



Turlock Irrigation District

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The Grower

A Publication for Turlock Irrigation District Water Users

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Drought Conditions Ease Slightly But Conservation Still Necessary

After two consecutive dry years, TID looked to 2009 with high hopes for wet conditions. The District's overall water supply comes from expected runoff, storage in Don Pedro Reservoir and groundwater. The April through July Tuolumne River runoff forecast is at 89% of average. Despite the improved conditions in 2009, the District's overall water supply from these sources still remains below normal.

On April 14th, the TID Board of Directors set the 2009 allotment at 33 inches with a cap on total available water at 48 inches. Growers will receive the 33 inch allotment at \$23 per acre. Growers may purchase an additional 12 inches of Tier 2 water at \$15 per acre-foot, plus 3 more inches of Tier 3 water at \$20 per acre-foot, for a total of 48 inches.

The Board of Directors recognizes that the District's water supply is still limited and dry conditions may persist in the next few years. This information was the basis for their recent decision to continue some of the conservation measures previously implemented, including capping the amount of available water, maintaining a shorter irrigation season and using rented pumping to supplement the surface water supply.

Growers can continue to maximize water use and minimize water cost by utilizing TID's water transfer policy. Only allotted water, any unused water up to 33 inches, may be transferred. Once a parcel has reached 33 inches, no additional water is available for transfer. Because many growers reach 33 inches before the end of the irrigation season, it is important that transfers are completed early in the season, before the allotment has been consumed.

The Pumping For Credit Program is also available to assist growers for the 2009 season. Those wishing to supplement irrigation supplies with pump water may do so, although most growers will find that the 48 inches of water being made available is adequate.

Pump owners wishing to participate in the program must enter into an agreement with TID. If you are interested in participating in the program, please contact the Water Distribution Department at 883-8356.

Important Dates

- JUNE 20th -
First Installment of Water Charge Payment Due

- OCTOBER 12th -
Last Day to Order Water

- OCTOBER 14th -
End of Irrigation Season

- NOVEMBER MAILING -
2009 Water Use Statements

- DECEMBER 20th -
Deadline to Transfer Water Allotment

- DECEMBER 20th -
Second Installment of Water Charge Payment Due

- DECEMBER 31st -
Excess Water Payments Due

Tracking Flow In The Canal System

TID is currently utilizing an environmentally friendly red fluorescent dye, known as Rhodamine WT. The dye helps the District to track water movement and flow within the canals for aquatic weed control activities and various engineering studies. Once the dye has been added to the water and allowed to dilute and mix, you may notice a reddish color in the water. There is no danger or cause for concern. Rhodamine WT is environmentally benign, poses no health risks and is commonly used in sensitive marine estuaries. The pigment will not stain the soil, plants or any other organic matter.



State-Wide Drought Leaves Many California Growers High And Dry

Whether it's a result of global climate change, natural variations in the hydrologic cycle or Mother Nature, California is clearly in the midst of a significant drought. Rain, snow and spring runoff have lagged well behind historical averages up and down the state for the past three years and no one knows how long it may last. The longest consecutive dry-period of record extended for six years, from 1987-1992. When one includes 1994, another dry year, the drought actually accounted for seven out of eight years.

The hardest hit has been agricultural interests that are dependent upon the state and federal water projects. Many growers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley are being told that they will not receive any water from the federal Central Valley Project. News for most state water contractors was scarcely better with projections of only a 20 percent supply. Those growers are faced with living off of groundwater, if they can find it, or fallowing their land.



Don Pedro Reservoir sits at 1,371,622 acre-feet of storage.

In some cases, as in San Diego County, growers are stumping their avocado trees in an attempt to preserve them for a year or two, in hopes that the drought will break. If there is no water after that time, the orchards will be lost. Closer to home, some almond growers are removing older orchards and using whatever water is available to preserve younger trees, as they already turn their eyes to the horizon in search of next winter's storms.

A number of TID growers also farm in other parts of the state and they know first-hand the value of the local water supply. By carefully managing the available resources, TID has developed a reputation as being able to navigate through multiple dry years, which isn't easy. There are many variables and considerations such as:



Lake Oroville, like reservoirs statewide, are experiencing their lowest levels in decades.

- Photo courtesy of ACWA.

- Balancing surface supplies with groundwater resources
- Crop demands
- Determining how much water to reserve in Don Pedro Reservoir if the drought continues in 2010
- Establishing the annual allotment
- Managing the available resource for the good of the whole agricultural community

Throughout the winter and spring, countless hours are spent analyzing model runs, spread sheets, historical records, runoff projections and weather forecasts to develop the necessary data that will lead to an informed decision as to how to best manage the system. The overall goal is to sustain agriculture through the current dry year and leave something in reserve in case next year is dry as well.

TID Takes Action To Protect Facilities

In an effort to combat theft and vandalism, TID has contracted with the Merced and Stanislaus County Sheriff's Departments to patrol its irrigation and electrical facilities. The contract is for a one year period beginning in January 2009. It will be monitored throughout the year and adjustments will be made as necessary to the patrol service to maximize the benefit for TID and its customers. The program will protect TID assets and should make the canals a safer environment. Additionally, the increased presence of law enforcement officers will provide more security for customer's property.

TID has contracted with the two local Sheriff's Departments in the past for limited patrol services along the canal system on weekends and holidays, during the summer months. When first initiated more than 20 years ago, these patrols were primarily intended to address unauthorized use of canal banks, to discourage swimming and combat vandalism of both TID and grower properties often associated with these activities.

More recently, illegal dumping, abandoned stolen vehicles and metal thefts have become more regular occurrences affecting TID irrigation and electrical facilities located in unincorporated communities and in rural areas within both counties. Over the past couple of years these incidents of vandalism and theft have increased in number and severity costing TID and its customers thousands of dollars each year. To date, deputies have given more than three dozen warnings, issued eight citations and arrested four people based on violation and prior warrants. Seven trash dump sites have also been located and investigated.