



South San Joaquin Irrigation District  
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**State Board Overreaching Flow Plan Continued from Page 3**

growers within SSJID would have experienced surface water reductions of up to 60 percent beginning in 1988 and continuing into 1994, two years after the drought was declared to be over.

If the State Board's SED were implemented prior to this current drought period starting in 2012, we estimate that SSJID would have been forced to limit ag surface water allocations to a mere 12 inches (1 AF per parcel) during much of our current drought period, while at the same time reducing deliveries by nearly 64 percent to our partner cities of Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy through the District's Nick C. DeGroot Water Treatment Plant.

The SED also stands to significantly impact local groundwater conditions. The State Board, while recognizing the significant surface water losses to the region, suggests that these losses can be mitigated by pumping more groundwater from the East San Joaquin Subbasin, the local aquifer that is already considered critically over-drafted by the state. Furthermore, the State Board fails to consider the State's own mandate to sustainably manage groundwater supplies in the Central Valley alongside the taking of local surface water supplies.

On a regional basis, the plan estimates about \$260 million in economic losses due to the implementation of the plan, which is questionably lower than a 2012 study suggesting \$1.6 billion in economic losses for the Tuolumne River alone. This includes loss to the agricultural industry, jobs, and loss of economic productivity that flows into local businesses and municipalities. Furthermore, the document doesn't adequately address the local losses in tax revenue due to reduced property values throughout the region, loss of hydropower revenues due to bypassing flows and shifting generation from peak summer demand periods to

lower demand periods like the spring, and the stranded assets such as our water treatment plant and delivery facilities which would no longer deliver the water they were built to provide to the region.

SSJID and OID currently invest nearly \$1 million annually in Stanislaus River fishery science and believe that other measures such as addressing predation, increasing and augmenting fish habitat, and more carefully and adequately timing pulse flows, will have a more beneficial and sustainable effect on our local fishery, while avoiding the unnecessary burden of economic losses to this region. Please visit [www.savethestan.org](http://www.savethestan.org) for more information on this critical issue and how you can help.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL PARCEL OWNERS**

You will notice one less piece of mail this year in your mailbox. SSJID has partnered with the San Joaquin County Tax Collector for the collection of SSJID annual base irrigation and recharge fees. With the exception of a few parcels (mostly government owned or parcels activated after August 1, 2016), **all annual irrigation and recharge fees historically billed by SSJID will become part of your annual property tax bill.** Some of you have called letting us know that you have already received your property tax bill and noticed the new change. The majority of our customers will receive their bills soon. **The charges will be clearly identified as a line item similar to other agency charges collected by the county.** All accounts will continue receive a monthly invoice for the volumetric and pressurized usage from SSJID. Please feel free to call (209)249-4608 if you have any questions.



**OFFICE CLOSURE AND BOARD MEETING LOCATION AND DATE CHANGES**

Please take note of the following dates and changes to SSJID's regular operations. The Main Office at 11011 E. Highway 120 in Manteca will be closed on Wednesday, Oct. 2 due to an all-staff training day. The office will reopen on Oct. 3 at 7:30 AM.

As for board meeting updates, the regularly scheduled November 8 board meeting will be held in the SSJID Shop due to Election Day and SSJID's Board Room being a polling location.

As the holiday season is approaching, the board has cancelled its meeting on Tuesday, December 27.

# SSJID Fall 2016 Irrigation Newsletter

October 2016

## 2016 Irrigation Season Comes to a Close

During the fifth year of the continuing drought in California, the district's goal throughout 2016 was to make enough water available for the irrigation season to assure that growers had a successful crop and that its municipal water users received enough high quality water from the Water Treatment Plant to meet the needs of our local community.

As the season comes to a close on October 14, the district wishes to thank its growers for working together with us to have such a successful irrigation season. Despite the increased allocation this year, your agricultural water use district-wide remained relatively low this year in large part due to your continued conservation efforts. As a result of this conservation, we diverted approximately 183,000 acre feet of our water supply, lower than last year, and yet, growers have reported successful crop yields, and most were able to bring their crops to harvest and take care of their livestock adequately. In addition, the cities of Tracy, Manteca and Lathrop, who rely in part on water from our treatment plant, continued to make strong efforts toward reaching aggressive water conservation goals.

Although not always accurate, experts are suggesting that the projected La Nina weather conditions for the coming winter are weakening, which provides some hope for more rainfall potential this winter, but it will still take years of normal or above normal rain and snowfall before significant recovery can occur in New Melones. As of the end of September, New Melones Reservoir was only at 528,000 acre-feet of storage, or

about 39-percent of historical capacity for this time of year and very similar to storage conditions in fall of 2014. Even taking into account that the District has a full conservation account in New Melones to carry over into next year, if there is not enough run-off next spring, the savings will simply be a number—not actual water that we can access.

Early this year, the district's Board of Directors agreed to keep last year's water conservation plans largely intact, although they increased the grower parcel allotment to 40". Master Accounts for allotments were continued as this was a valuable tool for growers last year. We also continued the program for transfer of allotments among parcels so farmers could increase their allotment by making a transfer agreement with another farmer. The program to transfer water from a private well to any location in the district was also kept in place.



This photo shows Tri-Dam Project's highest reservoir, Donnells, in late May of 2011, when there was still snow visible at higher elevations, and the reservoir level was normal. While weather forecasts can't yet predict what this winter will bring, we hope for the best and look to the skies for rain and snow as often as possible.

additional water supplies available upon approval. Because of this year's hydrology and water supply, reservoir storage management and your diligent efforts to conserve water using efficient irrigation practices, the district was able to make more water available to growers who found themselves in hardship due to weather trends and the 40" limit. Growers who exhausted their 40" allocation limit were able to apply for an increase in their allocation and after review by SSJID's general manager, and all allocation increase applications were approved. 100 applications were received and an additional 2,525 acre feet was allocated to those growers.

"All of our growers are truly thankful for the option of the Augmentation Policy and appreciate the efforts the district has made in regards to conservation and preservation of our water rights," said district Water Conservation Coordinator Julie Vrieling. "They only requested what they truly needed, and working together, we were able to make that happen."

The District would like to recognize all of our growers for working together and supporting our efforts to conserve water to help us get through a very difficult season! We sincerely wish you a restful off-season and, as we did on Friday, October 14, we will be looking to the skies each time there are clouds and hoping for snow and rain this winter.

The newest program added as the growing season was well underway was the Water Allocation Augmentation Policy, which made

## Be Aware of SSJID Easements During Orchard Development

In an effort to protect the district's facilities on your property and to fulfill our commitment to provide consistent and reliable water to our community, we would like to share some information with you that may be relevant to your farming activities during the development phase of any potential grower project.

The district owns, operates, and maintains delivery facilities, including pipelines, that run through many properties throughout the district. In most cases, these pipelines are accompanied by a recorded easement that identifies the district's need to properly maintain its facilities. In some cases, recorded easements were not officially formalized, however the California Water Code provides the district with easement rights for existing facilities and allows the district enough space as may reasonably be required to maintain, repair, patrol, and operate the conveyance facility for the distribution of water.

The district's standard easement width for pipelines is 30 feet, centered on the pipeline. Additionally, the standard easement languages states that no tree, vine, or other deep-rooted crop or shrub shall be placed or permitted within fifteen feet from the edge of the pipeline. No building, structure, explosive, well, guy wire, or any tree, vine, or other deep-rooted crop or shrub can be placed within the easement area.

Tree plantings are the most common form of unapproved encroachments experienced by the district. Admittedly, at times, the district has not actively enforced the removal of unpermitted encroachments which resulted in several mature orchards with trees planted within 15 feet of the pipeline. These encroachments can be problematic for a variety of reasons including root intrusion and unnecessary vibrations that result from harvesting

practices. The trees can also limit the ability of the district to patrol our facilities and respond to emergencies. Access to the pipelines is also important so that the pipeline integrity can be monitored, leaks can be detected and fixed, and ditchtenders can access control structures.

SSJID has not actively pursued the removal of prior tree encroachments unless they were causing an immediate problem. However, we have become more active in ensuring that the easements are preserved when properties replant. It is the district's intention to enforce the standard easement language with all new agricultural developments.



Unfortunately, this type of encroachment will result in trees having to be removed from the district's easement. The district's markings are clearly evident, yet the grower still planted trees within the easement.

In an effort to assist our growers and prevent any conflicts or unnecessary expense or project removal, please make sure to do the following:

- Contact the district with any new orchard development to determine where the district's easement is located within your property, and whether or not you need a permit for installation of a new irrigation service (valve, box, turnout, pump, etc.) or facility installed across an easement. Please contact Dawn Driesen in the Engineering Department at 209-249-4619 to obtain the proper application forms. Structure permits are free and en-

croachment permits cost \$100 to cover recording costs. Please allow approximately one month for processing time.

- Call Before You Dig. California Law requires that you call Underground Service Alert – Northern California (USA-North) two working days, but not more than 14 calendar days prior to commencing excavation. Once you have notified USA-North, all utility owners (including SSJID) are required to locate and mark their facilities within the defined area that you have outlined.

SSJID facilities will be identified by blue stakes, blue paint, or blue flagging. SSJID would like to specifically request that you take care to preserve those markings during development so that it is always clear where the pipeline is

located and to prevent the need to unnecessarily remark the facility multiple times. USA-North can be contacted by calling 811.

It is the district's commitment to continue to provide reliable water to our agricultural community by maintaining the integrity of our easements and infrastructure. SSJID sincerely wishes you the best of luck with any new endeavor you may plan in the future. Please feel free to contact Jerry Donahue, district inspector, at 209-652-2987 if you have any questions.

## Maintenance Season Will Keep Crews Busy

The District has a number of the projects planned for the 2016-17 maintenance season, many of which will be performed by district crews. These include replacement of approximately 4,300 feet of cast-in place pipeline with RGRCP on a portion of Lateral "Kac" located near Wagner Road, and Lateral "A-178" located on Miller Road, east of Escalon Bellota Road.

Two pumps will also be installed in the pressurized system basin, helping to supply water as backup during high demand periods, drought conditions, or if the supply system is out of service for some reason. Improvements will be made to the Main Distribution Canal along Victory Road downstream of Hwy 120. The MDC improvements will be located south on Combs Road, west of Victory Road—installing a 1,200-foot long cut-off wall on the bank of the MDC to prevent seepage. Also planned is construction of a storm water/tail water basin at Rossier Road, installation of a float device as a shared project with a landowner on Steingul Road, and investigation for future float device installations (float devices help in regulating sprinkler deliveries for farmers).

To improve our customer service to all growers, we are developing a web interface to transmit information from current on-farm flow meter installations that will allow for online billing and viewing of grower information on water usage, similar to the format that pressurized service customers are already benefitting from.

## SSJID Board Votes to Cooperate with Pulse Flow

*Water to be Supplied from Unused Portion of this Year's Allocation*

On September 27, SSJID leaders voted 4-0 to approve a resolution finding that releasing water for a fall pulse flow is exempt under CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) regulations and took further action to approve a decision to supply a portion of the water required to be released by the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) to meet instream flow requirements for the San Joaquin River in the fall. The Bureau of Reclamation is required to release water to meet federal regulatory pulse flow requirements and state water quality requirements in the mainstream of the San Joaquin River.

Given continued low storage conditions in New Melones, Reclamation coordinated with SSJID and OID on the fall release, and the districts agreed to provide up to 16,000 AF of current-year supply released at Goodwin Dam to help meet the Bureau's fall pulse flow objectives. Goodwin is located on the Stanislaus River between Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties and is jointly owned by OID and SSJID. The water will be released during October and November to meet instream supply requirements as well as temperature and salinity flow objectives for migrating fish at Vernalis. Since the released water has the potential to benefit contractors of the Department of Water Resources and the San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority, the water is being purchased by the two entities at \$250 per AF.

To find that the release project is exempt from CEQA, the release must be for: "Maintenance of fish screens, fish ladders, wildlife habitat areas, artificial wildlife waterway devices, stream flows, springs and waterholes, and stream channels (clearing of debris) to protect fish and wildlife resources..." The water was delivered to the USBR at New Melones before the end of September and will use the districts' conserved 2016 water supply. The board first

needed to make the CEQA exemption finding before it could approve the project agreement.

"This is a helpful exchange," said board member Dale Kuil. "If this helps the fish with better water quality and we have the water because our growers did a fine job of conserving, then we can operate in a financially efficient manner by selling the water to an agency that really needs it."

San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority is a California Joint Powers Authority with 28 water agencies representing approximately 2,100,000 acres of land within the western San Joaquin Valley, San Benito and Santa Clara counties. The Department of Water Resources operates the State Water Project to the benefit of 27 water agencies that serve primarily municipal interests, but also include some agricultural interests in the San Joaquin Valley. The two entities receive water from the federal Central Valley Project or the State Water Project, although their water allocations throughout this historic drought have been severely curtailed, including at times receiving no surface water for the growing season.

The transfer of SSJID and OID uses existing water conveyance infrastructure and no construction is required to move the water. The action does not endanger or abandon the districts' water rights as some have stated, but rather is simply transferring a portion of their conserved, stored water to organizations who desperately need it. The water would be released for pulse flows whether or not the districts received any payment for it. The National Marine Fisheries Service reviewed the transfer and concluded that more water in the Stanislaus would create better habitat conditions.

## State Board Releases Overreaching Flow Plan that Threatens SSJID's Supplies

On September 15, the State Water Resources Control Board released their much-delayed revised Substitute Environmental Document (SED) analyzing effects of proposed updates to the 2006 Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. The proposal calls for 30 to 50 percent of natural runoff during the months of February through June to flow out of the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers for water quality and fishery objectives in the San Joaquin River Basin. The plan recommends starting at 40-percent and adaptively managing flows within the 30 to 50 percent range, based on yet-to-be developed biological objectives.

What does this mean for us locally for SSJID growers and partner cities? The Stanislaus River, under federal Biological Opinions and pulse flow requirements, currently dedicates about 30-percent of unimpaired flow, which results in low storage in New Melones during extended drought conditions. The state's recommended

40-percent proposal will cost Stanislaus River senior water rights holders like Oakdale Irrigation District (OID) and SSJID nearly 79,000 acre-feet of water on average each year, with further threats of reductions up to 136,000 acre-feet annually with "adaptive management," and seeks to establish 700,000 acre-feet of inoperable, minimum storage in New Melones. This proposal amounts to annual reductions of surface water supplies of up to 25 percent on average for SSJID over an 80-year period. If you look closely at the analysis though, the dry and drought period effects are far worse.



Dry bed of New Melones Reservoir in June 2015.

SSJID weathered the 1987-1992 drought, with very few reductions in deliveries due to the District's senior water rights and its agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation for delivery of these rights from New Melones Reservoir. If the SED were in place at that time,