

THE Current



MID's Monthly Newsletter

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DID YOU KNOW?



MID was just recognized as Business of the Quarter by the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce.

MID maintains more than 800 miles of canals.

Some 6,400 residents and 1,300 businesses receive electricity from MID.

Nearly 200 of our neighbors are employed by MID.

2,200 growers in Merced County receive irrigation water from MID.

MID races to complete construction and maintenance in winter months

As irrigation season comes to a close each October, the clock begins ticking.

"You may not see your local friendly ditch tender along the canal but I assure you he or she is very busy," said Jon Parnell, Manager of Water Operations for Merced Irrigation District.

Under its licensing requirements, MID must end surface water distribution each year by October 31. Immediately afterward, MID ditch tenders – technically known as Distribution System Operators – join other maintenance employees. They begin a race against time to complete scheduled maintenance and make upgrades and repairs to a system comprised of approximately 800 miles of canals, pipelines and waterways before the next irrigation season.



Workers install pipeline as part of the Garibaldi Lateral Water Conservation Project. By connecting two canal laterals west of Livingston, the project will allow approximately 5,600 acre feet of irrigation water to remain in MID's canals each year that would otherwise spill to the Merced River.

Within a week of the end of irrigation season, MID's 24 full-time ditch tenders remove weir boards, dams and structures to prepare the system for use assisting in diverting storm water runoff around and away from Merced County communities during the winter months.

"Then we dive into projects," said Parnell. Those projects include ones identified in the District's capital improvement

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FROM THE HEADGATE: MID GENERAL MANAGER JOHN SWEIGARD

I've recently been asked if Merced Irrigation District is in a panic about the lack of rain so far this year. The simple answer is this: not yet.

Are we concerned? Of course we are. Every one of us in the agriculture industry would feel better seeing a good solid snowpack in the Sierra right now. But the fact is it's still a

little early to ring the alarm bell. We are one month into winter with two months to go. Additionally, we know that historically we receive the majority of our precipitation in February and March.

Here's where we stand. We typically

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plans each year. Other maintenance may be identified as ditch tenders convert the system from irrigation conveyance to a diverter of storm waters during the winter.

Among the largest projects this season is the Garibaldi Lateral Water Conservation Project located just west of Livingston. The work includes the construction of some 3,655 feet of reinforced concrete pipeline, together with several reinforced concrete pressure delivery boxes, that will connect the Garibaldi Lateral to the McCoy Lateral. The project will allow approximately 5,600 total acre feet of irrigation water to remain in MID's canals each year. Rather than water spilling to the Merced River from the Garibaldi Lateral, 1,100 acre feet will flow to the McCoy Lateral for additional use in MID's system. In addition

to the pipeline construction, the project includes relining approximately 11,400 linear feet of the McCoy Lateral allowing it to accept increased flows. The pipeline and lining work will result in 4,500 less acre feet of seepage.

Regularly scheduled winter work in the field includes construction and installation of reinforced concrete boxes with delivery gates, pipeline replacements and repairs, delivery gate repairs and replacements, maintenance of MID's thousands of booster and well pumps and motors and the maintenance of MID's equipment and vehicles.

"This is the busiest year I can remember in my twelve years at MID, and I'm very proud of the people here who work hard every day to get the job done", said Tom Rogers, MID's Maintenance Superintendent.

MID workers are also tasked with clearing sediment deposits and debris from irrigation canals and smaller laterals, often with the use of hand tools. MID's winter maintenance crews also perform work for other MID departments. For instance, some are assisting MID's Parks and Recreation Department construct improvements at the boat repair facility at Lake McClure.

Back in the maintenance yard, workers scramble to complete maintenance and make repairs to irrigation gates and other vital infrastructure that must be returned to MID canals and laterals before the irrigation season begins, typically in March.

"It's a race to complete projects and perform necessary maintenance," said Parnell. "There is no 'off-season' at MID."

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receive 12 inches of rainfall in a year. Of that, we usually see 6.3 inches by the end of each January. So far, as of the end of January, we've received 2.4 inches. Hopefully we'll have received more snow and rain by the time this edition of The Current reaches your mailbox. At the same time, MID has carried over the maximum capacity of allowable water this year in Lake McClure and are in good shape for the coming 2012 irrigation season.

Currently the reservoir is 66 percent full. Under its licensing, MID is required to hold space open in the reservoir for flood runoff for the Army Corps of Engineers.

Lake McClure receives an average of 640,000 acre feet of inflow between April and July. We need to receive a minimum of 400,000 acre feet of inflow to the reservoir in order to have a comfortable carry over supply going into 2013.

In a worst-case scenario, in which we don't receive adequate inflow to Lake McClure, the fact is that we have been through painful droughts before. MID has an extensive network of wells able to deliver about 100,000 acre feet of water to farmers.

We continue to remain hopeful we'll

see more rain and snow in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, as always, MID is pleased to continue providing its winter water program. MID is required to use portions of its system to divert flood water in the winter months. However, the District continues to provide well water when requested and where it's available.



For the second year, the District is pleased to sponsor the MID Lake McClure Road Race as part of the four-day MERCOCycling Classic. In addition to driving significant economic activity, the proceeds benefit the nonprofit United Way of Merced County, which works to improve education, health and income in our community.

Due to the increased cost of providing this water, it is priced slightly higher than the \$18.25 per acre foot charged for surface water during irrigation season. Typically, groundwater wells

are used to provide deliveries of water in the winter, requiring additional labor and energy costs, resulting in a cost to MID of up to \$35 per acre foot. As a result, MID charges users \$33 per acre foot in the winter months.

As I have said many times before, MID remains committed to supporting our community. Last year we were pleased to offer our support to the MERCOCycling Classic race. We opened our roadways and provided staffing assistance to add a fourth day of racing: the MERCOCycling Classic MID Lake McClure Road Race in the foothills along Lake McClure. We look forward to again supporting the race this March and invite the public to come watch this amazing sporting event. For more information, please visit www.topsportcycling.com/events/merco-cycling-classic/

All of us at MID remain committed to serving you at every level. It truly is our honor to be the trustees of our community's critical water, power and recreation resources. Again, our doors are always open and we stand ready to assist you.