

MID Water Resources Plan bears fruit

More than three years ago, Merced Irrigation District began developing the Water Resources Management Plan. The long-range business plan is intended to protect and maximize the District's water rights, and ensure MID remains financially sound.

This year, the plan is bearing fruit with construction of a project that was identified as being among the most needed by MID growers: The LeGrand/Planada Bifurcation Regulating Reservoir serving two of the District's main canals.



Growers provide important input to MID on the Water Resources Management Plan in 2016.

“The District said from the beginning that this Plan will be an implementable Plan, not one collecting dust on a shelf,” said Bryan Kelly, Deputy General Manager of Water Resources. “After all of the community involvement we’ve had, it’s great to see ground about to break on major facility modernization projects.”

Major recommendations of the Water Resources Management Plant (WRMP) include:

- Construction of approximately 12 new water regulating reservoirs.
- Canal automation and improved water control along the major canals that feed into other parts of the water delivery system.
- Improved flow measurement at key points.

Under the WRMP, most modernization projects are expected to be completed in the first 10 years of the 30-year planning window.

The LeGrand/Planada Bifurcation Water Regulating Reservoir is among those projects. The new 120-acre-foot water regulating reservoir is currently being designed. Construction will begin in July 2018.

It is expected to be completed and in operation prior to the 2019 irrigation season.

The reservoir will be located north of Planada on the LeGrand Canal, immediately upstream from the headworks of the Planada Canal and Booster Station No. 1. The water regulating reservoir will enhance irrigation flexibility for MID growers in the Planada and Le Grand areas.

MID's Water Resources Plan was developed with significant input from growers and others at a host of workshops and outreach efforts that began in January 2014.

The plan provides long-term guidance to help optimize MID's water rights, facilities, operations and finances. The plan will also help MID meet environmental requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. It takes into consideration a host of trends for land and water use, as well as existing and upcoming mandated regulations affecting both agriculture and MID operations. Additionally, the modernization of District facilities will allow more water storage to be conserved in Lake McClure by improving operations and reducing operational water losses at key locations.

“It is imperative that MID modernize its facilities in order to continue meeting growers' changing

needs,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard. “Their businesses are transitioning from predominantly flood irrigation to pressure systems,” he said, “and MID must be prepared to meet their water demands both in terms of timing and in the volume delivered.

For more, visit www.MercedID.org