



MID Plans Short Season Beginning Next Month With Extremely Limited Water Supply

Penalties and Fines Will be Charged for Theft

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MERCED, CA – Merced Irrigation District will begin irrigation season next month with an extremely limited supply of water.

Following a vote today by the MID Board of Directors, water orders will be taken on April 14 and the first deliveries will begin on April 21.

Facing a third dry year with unprecedented drought conditions, the Directors also enacted strict penalties for any water theft this season.

Today's announcement comes after months of discussion with growers about the water crisis. The District is in its third dry year and California's governor has declared a state of emergency for the entire state.

Based on Lake McClure's available water, growers will receive 6 inches per acre. Class II growers in the consolidated El Nido area will receive 3 inches per acre. Deliveries are expected to continue until August. Water is typically measured in acre feet, rather than acre inches.

"This will be one of the most challenging seasons our employees and our growers have ever experienced. We are facing an unprecedented drought and that will require unprecedented cooperation from everyone," said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

In order to provide that minimal amount of water, MID intends to reduce Lake McClure – the District’s surface water storage facility – to its lowest possible level.

In addition to the surface water allocation from Lake McClure, MID will again implement its Supplemental Water Supply Pool Program. Growers can elect to receive additional water that is made available from banked groundwater pumping. The District expects to provide approximately 28,000 acre feet through the program this year.

Growers will receive their regular irrigation sign-up packets in the coming days, along with additional information about signing up for the Supplemental Water Supply Program.

At today’s meeting, growers also put in place strict policies to help deter water theft. For a first offense of unauthorized use, a grower will be fined \$1,000 and \$500 for each acre foot used. For a second offense, the grower would receive the same fines and penalties while losing any further access to MID water this year.

MID’s office is located at 744 W. 20th Street, Merced, CA 95340. As in previous years, irrigation orders may be placed 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the irrigation season by calling (209) 722-2720 or toll-free at (800) 750-2720.

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