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An informational newsletter for water users and landowners in the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors' service area.

EXCHANGE perspective

APRIL 2018

Needed funds for River Restoration remain elusive

A series of meetings during a recent trip to Washington, D.C, provided an opportunity to present an agreement on the work needed to move forward with the San Joaquin River Restoration Plan.

Other important projects include levee construction in Reach 2B to provide floodplain habitat and channel capacity of 4,500 cfs, and completion of seepage mitigation and levee stability along the river.

"That agreement was approved by all parties involved," explained Executive Director Steve Chedester of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

"These projects are needed to protect our landowners," added Chedester. "Funding to complete all phases of the program remain elusive. Our focus is to complete Phase 1 infrastructure projects that protect our diversions, mitigate seepage, and rebuild levees with the dollars that are firm."

Among the identified construction projects included within the agreement document are the Mendota Pool Bypass and fish screen, Sack Dam modification, and a fish screen on the Arroyo Canal which are pivotal to prevent fish from entering water distribution channels leading to farms.

When first developed, the cost of implementing the Restoration Plan was \$600 million. That estimate has now grown to more than \$1.5 billion.

Tour provided for NOAA officials

Officials within the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration received a day tour of the service area of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority in early February. The day included briefings on various



issues that affect water being delivered to local farmers.

Top photo shows CCID General Manager Chris White (with hat) describing the operations at Los Banos Creek Reservoir.



Left photo is taken at Sack Dam and includes SLCC General Manager John Wiersma and Barry Thom, Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries.

The group also stopped at Mendota Dam and received a briefing on the needed construction projects as part of the San Joaquin River Restoration Plan.

Good news for 2018 water deliveries

Farmers in the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority service area received good news from an initial allocation announcement from the Bureau of Reclamation. Based on current inflow projections for Shasta Reservoir, the source of contracted water deliveries, the 2018 water year has been declared “non-critical.”

That declaration means water deliveries are scheduled at 100 percent of existing contracts.

Even though dry conditions developed in January and February that saw below average rain and snow fall through Northern California, a wet March helped to alleviate those concerns but not enough to bring water storage conditions to normal.

“Our 2018 deliveries look secure but dry conditions and regulatory restrictions could have an effect on deliveries in 2019,” said Executive Director Steve Chedester of the Authority.

While Reclamation provided hopeful news for the Exchange Contractors, South of Delta agricultural water

Confidence is key as Wiersma confronts issues for SLCC

John Wiersma has brought a confidence to his new role as General Manager of the San Luis Canal Company (Company), and that confidence will be useful as he navigates major issues such as subsidence, drainage and protecting water rights.

“Those are significant challenges facing the Company and some good groundwork has already been laid,” he said. “My predecessor, Chase Hurley, and Chris White of Central California Irrigation District have worked to establish a program that recharges groundwater and reduces subsidence in neighboring areas. I will continue those efforts along with Chris and others involved.”

John joined the Company on Dec. 1, 2017, following seven years at Merced Irrigation District in various roles in both the energy and water resource departments. His last area of responsibility was Water Operations Manager.

John received a Civil Engineering degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and later obtained his professional engineering license.

He and his wife Amanda have two children, ages 4 and 7. John and his family enjoy outdoor activities such as camping, roping and motorcycle/ATV riding.”

users were told to expect only 40 percent of their contracted water supply for the coming year. Farmers in the Friant Division have seen their allocation increase from 60 to 100 percent of Class 1 deliveries.

Eastside water service contractors should expect 100 percent of their contracted supply, which reflects the conditions at New Melones Reservoir with levels at 134 percent of normal as of February 20.

“This will be a challenging year for many farmers in the San Joaquin Valley,” added Chedester. “The beginning of the current water year has been a concern to everyone.”

\$1.5 million grant awarded for groundwater plan efforts to comply with SGMA law

A \$1.5 million grant from Proposition 1 funds has been awarded to the Delta-Mendota Subbasin for its efforts to gain compliance with the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). A portion of the grant, \$330,000, will go to the Exchange Contractors Groundwater Sustainability Agency for its work in developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) with other GSAs in the subbasin.

The GSP must be completed and submitted to the California Department of Water Resources by Jan. 31, 2020.

The Act requires a basin to avoid significant and unreasonable effects for the sustainability indicators:

- 1) Chronic lowering of groundwater levels;
- 2) Reduction of groundwater storage;
- 3) Seawater intrusion;
- 4) Degraded water quality;
- 5) Land subsidence; and
- 6) Depletions of interconnected surface water.

Proposition 1 was approved by voters in 2014 and provides money for groundwater, water quality, supply, treatment and storage projects.

Temperance Flat funding awaits appeal

An application for funds to move forward with the planning of Temperance Flat Reservoir was rejected in January by reviewers with the California Water Commission. A subsequent appeal to clarify the application has been submitted and is awaiting a ruling.

At press time: *The California Water Commission staff announced a recommendation of only \$171.3 million for planning of Temperance Flat Reservoir. The Authority disagrees and will appeal this application directly to the CWC in early May.*

“We were puzzled by the rejection and received further clarification in follow-up meetings conducted by the Commission to explain the reviewers’ reasoning,” explained Executive Director Steve Chedester, who also serves as a director to the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority.

The Authority submitted the application and a follow-up appeal to the rejection.

The application was one of 11 programs submitted to the Commission for funding of \$2.7 billion from Proposition 14, approved by the voters in 2014 for water storage and other water-related projects. All 11 applications failed to receive acceptance for monies sought.

The Temperance Flat application sought \$1 billion in funds and was denied for any funding. Sites Reservoir, another project in the Sacramento Valley, sought \$1.6 billion and received approval for only \$660 million.

New requirements looming for Irrigated Land reporting

A decision approving new requirements for farmers in the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed WDR under the Irrigated Land Program will have similar effects in other basins.

Consultant David Cory told the Water Authority directors at a recent meeting that the new requirements could be enforced as early as March 2019, but that date is not firm. Among the new requirements are:

- Growers in Low Vulnerability areas must comply with some provisions previously directed at growers in High Vulnerability areas.
- Irrigation management practices will be incorporated into existing Nitrogen Management Plans to create Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans.
- Growers/landowners must monitor and test the water quality of drinking water wells located on property enrolled in the irrigated lands program. Depending on test results,

Proposition 1 dictates that projects seeking funding must provide “public benefits” and not be solely for water storage.

“The Authority spent several thousands of dollars to review the rejection and formulate the appeal,” Chedester said. “It was perplexing when we first received the denial. We were not sure if the review process included a full understanding of the application package.”

According to the 18-page appeal letter and attachments, further clarification and revised numbers were provided to answer the reviewers’ questions to the original application.

General Manager Chris White of Central California Irrigation District chaired the committee efforts in pulling together the technical aspects of the initial application. White and his committee were also involved in formulating the data included in the appeal process.

The reviewers scored the public benefit ratio as only 0.10 from the initial application. Following adjustments, the Authority qualifies the public benefit ratio as 2.65.

“We are waiting to learn whether the reviewers will accept the adjustments and change their ruling of no funding for Temperance Flat,” Chedester concluded.

A decision from the Commission in response to the appeal is expected in July 2018.

additional reporting and monitoring could kick in.

- Coalitions must submit anonymized nitrogen use data to the Regional Board. This anonymized data will be accessible to the public, but the data will not divulge the specific name of the grower or the parcel location.
- The Regional Board must conduct an external expert review process to evaluate the Eastside’s surface water quality monitoring program. SWRCB may convene an expert panel in the future to provide guidance on all surface water quality monitoring programs.

The new requirements are expected to be adopted for coalitions outside of the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed later this year. The Westside Coalition will keep growers informed about the new requirements after the Regional Board incorporates these new provisions into the Westside SJR order.



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Water Authority marks 25 years of service

By Steve Chedester
Executive Director

It was 25 years ago this May that the four individual Exchange Contractors decided to formally join together to engage in legal and legislative efforts to protect their water rights. A Joint Powers Agreement was signed in May 1993 and launched a new organization known today as the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

The leaders of the four districts looked into the future and realized the importance of working closely together on those issues that would most affect them. We have continued that role and will carry it forward into the future.

The history of the Exchange Contractors dates back to the late 1880s as Henry Miller assembled nearly a million acres of San Joaquin Valley land into a cattle empire. Miller, a butcher in San Francisco, joined forces with a rival butcher, Charles Lux, and formed Miller & Lux. Along with the new land holdings came 100

miles of riparian rights adjacent to the San Joaquin and Kings rivers.

The Exchange Contractors, or the Four Entities as they were known at that time, were formed from the Miller & Lux acreage.

In 1939 the Exchange Contractors signed two agreements with the federal government that enabled the construction of Friant Dam and the diversion of San Joaquin River water, previously used by the Exchange Contractors, down the east side of the valley into Tulare and Kern Counties.

At no time did the Exchange Contractors agree to give up their rights to the San Joaquin River.

In normal water years, the Exchange Contractors are guaranteed 100 percent of their contractual water allotment (840,000 acre feet) and in critical years the amount is 75 percent (650,000 acre feet).