



Dry conditions prompt irrigation season to begin on March 1

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Given the dry winter conditions, the Merced Irrigation District will begin taking water orders on March 1, 2020, making much-needed water available as the irrigation system fills and demand dictates.

Until the Board meets on March 9, to consider adopting its budget for fiscal year 2021, the MID in-District water rate will temporarily remain the same as the previous season's \$40 per acre foot. MID is currently operating on a consolidated budget of approximately \$112.8 million.

The MID Board is considering an increase in its water pricing this year as a result of market conditions negatively affecting revenue sources such as hydroelectric generation and water transfers. The increased cost of materials, construction and professional services have also contributed to overall increased operating costs for the District. Meanwhile, MID expects to see increased costs associated with protecting its water rights, both locally and at the state level. The State Water Resources Control Board continues to move forward with its intent to divert local water supplies to the Bay Delta, and increasingly burdensome state and federal regulations have had a financial impact as well.

"We are committed to the strongest management possible of Merced Irrigation District, and the protection of its established water rights," said MID General Manager John Sweigard. "Our District remains financially strong with continued recognitions for our financial management. In the coming weeks, our Board and our growers will be faced with some difficult choices to ensure the continued long-term health of the District. We are at a crucial point right now with multiple – and costly – legal challenges to our water rights and we must ensure the protection of the District and its resources."

Also at its meeting on February 18, 2020, the Board indicated its desire to make surface water available to farmers outside of the District but within the local groundwater basin, but has not made a final determination regarding water availability for out-of-District water transfers. Both water availability for water transfers and pricing are subject to future Board action. As it previously has, MID will evaluate and approve in-basin water transfer requests on a case-by-case basis.

MID will send its customers an information packet by mail that includes the 2020 Water Management Implementation Plan (WMIP) as well as other important and useful documents associated with the upcoming water season. As always, MID invites its customers to call the Customer Service Department with any questions or concerns at 209-722-2720.

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