TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT
FORMED IN 1889

TID TIDINGS

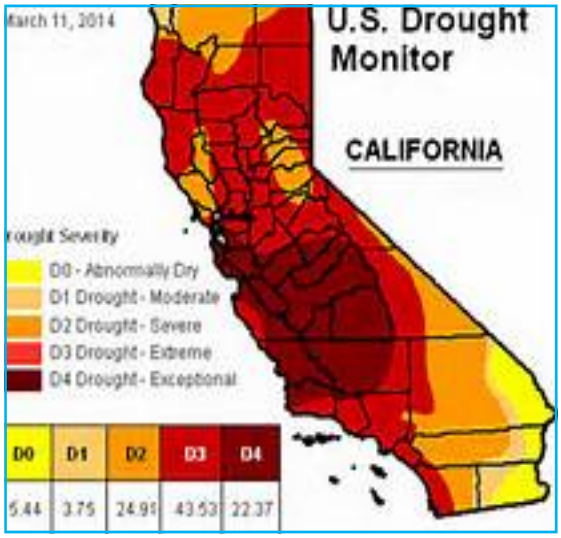
Newsletter of the Tulare Irrigation District

The Board of Directors holds regular public meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 9:00 am at the District office in Tulare

1st Qtr. 2014

In This Issue:

Year of Firsts



An exceptional year is shaping up, one which may go into the record books on several fronts. This will be the first time ever that state and federal water officials have allocated zero supplies for the SWP and CVP from the Delta, the first time since the inception of the Friant Unit in 1950 that the USBR will have to meet the lower San Joaquin River irrigation needs with Friant water – thus resulting in a zero allocation for the 28 Friant contractors along the east side – and the first time that TID will experience back-to-back years with no summer irrigation run. Thinking positively, however, some or all of these firsts might not occur if the balance of this year's winter and ensuing spring turn really wet.

Along with no Friant water this year, the District's situation is compounded with a nominal supply outlook from its Kaweah River sources. As of late mid-March, TID only had 400 AF in storage, and this year's meager runoff will likely produce less than 10,000 AF, all of which will likely be dedicated to our long-term exchange partner, Lindsay-Strathmore ID. Unfortunately, that leaves nothing at all for an irrigation run this year.

Extreme water shortage years like this one, while infrequent, underscore TID's emphasis on maximizing groundwater recharge in wetter years. Stored water in the underground reservoir becomes the supply that our growers rely on exclusively during times like this.

While the stress put upon groundwater reserves is acute in dry times and pressure mounts to find ways to control overdraft, most growers in the Kaweah Basin are spared the panic unfolding in other areas where little or no groundwater exists. In such areas, decisions on which permanent plantings to preserve and which to let go for the summer are being made due to lack of irrigation water. Such a situation has happened in recent

Continued on page 2

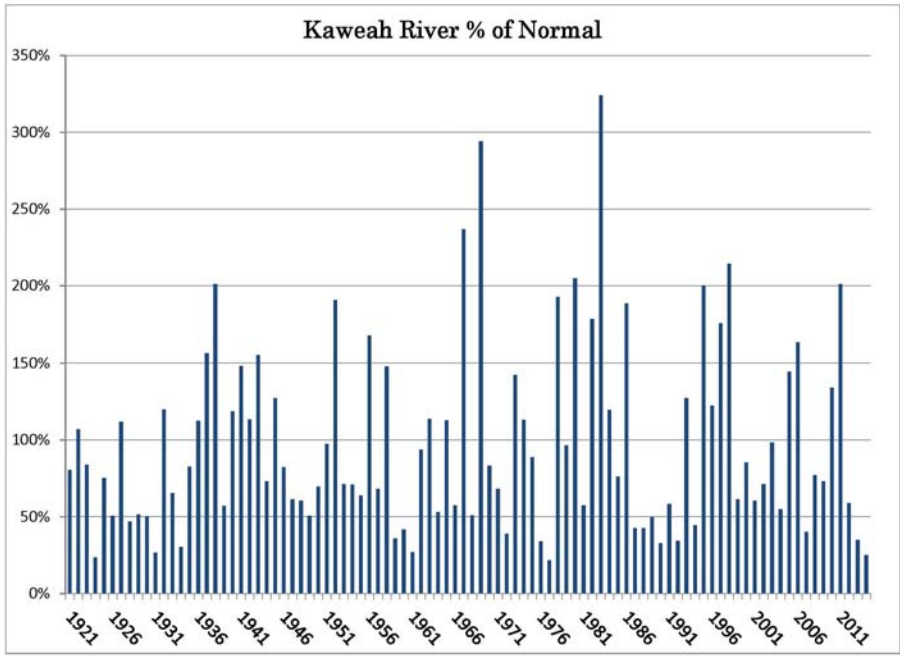
RICK BORGES
FARMER OF THE YEAR 2014

On March 19, 2014, the Noon Kiwanis Club of Tulare hosted its annual Farmer of the Year Banquet lunch celebration at the Tulare Heritage Complex recognizing an outstanding Farmer of the Year from the greater Tulare area. The 2014 honoree is Rick Borges, TID's Vice-President. Congratulations Rick!

(Continued from Page 1, Year of Firsts)

times on the west side of the Valley dependent on water supplies exported from the Delta but never before on the Valley's eastern fringe, where the Friant Class 1 supply, even in previous drought years, has generally been sufficient for tree crops.

Media reporting on this year's conditions tend to sensationalize the situation, e.g., "record-setting drought," "worst ever recorded," "500-year drought," etc. None of these accolades are really accurate. The truth is that while this year is indeed bad, we've had very dry years in the past, as recently as 2007, 1991 and 1977. See the chart to the right for comparisons. What's different this time is that we have much greater water needs and layer upon layer of regulatory/ environmental requirements hampering the operations of the CVP and SWP. The result – less water to meet higher demands, the combination making for greater shortages.



GOVERNMENT DROUGHT DOLLARS

The 2014 drought has caught the attention of Governor Brown and President Obama. Both have recently announced actions to help alleviate some of the problems faced by farmers and towns dealing with little or no water this year. Aid comes in the form of money - $687 million from Sacramento and $1.2 billion from Washington D.C. Governor Brown's bill will provide emergency aid for housing, water and food for drought-impacted communities as well as bond funds for projects to more efficiently capture and manage water. President Obama's pledge of funds will provide financial relief for farmers, ranchers and small communities in California and other western states.

We all know the saying "money doesn't buy happiness," and neither does it buy water, especially when there's none to be found. While government drought dollars can help in the short term, keeping farms alive and small towns functioning this summer, it does nothing to restore and expand upon the state's languishing water delivery infrastructure. If we are to do something to prevent what's happening this year off into the future, our statewide water system needs to be more robust. That means more storage to hold on to wet-year supplies and a better means to move water around the Delta to export Northern California's surplus supplies to the south. These things were part of the original plans for the federal and state projects, but have been put off for too long. If they were in place now, the shortages that would have occurred this year, as well as during the last two dry years, would be much smaller and easier to reckon with.

Visalia Water Exchange Advances

As reported in last year's second quarter issue of TID Tidings, the District and City of Visalia have each approved a water exchange agreement to ultimately bring up to 12,000 AF of additional water annually into our service area. Now what's needed are the physical works to make it happen, and things are underway in that department.

The City has awarded a $147 million construction contract to W.M. Lyles for the necessary modifications to its treatment plant to produce high-quality water that we will ultimately receive. Also, a $4 million contract has been awarded to Mozingo Construction for the construction of the 60-inch diameter pipeline and associated control facilities to deliver the water to the Evans Ditch within the District below Caldwell Ave. By the year 2017, we expect to be receiving this reliable supply, even in drought years such as we are now experiencing.

GROUNDWATER REPORT

We can't seem to get away from the old adage "what goes up must come down." TID's yeoman's efforts to keep sinking basins full in times of ample water supplies are quickly outdone by heavy pumping in dry times with little ditch water for sale to growers. Perhaps this recent string of years, starting with 2012, is an unfair comparison as this is now being called one of the worst droughts on record in California. We expect our groundwater reservoir to be drawn down in such drought years, but when we see no rebound back to pre-drought times, this is cause for concern. The chart at the bottom depicts this situation, where the long-term trend is downward, notably steeper in this latest and ongoing drought. Why is it steeper? Probably for several reasons, not the least of which is that TID and other districts in the Valley have less access to imported water from the CVP and SWP to replenish the groundwater basin. More people living in cities that rely solely on groundwater plays a part, as does more intensive double-cropping on dairy feed lands.

As of this spring, average depth to groundwater is about 154 ft, down some 12 ft from last spring. We usually see a reprieve over the winter, where the fall levels recover during the storm season, but not in the last two years. Levels have dropped even during the winter. Maybe at the end of this dry summer, without surface water in the TID canal system, levels could recede another 15 to 20 ft, down to 170 ft by August. Still, farmers and cities drawing water from depths less than 200 ft are in an enviable position in the southern Valley. Other areas are dealing with depths of 500 ft or more, and seven-figure sums are being paid to construct wells with pumps and motors to lift water from such deeper levels. Clearly we don't want to get there, as there are severe economic consequences in pulling water out from so deep in the aquifer. Also, as water recedes below the confining clays beneath, our ability to recharge in sinking basins from above may come into question.

We've been through this cycle before. Groundwater levels drop, well drillers get busy and booked up, the situation gets the attention of the academic community and others concerned about preservation of the resource, and then the legislature gets involved. It's the same this time, but with more intensity. With mounting interest, we are seeing the state's SWRCB and DWR weigh in on the issue. Stakeholder meetings are ongoing, and legislative committee hearings are scheduled on groundwater management. Tulare's groundwater forum held last November also evidenced local concern over the situation, with nearly 300 people – mostly farming interests – in attendance.

Outreach to the agricultural community is occurring, and two key points are being expressed. One is that we insist on local oversight of the situation, with the state only stepping in if we do nothing. Two is that we need time (read 20 years or so) to phase into local management plans that bring our groundwater reservoirs into balance. After all, we didn't get into this unsustainable situation overnight. As pointed out already, our water supply tools, with which we felt we were holding our own in sustaining our groundwater, have been eroded with Delta water export cutbacks and loss of Friant water to the lower San Joaquin River for a future fishery.

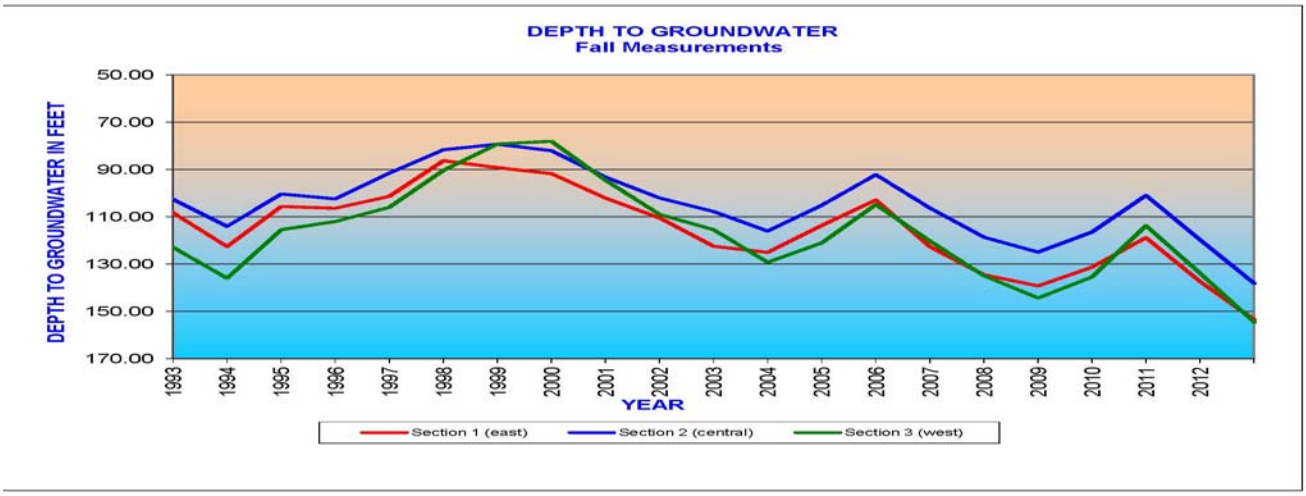
These water losses have occurred over decades, each time with our hope and efforts to restore what we lost, mostly to no avail. Without full access to these imported supply tools and with demands either holding steady or in some areas growing, we are left with considering the future reduction in groundwater pumping. The economic impacts of such reductions will not be small and time will be needed to adjust.

Water Conservation Grant

Adding to the $2 million already awarded to TID growers since 2008, the NRCS has provided us another $750,000 for on-farm improvements to advance water use efficiency on lands served by our canal system. Typical farm projects that qualify for these grant funds include micro-drip irrigation systems, drip-tape installations, and pipeline projects. We have quite a list of growers and associated improvements in the queue and, if you are interested, contact Aaron Fukuda at the District to discuss your improvement projects.

USBR Regional Director's AWARD

January 22, 2014 was a proud day for TID when the Bureau of Reclamation - Mid-Pacific Region, presented TID 's General Manager the Regional Director's Award recognizing TID as a leader in groundwater recharge and surface water management efficiency .



Tulare Irrigation District
6826 Avenue 240
Tulare, California 93274

LOOK INSIDE…

Visit us at…
www.tulareid.org

Founded in 1889, Tulare ID was one of the first irrigation districts in California. Its purpose is to serve the water supply needs of the greater Tulare area, a rich and agriculturally diverse region within the Southern San Joaquin Valley. The water provided comes locally from the Kaweah River and is also imported from the Federal Central Valley Project.

Important Dates to Remember

April
- 8th-TID Board of Directors Meeting

May
- 1st-Second Installments Mailed
- 13th-TID Board of Directors Meeting
- 26th-Memorial Day (Office Closed)

June
- 10th-TID Board of Directors Meeting
- 20th-2nd Tax Assessment delinquent (5% penalty)

July
- 4th-Independence Day (Office Closed)
- 8th-TID Board of Directors Meeting

The TID Tidings is published quarterly by the Tulare Irrigation District. Questions about the articles or items appearing in the TID Tidings can be answered by reaching the Tulare ID office at (559) 686-3425