

THE MAIN CANAL

M A R C H 2 0 0 2

V O L U M E 1 2 N O . 2

The 2002 Irrigation Season

At its regular meeting held on March 5, 2002, the Merced Irrigation District Board of Directors voted unanimously to authorize the General Manager to begin the 2002 irrigation season when soil and water supply conditions merit. With promise of a series of several strong storms expected within hours of the meeting, the District staff

The 2002 Irrigation Season started Monday, March 18th.

was hopeful that the start of the season could be delayed as the reservoir level in Lake McClure is below average.

Mother Nature, as is her prerogative, decided to deliver only about one-half the precipitation that was originally expected, insufficient to provide a "free" irrigation to those crops in need. Therefore, the start of the 2002 irrigation season was set for Monday, March 18th. Irrigation water was available throughout the distribution system for delivery on Friday, March 22nd.

Water deliveries to in-District growers

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Merced's irrigation water source originates from Yosemite National Park.

Issuance of \$5 Million Bond Highlight's District Activities

The start of the 2002 irrigation season, the construction of our new administration facilities and a bond sale are among the many activities the District has been hard at work on recently. The 2002 irrigation season and the new facilities are the subject of stories elsewhere in this edition of the Main Canal.

The big news was the District's \$5.0 million bond sale, also known as Certificates of Participation, which made headlines in the press. The bond, issued on February 28, sold out in one day and received a Baa-3 investment grade rating by Moody's Investors Services of New York.



From the General Manager's Desk by Ross Rogers

According to Frank Soriano, president of Sutter Securities Incorporated of San Francisco, whose firm handled the sale, a Moody's investment grade rating for a new utility bond issue is very difficult to achieve since the advent of the energy crisis of 2000. "Merced I.D. has really earned this rating," Mr. Soriano told the press. "The District was able to make all the right moves and adjustments over the past 18 months to put it into a strong position," he said. We thank Mr. Soriano for those kind comments. Incidentally, the rating also applied to the previous \$57 million refunding electric bond issued in February

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A Quick Look At The 2002 Water Supply

Above normal precipitation in the Merced River 1,200 square mile watershed fell in November and December promising to bring at least average snowmelt runoff to Lake McClure during the peak runoff season of April through July. Water content in the watershed snow pack exceeded average values the first of January, 2002, but then the precipitation stopped. January and February precipitation in the watershed was dismal. One only needs to look at Lake McClure storage and inflow for those months to see the real water supply picture.

The first of four monthly forecasts of unimpaired runoff to Lake McClure was performed by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Snow Surveys the first of February, 2002 (Bulletin 120). At that time, the 2002 Median April through July runoff forecast was estimated to be 590,000 acre feet or 93% of average

(50% chance of error either direction; or 50% exceedence). The low runoff forecast (10% chance of error or 90% exceedence), which is generally used to predict water delivery reliability, was estimated at 410,000 acre feet, or 65% of average.

As of March first, the average snow water

470,000 acre feet, or 74% of average. The low or 90% exceedence runoff forecast is now down to 350,000 acre feet. What a difference a month of little precipitation in the mountains can make on water supply!

With the most conservative, DWR March 1st

90% exceedence runoff forecast, combined with average 2002 deliveries, there is a likelihood we'll see the original Exchequer Dam, which sits at the upstream toe of New Exchequer Dam. The Dam, which was one of the largest gravity arch concrete dams of its day (1926), slumbers most years hundreds of feet underwater, fortunately. The old dam has not been seen since 1992.

If you want to consider that

El Niño has the capability to be a water supply savior, there are signs that El Niño may be with us in mid- to late 2002...More to come in a future issue.

2002 Lake McClure Inflow (Acre Feet)			
Month	Observed	105-Year Average	Percent Average
January	43,100	69,500	62%
February	33,400	84,700	39%

2002 Lake McClure Storage (Acre Feet)			
Month	Observed	Capacity	Percent Capacity
January	417,100	1,024,600	41%
February	437,000	1,024,600	43%

content in the region had dropped to under 80% of average. The March 1st DWR Median or 50% exceedence April through July runoff forecast dropped a staggering 120,000 acre feet, down to

Construction Begins On New Merced I.D. Headquarters

After years of planning, the construction of the new Merced Irrigation District headquarters has begun. After years of being housed in four separate buildings around Merced, the new 22,000 square foot facility will save the District thousands of dollars annually by bringing together three key departments of Merced I.D.'s operations under one roof.

Located at 744 West 20th Street, the new facility will be adjacent to the existing office at 720 West 20th Street. "The new facility is an ideal location," said Ross Rogers, MID General Manager. "It's centrally located near city and government offices, parking is ample and it's

near the historic area of Merced that compliments the District's history." Merced I.D. is one of the oldest on-going organizations in the county with roots that date back to the 1870s.



Bob Blum, Director of Administrative Services, said, "The building, when completed, will house our irrigation operations, retail electric, storm drainage, finance, planning, water resources engineering, facilities and administrative departments." Utilizing a combination of traditional and modern architecture, the design is a tasteful, high quality building that will provide years of service, without being extravagant. Construction will be completed in September 2002. The building was designed by local architect, Robert Dinuzzo and architect Mead & Hunt, Inc. of Modesto.



See the Lakes from a Different Perspective

Want to try something different? Houseboating is a great way for large groups of family and friends to get together for a leisurely vacation. With several styles and sizes of houseboats available to rent, there's one sure to fit your ideal. Houseboating is a great way to experience the combination of the outdoors, while still having the luxuries of home, such as a microwave, refrigerator, coffee maker and TV/VCR. Higher-end models come equipped with a jet ski ramp and hot tub. During the day, houseboats provide an excellent base for water sports such as riding personal watercraft, water skiing, swimming and fishing. **For prices and availability of houseboat rentals, please call the Lake McClure Marinas at (209) 378-2441.**

Fun Is Just A Few Miles Away! Local Lakes Provide Recreational Paradise

With warmer weather right around the corner, now's the time to start thinking about your Spring and Summer vacation destinations. In Merced we're fortunate to have two of California's gems in our backyard. Lake McClure and Lake McSwain offer a multitude of family activities and fun.

The lakes are ideal for water skiing, riding personal watercraft, windsurfing, swimming, kayaking and boating. There are also houseboats available for rental for leisurely vacations on the lakes. If fishing is more your style, regular stockings of trout provides a haven for anglers on

the water or along the shore. Fishing and paddleboats are also available for rental.

Picturesque camping and picnicking facilities are available where you might catch a glimpse of local wildlife, including deer, raccoons, foxes, eagles, ospreys, herons and many more.

Make sure you make your camping reservations early and use the coupon provided in this edition of the Main Canal. We look forward to seeing you at Lakes McClure and McSwain this year! **Call (209) 378-2534 anytime for current fish plant information and the latest "hot spots."**

Hidden Treasure at Bagby Recreational Facility

For those looking to get away from the crowds, the Bagby Recreational Facility provides quiet and seclusion from the mainstream Lakes. One of the best kept secrets in the Sierras, Bagby is situated at the upstream end of Lake McClure. The campsites at Bagby offer pine and oak woodland settings and offer swimming and sandy beaches. Depending on the season, stream or lake fishing provide excellent opportunities.

**\$2
OFF**

MID Coupon

**\$2 Off Vehicle Admission for
Lake McSwain or Lake McClure**

**\$2
OFF**

Offer valid thru September 2002. No photocopies, one coupon per admission.

How To Contact Us

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Clean Canals. Clean Water.

Keeping canals weed-free to ensure clean water to growers is a continuous cycle for District employees. In early March, the Merced Irrigation District submitted an extensive Individual Monitoring Plan to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to utilize Aquatic Herbicides in our canal system. The plan is required for the District's coverage under the NPDES Permit.

As in years past, the District is planning on applying aquatic herbicides this irrigation season in order to provide fresh water to growers and reduce the expense of mechanically cleaning the canals. Several extensive monitoring programs will be completed for each aquatic herbicide used in the canal system during the irrigation season.

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The 2002 Irrigation Season

will not be curtailed in 2002. However, out-of-District growers who, depending on water supply availability, purchase surplus water from the District, will be curtailed this year as early as mid-to late-June, depending on runoff into Lake McClure. The curtailment date may be extended based on additional runoff received in excess of estimates. 1992 was the last year in which out-of-District water use was curtailed. Growers outside District boundaries must have an alternate water source to ensure completing a crop in the 2002 season.

For the ninth consecutive year, in-District water rates remain at \$13.00/acre-foot. Out-of-District water rates remain at \$22.00/acre-foot, plus \$3.00 for each additional boost. 24-hour water orders can be placed at (209) 722-2720. For growers in the Livingston or Northside, a toll-free number is available: (800) 750-2720.

cont. from pg. 1 \$5 Million Bond

2001, thus improving the position of those bondholders and providing the District improved credit standing.

The proceeds from the bond issue will allow the District to continue to develop and expand its growing electrical system. The system now boasts 75 megawatts of connected load and over 1,200 customers. This makes the District the 25th largest utility in California out of 47, an impressive record for six years in the business.

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