

THE Current



MID's Monthly Newsletter

September 2015



WATER & POWER

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Power line would enhance reliability



Existing power lines run along Thornton Road, south of the City of Merced, near the area of the new proposed Merced South Transmission Line. If built, it would enhance service for MID's 8,400 existing customers.

South Merced and new economic development could benefit

More reliable electrical service. Local economic development.

Those are benefits of a proposed project to expand MID's electric service in Merced.

Known as the "Merced South 115 kV Trans-

mission Line and Substation Project," it would further improve electric service to MID's 8,400 current residential and business customers. It would also allow MID to deliver public power to southeast Merced in an area identified for new economic

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FROM THE HEADGATE: MID GENERAL MANAGER JOHN SWEIGARD

Although mired in a fourth year of drought, the Merced Irrigation District has never been busier. This summer MID has worked to fend off multiple regulatory challenges to its water rights. Also, in an emergency action, the MID Board provided a minimal supply of Lake McClure water to growers, although it had initially been expected that growers would receive no water from the reservoir this year. MID received some welcomed news in its

energy department when the District received a top national safety award.

EL NINO

The prospect of an El Nino year has grabbed national headlines as a potential "drought buster" for California. MID has continued to warn its growers that it is entirely too early to make predictions about how an El Nino year

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may affect Lake McClure or MID's water supply. As with any other year, MID will continue to closely monitor snow levels in the Sierra and runoff into Lake McClure: any decisions about water allocations will be made by the MID Board of Directors in spring of 2016 when there is a better understanding of the water availability.

EMERGENCY WATER DELIVERIES

At a special meeting in June, the MID Board of Directors took emergency action to divert the District's remaining amount of stored water from Lake McClure to its growers. MID had previously informed its growers that no surface water would be available. However, faced with the current unprecedented drought conditions, the MID Board took the only available action. Approximately 10,000 acre feet of stored water was diverted from Lake McClure to approximately 2,000 MID growers. In a more typical year, MID would divert up to 500,000 acre feet for irrigation.

NEW WATER DIVERSIONS

MID is still fighting back against federal and state environmental processes seeking to divert water from Lake McClure downstream to the Bay Delta. Not only would this harm agriculture and our economy, it would be devastating on local groundwater resources.

As part of MID's federal relicensing process, new requirements propose diverting more Merced River water from storage in Lake McClure to the Bay Delta. In May, nearly 200 members of the community met with federal regulators to voice concerns and provide written letters at a town-hall meeting. A final Environmental Impact Statement is expected from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission later this year.

At the same time, the State Water Resources Control Board is continuing its own plans to divert more water from Lake McClure to the Bay Delta. The State Water Board is doing so under the pretense of benefitting salmon and water quality in the San Francisco Bay Delta. A new plan is expected later this year.

SPILLWAY PROJECT

MID is continuing to pursue efforts to expand storage and flood control space in Lake McClure. A drought bill currently in Congress could provide some benefit to MID as it continues to work towards this reservoir enhancement project. We will be closely monitoring happenings in Washington. MID has developed a proposal that would raise its spillway gates by up to 8 feet and create an additional 57,000 acre feet of storage and flood space in Lake McClure.

SAFETY AWARD

MID was proud to have received a top national award for electric safety from the American Public Power Association earlier in the summer.

Specifically, MID earned first place among electric utilities of its size for having the most injury-free work-hours in 2014. This earned the District an Award of Excellence for safe operating practices for the year.

More than 290 utilities entered the annual Safety Awards competition.

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development, including the Campus Parkway corridor.

The project is currently under environmental review. The preferred transmission line route, as identified in the draft EIR, would run south around the City of Merced beginning by connecting to an existing transmission line near Highway 99 and Franklin Road. The line would then run south along Franklin Road, crossing West Dickenson Ferry Road. From there it would turn east running along Rice Road and cross Highway 99. It would then turn north and terminate at the proposed new Lyons Substation at Mission Avenue.

This preferred route was identified as the best way to minimize environmental impacts while meeting the project's objectives. The draft Environ-

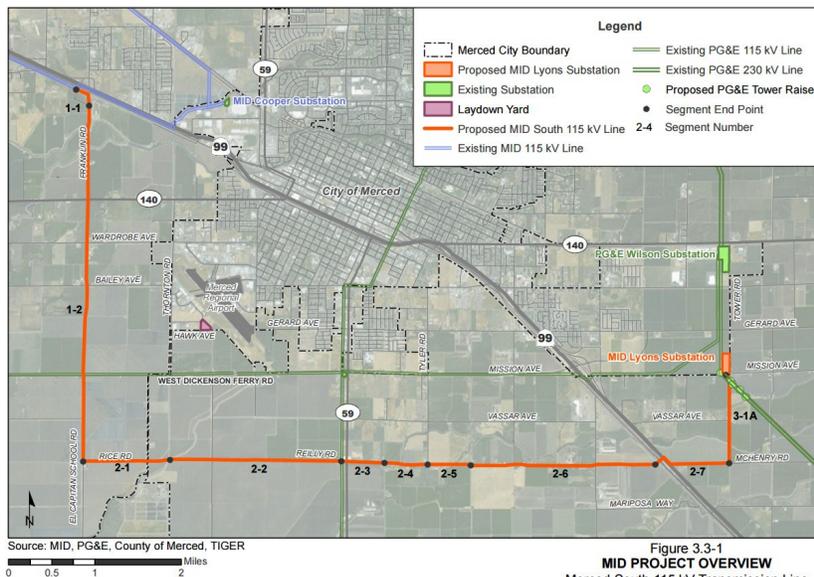


Figure 3.3-1
MID PROJECT OVERVIEW
Merced South 115 kV Transmission Line and Substation Project

mental review, MID has held several public meetings and has taken public input on the proposed project. A final Environmental Impact Report will be released in September and address any comments previously received from the public. The MID Board will make a final determination. If approved, the construction phase could begin by spring of 2016, taking approximately 18 months to complete.

The complete draft Environmental Impact Report can be viewed at

www.mercedid.org

mental Impact Report notes that the project area contains a number of vertical structures – including existing electric transmission lines, cellular towers, and electric distribution lines – which are already part of the landscape.

As part of the state-required environ-

