

THE Current



MID's Monthly Newsletter

January 2013



MID Main Office

744 W. 20th Street.
Merced, CA. 95340
(209)722-5761

Customer Service

Water: (209)722-2720
Electric: (209)722-3041

Automated Water

(866)825-2475

Board of Directors

Div 1: Tim Pellissier
(President)
Div 2: Scott Koehn
Div 3: Dave Long (Vice
President)
Div 4: Kevin Gonzalves
Div 5: Billy Pimentel

Board Meetings

Merced Civic Center
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

The first and third
Tuesday of every month
at 10:00 am.

Mailing Address

PO Box 2288
Merced, CA 95344

Websites

www.mercedid.org
www.lakemcclure.com



FROM THE HEADGATE: MID GENERAL MANAGER JOHN SWEIGARD

I hope that you and your family had a safe and festive holiday season. Here at Merced Irrigation District, we are as busy as ever heading into 2013. Among the news most relevant to you: a change in billing for irrigation standby fees, MID's new online presence and the water forecast for the coming year. As always, MID remains committed to our community and were honored to have been selected as the 2012 Best Commercial Entry in the Home Town Christmas Parade.

Standby Irrigation Fees Billed Later in the Year

Merced Irrigation District has shifted the beginning of its financial fiscal year from January 1 to April 1. This has significant benefits in budgeting and maintaining control of MID's finances. As a result, standby fees traditionally billed in January will now be billed in April. Two installments for the standby fees will be due: one on May 15 and a second on June 30. As always, irrigators are welcome to pay estimated standby fees early. Historically the fee has been \$24 per acre. However, until a new 2013-14 budget is adopted, the standby fees for 2013 have not been established. The fees will be reviewed as part of the budget by the MID Board. Adoption of the 2012-13 budget is expected by the end of March.

MID Goes Social

Merced Irrigation District is continuing to increase its efforts to connect with those it serves. Within the past couple months, MID has rolled out its new website aimed at in-



Above, storm clouds form over one of MID's canals in late December. The District's reservoir had 400,000 acre feet in December, just below the 45-year average of 460,500 acre feet. At left, MID employees prepare to deliver Christmas gifts to Merced County foster youth.

creasing the ease for customers and the public to access information, pay bills and learn more about free services provided by the District. The new website provides visitors the same opportunities to pay bills and order water as before. However, there are additional pages containing information about energy conservation tips, cost savings, energy audits and more. The website can be found at www.mercedid.org. You can also now find MID on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MercedIrrigationDistrict

Although, the Internet is becoming a more routine way of doing businesses, rest assured that MID will continue to also do things the old-fashioned way.

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That means if you need to order water or have questions about your electric bill, you can always reach a "real person" at MID by simply calling 722-5761 and pressing the number 0. You will immediately be connected with an operator who will begin to assist you.

Eye on Storage and Snowpack

As with every winter, we are keeping a watchful eye on the weather and developing snowpack conditions of the High Sierra in the Merced River watershed, which feeds Lake McClure, our source of irrigation water. As of mid-December, the lake held approximately 400,000 acre feet of water. The 45-year average for the lake at this time is 460,500 acre feet. Snow conditions are right around the historical average for this time of the year. At the same time, MID is diverting a small amount of water that's moving through its system during the winter months to recharge groundwater through the Cressey-Winton recharge basin.

The basin spans 18 acres and was first used in 2011 after years of construction and planning. In the first three months of its use, MID replenished approximately 1,300 acre feet of groundwater water. It was not used in 2012 as MID faced one of the driest years on record going into the irrigation season and no additional surface water was available for groundwater recharge. We remain in a watch-and-wait pattern in deter-

mining water supplies and allocations for 2013.

Independence Day Celebration

We are excited to announce that MID will have its first-ever Independence Day Celebration fireworks display on Lake McClure. The celebration is currently approved and scheduled to be held on Friday, July 5. There will be much more information to come about this exciting news. However, in the meantime, we wanted to give you plenty of time to get this on your calendar. We expect this is going to be a spectacular event that you, your friends and your family won't want to miss.

In the community

Merced Irrigation District's commitment to the community was in full swing for the holiday season. The MID Rudolph Float was recognized as the 2012 Best Commercial Entry in the Home Town Merced Christmas Parade. The float was the result of several of our hard-working, imaginative employees. At the same time, our employees took it on themselves to adopt 35 local teenagers in foster youth by working with United Way and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Merced County. In all, our employees raised more than \$7,000 to help provide a brighter Christmas for teenagers recovering from abusive and neglectful environments.

MID Monitors Salmon for Benefit of Growers and Environment

As part of its relicensing effort with the federal government, Merced Irrigation District helped monitor the number of salmon swimming up the Merced River for spawning this year.

Preliminary numbers suggest more than 4,800 made the eastward turn from the San Joaquin River and up the Merced. The fish were counted at a weir operated near Stevenson from June 2012 through December 2012. Such weirs have been operated on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne rivers for several years now.

MID was required to install and operate a weir as part of its required studies related to application for a new operating license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the Merced River Hydroelectric Project. The fish count helps determine the number of fall run Chinook Salmon that migrate from the ocean to the Merced River to spawn. It also provides specific time-relevant data about the migration.

The data will be used by federal and state regulators when they examine proposed in-stream flows on the Merced River, one of the anticipated resource management requirements associated with issuance of a new license.

Although MID does not have historical counts to compare to, the Merced River Hatchery has captured and spawned large numbers of salmon. Egg counts (one of the products of the hatchery) were extremely high compared to recent past years.



A weir in the Merced River is used to count salmon migrating upstream to spawn as part of an MID environmental study. The study is being conducted as part of the District's federal relicensing.

In recent years, several native anadromous fish species have been listed as threatened or endangered through the Endangered Species Act. Such a listing can have significant water supply impacts, as has been seen with the ongoing battles associated with the state and federal water contractors, the Delta pumping facilities and the Friant Water Authority.

Fortunately, the Salmon on the Merced River have not been listed. For both MID's growers and the fish alike, it is in the District's best interests that our operations are managed to facilitate a healthy environment for these fish and avoid the need for special protections. In most simple terms, an existing species in the

Merced River being listed as threatened or endangered has the potential to cause significant restrictions on MID operations and impact our water supply to growers.

MID intends to remain an environmental leader working progressively with the state and federal regulatory agencies for the benefit of District growers and the environment alike.