



SOUTH SAN JOAQUIN  
IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SOUTH SAN JOAQUIN IRRIGATION DISTRICT ISSUES DROUGHT MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

MANTECA, Calif., July 18, 2014—Starting in January 2014, SSJID's general manager, Jeff Shields, has continued to update a biweekly report on the water supply situation due to drought conditions. At that time, the District committed to enabling growers in SSJID's service area (Escalon, Manteca and Ripon) to receive enough water to get a healthy crop, and that the cities that receive wholesale treated water (Manteca, Tracy and Lathrop) would get enough water to assure they would be able to meet the State's drinking water quality standards. The key to SSJID's ability to meet these commitments is the fact that this year it has a hard cap on its water supply out of New Melones Reservoir of 225,000 acre feet (AF). In the past couple of years, the District has made significant gains in its conservation efforts, partly in response to drought conditions. In 2012 the District used 247,070 AF, and in 2013 usage dropped to 239,670 AF.

Despite those savings, the District needs to implement some additional measures between now and September 30<sup>th</sup> in order to stay within its 225,000 AF allotment for 2014. Unfortunately, while SSJID diversions from New Melones were a little under budget for March, it went over budget in April, on budget in May, and over budget in June.

“Because of the hot, dry conditions California is currently experiencing, some growers are taking water at a rate higher than last year,” said Shields.

The District previously called for a voluntary 20 percent reduction from the cities’ demands of the Nick C. DeGroot Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Currently, Tracy has seen a 14 percent reduction. Lathrop has reduced their demand by 16 percent, while Manteca’s use increased by 1 percent. SSJID’s general manager and its Water Committee have notified the cities that the District will be curtailing their respective demands of the WTP by 20% in August and September. This means that each individual city will be curtailed by 20% from their 2013 use in August and September.

On the irrigation side, the District is proposing that Woodward Reservoir in Oakdale be held at a 204’ elevation, as opposed to its normal 210’ level. In addition, the irrigation season will end on September 30<sup>th</sup>. (The irrigation season typically ends mid-October depending on the water supply.) Woodward Reservoir is the District’s storage facility used for both irrigation and treated drinking water.

In March the District agreed to provide 2,400 AF of water to Tuolumne Utility District as a humanitarian gesture to help the Sonora community. As it turns out, TUD was able to find an alternative supply to get through this summer and only needed about 100 AF of the District’s water.

These combined efforts will bring SSJID’s usage to a projected total of 226,616 AF, leaving the District short by 1,616. This shortage will be made up by lowering Woodward earlier than usual, and from an intensified effort to avoid spills from individual grower operations. SSJID will also look to optimize use of its own wells to the greatest extent possible and will ask growers that have wells to rely on those for their last irrigation after harvest.

While these efforts are necessary to stay under the hard cap of 225,000 AF it has this year, the District's looming concern is for the 2015 water year. "SSJID has succeeded in meeting its grower and city needs this year, without setting maximum allocations or raising fees, due to the combined flow into New Melones and the water that it has stored at the reservoir in its conservation account," Shields remarked.

If next year is dry, and there is a strong chance that will be the case, SSJID could face great challenges meeting its water needs, because New Melones will be pulled down to historic lows this fall. On July 15, 2013 New Melones held 1,208,980 AF. On July 15, 2014 the reservoir had only 669,687 AF, and it is expected to be at 339,000 AF on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Without significant rain and snow this winter, next summer will be an extremely difficult year across the State. In its favor, SSJID will still have water in its conservation account to help meet next year's demand, and also has water stored in its upper reservoirs that will be released into New Melones this fall to get a jump start on next year's water supply.

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