



## State Grants MID Authority to Divert Additional Irrigation Water From Lake McClure

### *Plan Has Multiple Benefits*

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MERCED, CA – Following three months of intense effort and negotiations, Merced Irrigation District has received authority to increase releases from Lake McClure by 30,000 acre feet for the benefit of water supply and Merced River fisheries.

Under a complex arrangement with state agencies, MID growers will receive an additional 25,000 acre feet of water this year. The remaining 5,000 acre feet will be released down the Merced River to assist out-migrating juvenile Chinook salmon and resident trout.

MID normally cannot divert water from Lake McClure for irrigation after the reservoir has fallen to 115,000 acre feet, or “minimum pool.” MID expects the reservoir to reach its minimum pool in the coming months. The California Fish and Wildlife Service supported MID’s petition to drawdown Lake McClure to 85,000 acre feet. As part of the comprehensive water management plan, fishery agencies encouraged 5,000-acre-feet of water be released down the Merced River to assist the Chinook salmon and trout.

Once that water has benefited the fish in the Merced River, it will be used downstream by Santa Clara Valley Water District and San Luis Water District. MID will receive \$5 million in compensation from the end-use water sale. That revenue will help offset a \$10.6 million shortfall MID faced this year as a result of having insufficient water supplies.

“Given the critical and unprecedented drought we’re facing, this is outstanding news. This is water management at its best,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

Hicham Eltal, MID Deputy General Manager, added: “MID growers will receive additional water; the district will recoup a portion of revenue lost to the drought; salmon will receive a ‘pulse flow’ for migration; resident trout will see cooler water temperatures later in the summer; and a small portion of water will provide significant benefit to other water-users in the state without adequate supply.”

The District began requesting regulatory relief for Lake McClure the day that Gov. Jerry Brown declared a State of Emergency from the drought, Jan. 17.

Following months of discussions with numerous state agencies – and obtaining support from the state department of Fish and Wildlife – on April 22 the State Water Resources Control Board granted the district’s request for the water management actions.

“This drought has caused plenty of difficulty for MID growers,” said MID’s Sweigard. “MID staff have continued to fight this battle and work with key stakeholders. Today, we were able to deliver a package with multiple victories. As this irrigation season unfolds, we’ll continue to do everything possible to assist our growers.”

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