Deep Trenching by Montgomery Engineers at Creamline Basin

“...are looking for new ideas that aren't holding water.” Makes sense, that is, if you're looking for ways to achieve more recharge out of existing recharge basins around the District. We've got over 1,300 acres of them, and even just a small gain in their infiltration rate puts a lot more water underground over time. Using USBR grant funding, we've retained HydroMetrics Water Resources, a California-based hydrogeology firm, to evaluate ways by which we can conduct recharge operations and basin maintenance to enhance the percolation characteristics of these key water recharge facilities. They've partnered with a sister firm, Montgomery & Associates out of Tucson, Arizona, who specializes in the evaluation of soil characteristics and their relationship to infiltration capacity.

Now with groundwater regulation essentially upon us in the form of the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), any ability to achieve more bang for the buck out of our basins will enable TID to take better advantage of the surplus wet-year supplies we know will occur on occasion in the future. This recharge basin study is one key element of an overall strategy to be able to improve our regional water budget—a critical metric that will determine how much each and every grower will be able to use their deep well(s) in the future. The closer we can get to a water budget that's out of the red, so to speak, the more TID's growers can count on their wells to irrigate crops.

Other elements of this strategy include a comprehensive projection of future surface water supplies accessible by the District, use of new soils mapping and other tools to help evaluate potential new recharge facilities, on-farm programs to achieve recharge on existing farm lands, and partnerships with the cities of Tulare and Visalia for groundwater management and recharge through our merger into the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Aaron Fukuda, TID's Engineer who is overseeing many of these recharge enhancement efforts, says of their potential "combining the District's current assets for groundwater recharge with the science to increase and maintain the most efficient recharge practices, the District hopes to meet the agricultural irrigation needs of today and tomorrow.”
Everywhere we hear the complaint: “Costs are going up.” In our public water district operation, like your farming business, this unfortunately holds true. Our costs, particularly in the acquisition of imported water from Millerton Lake on the San Joaquin River, are much higher now than in the past. TID has held our water sales rate at $33 per acre-foot for many years now – ever since 2004. Still true today, we are advantaged by a major part of our supply being a low-cost local source (the Kaweah River), and a delivery system that depends almost entirely on gravity flow (no high-energy costs for pumping water uphill). This is not the case for many of our neighboring Friant districts, and for those reasons their water sales rates are three times higher or more.

Over the last several months, the District's Board of Directors has been reviewing budget projections which indicate a significant increase in the sales rate is going to be needed. The Board is mindful of the rate-payer support process necessary to implement any rate increases and, on that important note, look for a landowner town hall meeting announcement in the near future to present more on this topic.

**COST OF WATER**

![Chart showing costs to growers in Friant Districts](chart.png)

**QUEST FOR WATER**

At last, after over five years of research, travel to historical archives housed in distant libraries, fact-checking and fact-checking one more time, and exhaustive professional editing, we are there! Richard Zack's manuscript of TID's history, starting with its formative years in the late 1880s up to current times, is now made ready for publishing in book form. It contains some 450 pages and is chock-full of many older photos heretofore unseen in any publication.

TID's story is a tale of water and all that is involved in securing its application in producing food for a growing nation. Maybe it's a small history in a little corner of the world. Histories of big achievements by notable people have been well-documented and read by many. Smaller histories are lesser known, but they are no less rich with insightful and noble people and their astounding accomplishments. This book represents but one recordation of a rich history out of one of those distant corners and serves as a tribute to the many individuals, past community leaders, ancestors, and citizens long forgotten who worked so hard and beat all odds to get the Tulare Irrigation District “on the map.”

Tulare Irrigation District remains as the fourth public water district to form since the passage of California's Wright Act in 1887 and, for this and other reasons, its well told saga is worthy of a professional-grade publication. If you wish a copy of this rather unique book of water development titled "Quest for Water," please call the District office to place your order.

**FRIANT CONTRACTORS FILE LAWSUIT AGAINST U.S.**

After 60-years-plus of dependable deliveries of water from the Friant Unit for irrigation and groundwater recharge within the District, we were allotted nothing in 2014. And again in 2015. It took awhile but, after extensive discussions and numerous meetings, things finally came to a head in the form of a lawsuit against the U.S., filed in the Court of Federal Claims in Washington, D.C. Many of the Friant water contractors, including TID, have joined in on a massive damage claim against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for CVP water allocations denied in 2014. The claim is for $350 million of damages across the Friant service area wrought from the lack of water and attendant loss of permanent crops, fallowed ground, and accelerated depletion of groundwater reserves in that year.

Beyond the money, the lawsuit's ultimate aim is to alter the operational practices of USBR in future years to protect the District and its growers' property right to apply water for beneficial use. It had been hoped that this legal course of action would be avoided, but we now join the ranks of other water agencies in California and in the West seeking to use the courts to preserve and protect water property rights in this era of limited supplies.