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Board Meetings

Merced Civic Center
678 W. 18th Street
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The first Tuesday of
every month at 10:00am

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www.mercedid.org
www.lakemcclure.com



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Merced officials and residents oppose state water grab



Well over 1,500 community residents and leaders opposed a State Water Board plan to divert local water supplies to the San Francisco Bay Delta. Here they are seen at a rally in front of the

Sacramento, CA – As the State Water Board neared a final decision on its plans to divert water away from eastern Merced County, significant opposition from our community was carried to Sacramento.

More than 1,500 people opposed the State Water Board's Bay Delta Plan SED during a rally at the steps of the State Capitol in August. More opposition was delivered during a two-day hearing at the State Water Resources Control Board.

Merced Irrigation District General Manager John Sweigard testified about multiple flaws in the Bay Delta Plan SED. The Merced Farm Bureau also had a strong showing at the Capitol.

At specific issue is the State's Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan SED. The plan would divert up to 50 percent of the water flowing into Lake McClure, sending it away from eastern Merced County and into the San Francisco Bay Delta.

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Brooke Gutierrez

New Parks Director Joins MID Team

Merced Irrigation District has announced the appointment of Mrs. Brooke Gutierrez as MID's new Director of Parks & Recreation. Mrs. Gutierrez brings an extensive background in the management, maintenance and promotion of parks and recreational areas that will

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Lake McClure provides water for local agriculture, the environment, groundwater replenishment, recreation, local wildlife refuges and more.

The local reservoir currently experiences water shortages about two out of five years. Under the State Water Board's Bay Delta Plan SED, water shortages in Lake McClure are predicted to occur every other year.

In testimony before the State Water Board, MID's John Sweigard pointed out numerous flaws in the Bay Delta Plan SED, including noting the document assumes salmon would benefit from additional floodplain habitat created with the release of more water down the Merced and San Joaquin rivers.

In fact, that habitat no longer exists along vast stretches of the Merced River and the San Joaquin River. Further, significant amounts of salmon-rearing habitat in the Bay Delta has been completely taken over by cities and farms created by reclaiming floodplain. Sweigard noted that the plan includes multiple false assumptions, including that the region could depend on currently-dwindling supplies of groundwater to offset the losses of Merced River water.

"This issue has deliberately been cast

as a false choice between salmon or farmers. This is, in fact, a choice between bad environmental assumptions and an entire community," MID's Sweigard said after the hearing. "The consequences of this plan will harm children, senior citizens and everyone in between. And it will do so in one of the already poorest and most disadvantaged communities in the state. We can produce more salmon – we



Water shortages would occur about every other year under the State's Bay Delta Plan.

know how to do that already. If this plan is implemented it will devastate our local agriculture, our economy and our drinking water."

According to the state Bay Delta Plan SED document, the water diversions would result in an annual increase in salmon ranging 2,059 to 7,637. That number includes salmon on the Merced River, as well as on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne rivers.

Between 2012 and 2016, an average of 169,400 salmon were caught in California, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The State Water Board had initially intended to consider adoption of the final Bay Delta Plan SED during the hearings in August.

However, the State Water Board received a request from Secretary of Natural Resources Agency John Laird requesting action be delayed in pursuit of finding compromise solutions between the State and irrigation districts in the San Joaquin Valley.

MID has established and promoted an alternative since 2016, the Merced River S.A.F.E. Plan (Salmon, Agriculture, Flows and Environment). The plan calls for immediate increases in Merced River flows during key spawning times; increased salmon production at the Merced River hatchery; restoration of habitat on the Merced River destroyed by dredge mining decades ago and addressing non-native bass predation of migrating juvenile salmon.

The plan has so far been dismissed by the state.

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be of significant benefit to MID, its ratepayers and those using MID's recreation facilities.

"It is with great pleasure that we announce Mrs. Gutierrez will fill this crucial management position for MID. Her experience and expertise will strongly benefit MID and our recreation enthusiasts at Lakes McClure and McSwain," said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

In addition to providing electricity and irrigation water to Merced residents, MID operates extensive recreation facilities on Lakes McClure and McSwain. This includes multiple recreation areas providing more than 600 campsites, fishing, boating, swimming, hiking and bicycling. Among the facilities are six boat launches and

several floating marinas. The Parks Department has 18 full-time employees, 11 seasonal employees and has a current fiscal-year budget of approximately \$3.5 million.

Under the direction of MID General Manager Sweigard, Mrs. Gutierrez will perform a variety of tasks relating to the overall planning, budgeting, marketing, operation and maintenance of the Parks Department.

Ms. Gutierrez brings a wealth of experience in parks and recreation management spanning nearly two decades. The vast majority of her expertise was developed during a lengthy tenure with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Most recently, she served as a Manager of Recreation in the Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo Region.

She oversaw such parks facilities as Montana de Oro and Hearst Castle, managing up to 115 full-time employees, 100 seasonal employees and 300 volunteers. She oversaw a \$16 million annual budget, including \$5 million for capital improvement projects.

Ms. Gutierrez began her career as a peace officer with the State Parks Department in 1999.

She holds a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Southern New Hampshire University.

She enjoys spending time with her family, hiking and traveling.

"I am extremely excited to be joining the MID team," said Gutierrez. "I welcome the exciting challenges and new opportunities that come with this position."