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

EXCHANGE perspective

NOVEMBER 2018

Recharge project yields unexpected benefit to water supply

Water delivered to a 20-acre pond site via Orestimba Creek has recharged to the underground at a rate of more than four times than originally planned. The early results of only a month of deliveries has prompted a look at adding 60 acres to the recharge effort.

"The aquifer is reacting very positively," says Executive Director Chris White of the San Joaquin Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

Formally known as the Orestimba Creek Recharge and Recovery Project, the project is a joint effort between the Authority, Del Puerto Water District and the local landowner. Central California Irrigation District has taken the lead in developing the project for the Authority.

The recharge area, located just outside of the CCID service area in neighboring Del Puerto, features a "fairly shallow upper aquifer but with good water producing sand lenses and a Corcoran clay layer that is not continuous in the area," explains White. "These conditions should provide us with an opportunity to install productive recovery wells."



Ponding efforts at Orestimba Creek Recharge and Recovery Project.

The project calls for water from the Delta Mendota Canal to be moved into Orestimba Creek to flow to the recharge area. Recovered water will be redirected to the DMC and also to Del Puerto and the Exchange Contractors.

"Del Puerto is an equal partner in the project and will receive half of the benefits of the project," says White.

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White assumes Authority Executive Director role

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority has moved into a new phase with the appointment of Chris White as the Authority's Executive Director. Former Executive Director Steve Chedester has shifted to the new role of Director of Policy and Programs.

White will be transitioning from his role as General Manager to the

Central California Irrigation District, a position he has held for 19 years, over the next 12 months.

"I appreciate the confidence expressed by the Authority's Directors," said White upon his appointment. "These changes will enable the Authority to be better equipped to address water related challenges into the future."

New Sack Dam could result in reclaiming 20 percent lost capacity caused by subsidence

Reclaiming 20 percent of lost capacity through Sack Dam could be the ultimate benefit to growers receiving water from the San Luis Canal Company following completion of a planned construction project that will result in a new dam complete with fish screens.

John Wiersma, SLCC General Manager, explained that significant subsidence detected at the dam site in 2011 has resulted in the new efforts.

Local efforts pave way to avoid groundwater pumping restrictions

A new state law requires local agencies overlying groundwater basins to develop and submit plans beginning in 2019 that would establish rules that could include pumping restrictions. But thanks to ongoing groundwater management programs instituted by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority during the past 25 years, landowners within the Authority's service area could escape future pumping restrictions.



The 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act calls for the local formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to develop plans to create sustainable use of groundwater. The Exchange Contractors established a GSA and is ahead of schedule to develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

"Going back to the 1980s and for a variety of reasons, the Exchange Contractors began to take stock of groundwater use and determined certain management practices needed to take place," recalls Executive Director Chris White. "Extensive monitoring and management programs were established in the 1990s that looked at well pumping within our service area and also adjacent areas.

"One of the main reasons we are ahead of schedule in developing our GSP," White adds, "is because we've been very successful with groundwater management. As a result, we do not anticipate any restrictions on groundwater pumping."

"Without a new dam or modifications to the existing dam, the conveyance capacity will remain inhibited and will worsen," said Wiersma.

A financial agreement for completion of environmental, engineering, and permitting for the project was secured this year through the San Joaquin River Restoration Program for \$2,890,937, completing a major milestone for the project.

"We are now meeting with various federal fish agencies and other organizations to reach consensus on the final design parameters of the new fish screen and passage structures," said Wiersma. "Once we have concluded that process, we will move forward with the actual design."

The total cost for the new dam is estimated at around \$52 million, also funded through the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. The goal for completion of the new "operational" dam is 2022.

The scope of work, according to Wiersma, includes a new dam with fish passage that will enable fish to travel both upstream and downstream. In addition, a screening system will also be installed to prevent fish, especially endangered fish, from entering the distribution system that delivers water to farms.

Orestimba Creek...

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"The positive results from the early stage of the recharge project has led CCID to look at adding an adjacent 60 acres to the effort," says White. An application has already been submitted to FEMA for \$7 million in funding for the expansion.

"We will also initiate an outreach program to local landowners to explain the project," he adds. "Our message to them is that we have a project that will provide positive benefits to their surface and groundwater supplies."

It will probably take another year to move through the permitting process before ground work begins on the expansion, according to White. Project completion is expected within the next three years after permitting is completed.

Mendota Pool projects —

CCID to take lead in design and construction

An 18-month long process to reach a framework document to proceed with new facilities as part of the San Joaquin River Restoration Project has resulted in Central California Irrigation District assuming design and construction responsibility for the Mendota Pool Bypass and the Mendota Pool Fish Screen.

Completion of the construction is estimated to be some time in 2022, according to Chedester.

“The good news is that the Bureau of Reclamation has agreed to cover all the costs of the two projects,” he added.



Authority Executive Director Chris White (left, with hat) and Randy Houk-Columbia Canal Company Manager, review San Joaquin River Restoration Program during a tour stop at the Mendota Dam for U.S. Bureau of Reclamation staff.

“We are now in the process of securing a financial assistance agreement so the design and construction work can begin,” updated Steve Chedester, Director of Policy and Programs for the Authority. “Early estimates are about \$80 million for the projects.”

Gaining the two agreements ---design and construction, and financial--- required several trips to Reclamation offices in Denver and Washington, D.C.

“CCID stepped forward to lead these efforts since they already own Mendota Dam,” said Chedester. “The current plans are consistent in making sure the projects get built in a timely manner and with dollars that will be available over the next few years.”

The projects associated with the Mendota Pool are among the first projects scheduled for completion as part of the Restoration Program. According to legislation passed by Congress in 2009 that authorized the Restoration Program, various projects were supposed to be identified and built before fish were reintroduced to the river.

“We’ve seen a limited number of fish already put into the river and we are hopeful that these projects can move forward before more fish are reintroduced,” added Chedester.

Authority awaits funding approval for projects

Three projects that could result in increased water supplies to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority are awaiting on how much funding will be available from state and federal agencies.

The three projects --- Los Banos Creek Recharge and Recovery, Orestimba Creek Expansion Project, and Red Top Banking Project --- have a combined price tag of \$29.6 million.

“We’re hopeful to receive confirmation by the end of the calendar year that \$22.2 million will come from the two sources,” said Steve Chedester, Director of Policy and Programs for the Authority.

“The importance in receiving the funds is that the projects have already started, and the funds will enable us to enter

into the next phase of construction without unnecessary delays,” he added.

The breakdown of the projects is:

- Los Banos Creek Recharge and Recovery: \$9.1 Million with \$6.8 Million in federal funding; \$2.3 Million local share split with San Luis Water District and Grassland Water District.
- Orestimba Creek Expansion Project: \$7.9 Million with \$5.9 Million in federal funding; \$2 Million local cost share split with Del Puerto Water District.
- Red Top Joint Banking Project: \$12.6 Million with \$9.5 Million in federal funds; \$3.1 Million local cost share to be provided by Triangle T Water District and land owners in the Red Top area.



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Groundwater protection began 25 years ago

*By Chris White
Executive Director*

Action taken 25 years ago by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority in adopting a Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) provided a solid foundation to respond to a 2014 law governing groundwater use and avoid impacts that could restrict the use of water from our aquifers.

The Legislature passed Assembly Bill 3030 in 1992 that approved a systematic procedure in developing groundwater management plans.

Then-Executive Director Dee Swearingen informed the Authority Directors that forming a GMP would allow the group's member entities to take control of groundwater use within their service area. The Directors consequently took action to establish a Groundwater Management Plan and embark on a series of management actions that continue to provide benefits.

This was a bold action on the part of the Directors, but it was an action made even more necessary in order to protect the local groundwater at a time when the Areias

Dairy Farms was proposing to transfer water to Metropolitan Water District.

In the ensuing years, the Authority has gathered data relating to groundwater and installed safeguards to protect this valuable resource.

In 2014, the Legislature again turned its attention to groundwater and approved the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The potential effects of this new legislation could have serious impacts on how much groundwater can be pumped.

Several of the guidelines called for in the new legislation have already been implemented by the Authority as a result of its Directors taking action in 1993. Because of that foresight, the Authority is ahead of schedule in establishing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan that will enable landowners to protect their right to continue to use their groundwater. Our expectation is that groundwater use not be restricted, as expected in other basins across the state.