



# Lake McClure reaches 65 percent of capacity

## *Storage Enhancement would benefit reservoir level*

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Since the storms reached Central California last week, Lake McClure has risen approximately 40 feet and captured approximately 150,000 acre feet of storm-water flowing down the Merced River from Yosemite National Park.

As of today, Lake McClure is more than 65 percent of its full capacity, up from approximately 43 percent last week prior to the storms and Yosemite Valley flooding. In total, the reservoir is holding approximately 652,000 acre feet of water as of today, Jan. 12, 2017.

Once the reservoir reaches approximately 67 percent of capacity, the remaining space is dedicated to flood management operations by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Had the McClure Storage Enhancement Project been completed prior to the recent storms, MID would be able to utilize an additional 57,000 acre feet of reservoir space this year.

For several years Merced Irrigation District has promoted the McClure Storage Enhancement Project, which would benefit both flood protection and water storage among other things. If the project ultimately moves forward, the spillways on Lake McClure would be raised by up to 8 feet. This would increase the flexibility of flood operations while helping increase available water storage by 57,000 acre feet in the 1-million-acre-foot reservoir.

“The current and recent weather in California exemplifies the value of this project,” said Hicham ElTal, Deputy General Manager of MID Water Supply. “In 2011 we had approximately 2 million acre feet of water flow through Lake McClure: we captured about 1 million acre feet and lost another million acre feet downstream to the Pacific Ocean. Following 2011, we then had multiple back-to-back droughts that brought the reservoir to a historic low of just 6 percent. Here we are again with significant storms filling Lake McClure. Water in California simply doesn’t exist in averages: it’s often all or nothing. This is what makes storage modification and enhancement projects so important.”

The recently passed federal WIIN-WRDA legislation marks a major milestone in Merced Irrigation District’s goals of raising the spillway at New Exchequer Dam, although significant work remains.

Crucial provisions are provided within the legislation that seek to move the project forward. Although significant work remains, MID is better positioned as a result of the legislation and will continue working to see it completed.

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