



SUMMER 2017

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

# EXCHANGE

## perspective

SEPTEMBER 2017

## Future of river restoration program remains uncertain

**R**epresentatives from the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority walked away from a recent meeting in Denver with Bureau of Reclamation staff with uncertain feelings regarding the future of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

"We spent a couple of days in talks with them that included a suggestion of how to incorporate infrastructure changes at the Mendota Pool that would satisfy the Program's needs," said Executive Director Steve Chedester. "Sev-

eral modifications were pointed out in our proposal but what happens next is still unknown."

Funding for the Program remains pivotal for both short and long-term efforts. Congress has authorized funding through the Bureau's past budgets but those funds have been released only on an annual basis.

"We continue to point out the weakness of moving forward with the Program without any guarantees that third-party interests, such as our landowners, will be protected from seepage from the river," exclaimed Steve Chedester, Executive Director for the Exchange Contractors.

"We are also seeing no clear prioritization of the completion of the needed infrastructure projects that would prevent protected and endangered fish species from entering into our deliv-



*Mendota Dam*

**Recent talks with Bureau of Reclamation staff included suggested revisions to infrastructure at the Mendota Pool.**

## New groundwater project adds to water supply

Reaching a 50,000 acre-foot goal of new water storage is moving forward with the construction this fall of a 20-acre groundwater recharge project.

The 50,000 AF-goal comes from a 2011 study undertaken by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors and Water Authority.

"The Orestimba Creek Groundwater Recharge Project is expected to break ground this fall," said Steve Chedester, Executive Director of the Exchange Contractors. "The result could be an additional 5,000 acre-feet for local growers and even more if conditions justify enlarging the project."

# Application submitted for Temperance Dam proposal

Supporters of the proposed Temperance Flat Dam on the San Joaquin River are hopeful that the submission of an application for Proposition 1 funds will result in moving the Temperance Dam proposal closer to reality.

The San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority (SJVWIA) submitted the application Monday, Aug. 14, to the California Water Commission. Proposition 1, approved by state voters in 2014, includes \$7.12 billion in general obligation bonds for state water supply infrastructure projects. The application is for \$1.3 billion of the projected \$3 billion cost of the project.

"It's a banner day today," said J. Steven Worthley, SJVWIA President and Tulare County Board of Supervisors Chairman, during a press conference at the Fresno County Farm Bureau announcing the submission. "Completing and filing this application and continuing to move Temperance Flat forward is the primary reason this organization was formed and has been working so hard."

## Hoffman joins Authority as Water Resources Specialist

Adam Hoffman's path to Water Resources Specialist had a surprising beginning when a counselor suggested he enroll in FFA classes while attending high school in the middle of Orange County.



**Adam Hoffman**

"It was almost by accident that I became interested in agriculture since I didn't have a farming background," says Hoffman, who joined the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Authority in April.

After graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and marrying Jill Freitas from Los Banos, the

young couple returned to the Hoffman family business in Orange County.

The addition of a second child and a desire to raise a family elsewhere than the concrete jungle of Southern California brought the family to Los Banos, where Jill grew up as part of the family dairy business.

"We were looking for someone who was a good communicator and able to compile the daily and monthly reports that are important to the Authority," commented Executive Director Steve Chedester. "We were pleased that Adam made the decision to join the Exchange Contractors."

"A lot of effort went into gathering the information needed to complete the application," said Steve Chedester, Executive Director of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority. The Exchange Contractors is a member of the SJVWIA and Chedester serves on the group's board of directors.

## SL&DMWA joins valley water group

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) has been added as the newest member to the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority. Farmer and SLDMWA Chairman Michael Cannon will serve on the Authority's Board of Directors. Executive Director Jason Peltier will serve as Cannon's alternate.

"Chris White put a lot of work into the application process as he served as chairman of the technical advisory committee charged with the research needed to compile the application," added Chedester. White also serves as General Manager of the Central California Irrigation District.

How the Commission will rule on the application may not be known until April 2018.

In an early July letter of support to the Commission Chairman Armando Quintero, Chedester pointed out the "operational flexibility that the Temperance Flat Reservoir provides the State's entire water system is what makes this project so unique and worthy of funding."

## River restoration...

*Continued from Page 1*

ery system. Resolution of these concerns and others could affect ongoing funding," he added.

The Restoration Program is a long-term effort to restore flows to the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River. In addition, the negotiated settlement that created the Program would also restore a "self-sustaining Chinook salmon fishery in the river."

"From the onset, the settlement was short-sighted in the amount of funding needed to achieve its goals," said Chedester. "Estimated costs for the implementation of the project have raced beyond the original reporting of \$250-600 million to over \$1.5 billion...and yet no infrastructure has been built that would provide the safeguards to our landowners, as spelled out in the agreement and implementing legislation."

# Subsidence resolution---

## *Agreement reduces groundwater pumping*

**A**n agreement aimed to halt damage to Sack Dam from heavy groundwater pumping east of the San Joaquin River has established limits on damaging deep wells. In a parallel effort, those landowners have formed a water district to implement groundwater management.

“This agreement will benefit farmers in our two districts as well as the newly formed district,” said Chase Hurley, general manager of the San Luis Canal Company (SLCC). Joining SLCC as signatories to the agreement are Central California Irrigation District (CCID) and the Triangle T Water District.

The agreement stems from a federal study conducted during 2008-2010 that revealed the elevation of the river was sinking at a rate of a half-foot per year. Along with that action was a dropping of Sack Dam, which threatened the flow of water to SLCC and CCID.

“We were losing 15-20 percent of our delivery capacity due to gravity loss,” explained Hurley. “We could see the effects of the subsidence and were pretty sure that it was being caused by farmers to the east of the river pumping groundwater from below the Corcoran clay at a depth of 250 feet.”

Those farmers were not in a water district so Hurley and CCID’s General Manager Chris White undertook a series of meetings to explain the situation to about 20 landowners. The goal was to “slow down the deep pumping of the aquifer to get the subsidence equalized,” added Hurley.

The meetings eventually narrowed to the two largest landowners close to Sack Dam. Talks focused on explaining the benefits of establishing a water budget that included a decline in groundwater pumping by a half-foot per year over the first five years after reaching an agreement. Along with that decline was the establishment of percolation basins to the east of the river.

During the current water year that has seen a return to normal supplies, Triangle T Farms has already achieved the 3-percent reduction in planted acreage and recharged over 50,000 acre feet in the percolation basins and in-lieu recharge.

“The formation of the new water district was pivotal,” Hurley said. “It was important for us to communicate and work with a single district instead of multiple landowners.”

Infrastructure construction is expected to be completed this year.

### **Agreement**

Establishes a five-year schedule to limit groundwater pumping from the deep aquifer. The ultimate goal is to reach ½-acre foot per acre per year reduction in five years. Also establishes an independent expert panel to review numbers and make recommendations for shallow and deep pumping, based on water demand.

Formation of Triangle T Water District to include 15,000 acres representing two current farms. Additional farms may be added to the District and will be required to concur with the groundwater pumping agreement. The District will hold title to infrastructure easements to move surface water within the District.

Installation by Central California Irrigation District of a siphon underneath the San Joaquin River to deliver surface supplies to the District from the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority and other willing sellers in the future. Utilization of surface water within the District is to reduce reliance on groundwater supplies.

Landowners within the District will follow 3 percent of their lands for the purpose of creating levees and percolation basins in order to recharge the basin.

### **Orestimba...**

*Continued from Page 1*

The 20-acre site is located within the service area of the Del Puerto Water District and was selected following an investigation of sites viable for groundwater storage. DPWD responded favorably to the offer of working with the Exchange Contractors in developing the site.

Central California Irrigation District, acting on behalf of the Exchange Contractors, has taken the lead in developing the project and, along with DPWD, secured a \$600,000 grant from the Bureau of Reclamation that will be matched from local funds.

Water for the recharge project is expected to come from river flood flows and CVP water supplies.



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## Local responses keep flood flows manageable

*By Steve Chedester  
Executive Director*

**M**anaging water flows is not as easy as 1-2-3.

Flood flows from the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers experienced this year serve as a good example of what it takes to deliver water to farms within the Exchange Contractors' service area.

We began to see an indication at the end of the last calendar year as to what kind of water year was ahead of us. Storms sweeping across the Sierras dumped an amount of snow that we had not experienced in years. Those storms continued as the new calendar began its march through the early months of the year.

As expected, warm rains and warming temperature followed and the runoff from the slopes of the Sierras picked up in volume. Both the San Joaquin River and the North Fork of the Kings River

presented challenges as the water moved through our area. The rivers were monitored on a 24-hour basis.

The Lower San Joaquin Levee District did an excellent job in maintaining the integrity of the levees. Their hard work not only helped along the San Joaquin River but also the East Side Bypass.

It was definitely a roller-coaster ride during the early months of the current irrigation season. Friant Dam eventually experienced water spilling over its top as flood flows continued along the river into late spring.

Good management efforts on the part of all involved kept the potentially damaging effects of a record water year at minimal in our area.

Good job...and thanks to all involved.