



Merced Irrigation District will provide local drought input at meeting of state water leaders

General Manager will serve as key panelist

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MERCED, CA – Merced Irrigation District General Manager John Sweigard will provide local input on the drought while serving as a panelist during a briefing with top water officials from across the state this week.

Leaders from local, state and federal water interests will discuss issues related to the four-year drought and examine the resulting impacts at a briefing titled “2015 Drought – Four Years and Counting: Impacts and Actions.”

The discussion is being sponsored by the Association of California Water Agencies in partnership with California’s Department of Water Resources, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, California Office of Emergency Services, as well as the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties.

Among those participating in the drought discussion Thursday are state Natural Resources Secretary John Laird, State Water Resources Control Board Chair Felicia Marcus, and state Fish and Wildlife Director Charlton Bonham, among others.

“Merced ID has very unique operations and provides multiple benefits to our community,” said Sweigard. “It is absolutely critical that leaders at the state and federal levels understand our local crisis. The impacts of the drought are directly harming agriculture and the groundwater-recharge benefit we provide our region and our cities. I welcome the opportunity to explain these issues and the consequences for residents of eastern Merced County, as well as other parts of the San Joaquin Valley.”

The discussion will be webcast live at <http://dwr.videoss.com/>. The conference will be held at Crest Theatre 1013 K St. from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Those wishing to attend in person must preregister at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/drought2015>.

Sweigard will serve on a panel titled Managing on the Ground: Local Agency Actions and Response. Among the panelists are Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager of Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, and Alexander Coate, General Manager of East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Merced ID owns and operates Lake McClure, with a capacity of 1-million acre feet. The reservoir was built and paid for locally, and is not part of the state or federal water projects in California.

Created by New Exchequer Dam, the lake reached a historic low this year and remains at 9 percent of its capacity. The District will provide no surface water to its 2,200 growers from the reservoir this year. Instead, the District will depend on its conjunctively-managed groundwater to provide a fraction of the water typically used by its growers.

Each year, the Merced ID provides upward of 100,000 acre feet of groundwater recharge to eastern Merced County through unlined canals and recharge basins. This year, the District will depend entirely on pumping less than 60,000 acre feet of its conjunctively managed groundwater. That's a fraction of the 300,000 to 400,000 acre feet of surface water Merced ID growers would receive from Lake McClure in more typical years.

Among topics on the [agenda](#) for the discussion in Sacramento Thursday:

- Emergency conservation regulations
- Impacts on the Environment
- Fires, farms and food – what to expect
- Helping the hardest hit communities
- Managing on the Ground: Local Agency Actions and Responses

“Although we are regularly engaged with these agencies, our community and our state are facing drought conditions never before experienced,” said Merced ID’s Sweigard. “As we move forward, it is imperative that our local impacts – and those of the Valley – are clearly understood. I look forward to this opportunity to provide that vital perspective.”

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