agricultural Water Management Plan is currently being worked on and will be adopted and submitted to the DWR by December 31, 2012.

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also noted that in today's economy increased rates would be difficult to manage. After all public comments were concluded; General Manager Jeff Shields and General Counsel Steve Emrick, answered questions that were asked.

Director Kamper explained that the Board was reluctant to raise rates but they must take responsibility for how our water is being used. In addition, it was stressed that if we do not comply with the law we could run the risk of losing some of our water rights. President Holbrook then confirmed that revenue acquired

from the new volumetric charges would only be spent on costs directly related to implementation of the law, including the installation of meters. SSJID will continue to subsidize irrigation services with income from the Tri-Dam hydroelectric project.

The Board voted against the annual CPI inflation increase largely due to farmers' concerns. For the first year, farmers will be shown what their bill will look like with the new volumetric pricing, but will not have to pay those rates until the 2014 billing occurs.

Please don't...

Forget your Permit!

Just a friendly reminder to be sure to obtain your structure permit prior to any work done on District facilities. This preserves the integrity of our lines and ensures everyone's safety. To apply for a permit at no cost to you, please contact the Engineering Department at (209) 249-4619.

On-Farm Conservation Program Approved for Third Year

The District is pleased to announce that its On-Farm Conservation Program has been renewed by the Board of Directors. The 2012-2013 Application period begins on Monday, November 5, 2012, making available \$1.14 million in matching funds for our growers' conservation projects. The Board also approved adding dust control measures to the program.

Please call Julie Vrieling, Conservation Coordinator, at (209) 249-4675, to make an appointment if you are interested in applying for funding.

Write One Letter

San Joaquin LAFCo to vote on SSJID's retail electric plan this winter

Grower letters will be important

To control power costs, many farmers have invested in numerous energy efficient measures, such as upgrading to diesel engines, efficient lighting and solar systems. These are good solutions, but involved and expensive.

For farmers currently served by PG&E in Manteca, Escalon and Ripon, there's a simpler way to control electric costs: **Write one letter.**

Write one letter telling the San Joaquin Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) that you want SSJID to be your electric utility.

Tell LAFCo that public power from SSJID will reduce your costs and benefit your bottom line. SSJID's 15% rate reduction will save District businesses and

residents some \$11.6 million every year — money that will recirculate in our local economy.

Tell LAFCo that SSJID's lower electric rates will give local farmers a competitive edge, boosting economic development and job creation in our communities.

Tell LAFCo that the best thing for your business and your community is lower-cost public power from SSJID, not profit-driven

power from PG&E. AND, tell them that you want a say in what you pay — LOCAL con-

trol will give you just that. LAFCo will vote this winter on whether SSJID can deliver electricity to Manteca, Escalon and Ripon, and that vote will directly affect your bottom line. Write one letter and make your voice heard.

For more information on SSJID's retail electric plan, visit our newly updated website and click on "Write a letter to LAFCo."

www.SaveWithSSJID.com

Write To:
Chairman Elden Nutt and Commissioners
San Joaquin LAFCo
509 W. Weber Ave., Suite 420
Stockton, CA 95203

Rundown of Winter Maintenance Projects

Over the past five years, an aggressive construction schedule has been credited with putting the District's irrigation facilities in tip-top shape. This year's 2012-2013 maintenance season will include the following projects, most being done in-house.

- MDC shotcrete along Victory Road north of Hwy. 120: includes 2,300 ft. of canal reshaping and concrete lining. This will be a contracted project.
- Main Supply Canal, downstream from the Siphon and Conde's property: 600 ft. of gunite work to repair/stop leaks.

- L-Kaa: connection line and new alignment, 968 ft. of new pipeline, 2 new boxes; providing improved sprinkler service and eliminating a dead-end line.
- B-15 Extension: add new pipe west of Steinegul Rd. installed to separate the B-15 and the A line that are currently connected; to provide improved service for both lines and repair leaks through the Hawes' Property.
- R Ditch: upstream of the NW Reservoir: 2,200 ft. repair with new shotcrete to be done in January.



In memory of Ron Morrow, retired District Water Operations Supervisor. You are loved and missed! Forever in our hearts, rest in peace.

Protect Your Pets from Potential Farming Hazards

Farming and family pets seem to go together. Dogs who roam the fields occasionally come across District rodent bait stations and poisoned rodents near our canals, at known areas of activity for ground squirrels. SSJID workers will begin placing these bait stations in February and will continue filling them until the squirrels stop eating from them.

While the anti-coagulant Diphacinone is designated as a medium toxic chemical, ingestion of the drug by pets can cause illness. The poison looks like small grains that have been painted blue. A very small amount of the poison grain is occasionally visible on the ground near the ends of the PVC pipe used to hold it.

The District has used this poison for several years, with only rare incidents of complaints

regarding pets. The treatment is necessary to prevent floods, leaks and bank failures on our system caused by rodents that tunnel through earthen structures. It is a conventional and legal treatment that has a good reputation for safety with low concentrations of toxicant, and many of our farmers also use it



District rodent bait stations, like the one shown here, are located throughout our service territory.

on their properties. While no chemical is perfect, it can be a potential hazard. It takes a week of steady feeding to kill a small rodent, however it does not affect birds. The District's bait stations are designed to keep out larger animals like dogs, who may be more sensitive to the poison. Dogs can also be vulnerable if they eat sick or dead squirrels.

As always, we ask that you monitor your pet's activities in the fields near canals — not only is poisoning a danger, but dogs drowning in canals has become more prevalent in recent years. Please do not encourage or allow your dogs to play near, or swim in, canals.

Consider keeping your dogs contained, or on a leash, if you regularly take them with you while working the fields.