



December 9, 2015

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement released for relicensing of New Exchequer Hydroelectric Project**

On December 4, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission released the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the relicensing of MID's New Exchequer Merced River Hydroelectric Project.

The document (EIS) will affect every aspect of MID operations. This ranges from irrigation supplies and finances to hydroelectric generation and environmental stewardship of the Merced River.

MID is carefully analyzing differences between the final EIS and the previous draft EIS. A thorough report will be made to the Board of Directors in early 2016 during a public workshop.

Upon preliminary review, it is obvious that the flows for the Merced River remain significantly higher than MID had hoped to see. For instance, MID will now be required to comply with increased flows down the river in the springtime.

It also appears that at least some of MID's concerns have been addressed, and there has been a benefit from the technical input from the District, as well as the tremendous support from the community.

For example, the final EIS accepted MID's proposed methodology of determining water-year types in place of the one originally included in the draft EIS. A "water-year" type refers to annual weather and precipitation conditions: a water year can range from "wet" to "critical dry." The issue is important because the type of water year determines MID's requirements to release water downstream from the Lake McClure and away from District storage and use. The MID-proposed water-year methodology more accurately reflects the conditions of the snowpack, runoff and level of the reservoir.

MID will continue reviewing and analyzing the details in the final EIS and its effects on District operations. The District will notify its growers and the community of the EIS public workshop early in the coming year.

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