



Merced Irrigation District preparing for dry season with marginal water availability

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Contact: Mike Jensen
209-354-2856 (Office)
209-201-6199 (Cell)
mjensen@mercedid.org

If nothing changes from the current weather conditions, Merced Irrigation District's Class 1 growers may receive slightly more than 1 acre foot of surface water this year.

Water supply availability for this year was discussed at length during a MID Board of Directors meeting Tuesday. Dozens of growers were in attendance to ask questions and get preliminary information about the upcoming irrigation season.

"As of now and unless the weather changes, the Board will have some difficult decisions to make in the coming weeks," said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

Determinations about water supply availability from Lake McClure are made each year by the Board of Directors. The allocation is based on a host of factors, including snow levels in the Sierra and the amount of water stored in Lake McClure when the season begins. MID staff summarized and explained that numerous variables could still affect water availability this year. No decisions were made at Tuesday's meeting.

Although not discussed in detail, in past dry years, MID has made supplemental water supplies available through a voluntary-participation supply pool program. As part of its conjunctive management operations, each year more than 120,000 acre feet of Lake McClure water is placed into the local groundwater basin through recharge basins and canals that remain unlined in specific areas. MID typically uses those water resources during dry years.

Lake McClure is currently approximately 28 percent full, half of its historic average for this time of year. No storms are predicted for the rest of February and daytime temperatures are expected to remain in the mid-60s to low-70s.

At its next meeting on March 1, 2022, the MID Board and staff will discuss any new developments. They will also discuss potential benefits and drawbacks of various decisions that could still affect this year's water supply availability. MID will not begin its irrigation season before March 1, and a precise season start date has not yet been set.

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