



Merced Irrigation District and City of Merced exploring partnership for municipal water supply

Agreement supported by multiple state policies

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The Merced Irrigation District and the City of Merced have signed a Memorandum of Understanding signaling their intent to provide Merced River water as a source of municipal water.

Specifically, the MOU formally indicates an intent to pursue a water sale agreement.

“We are pleased to enter into this partnership with the Merced Irrigation District,” said Merced Mayor Mike Murphy. “This will benefit the people of Merced by providing an additional source of water that is sustainable for the City as we continue to grow.”

“This is a significant step forward toward implementing integrated regional water management for our entire community and we are pleased to be taking this joint action,” said MID Board President Scott Koehn.

The Merced City Council approved the MOU Monday night and the Merced Irrigation District Board of Directors approved it Tuesday.

The Merced Irrigation District holds senior water rights on the Merced River. MID is the sole owner and operator of Lake McClure, a 1-million acre-foot reservoir located east of Merced in the foothills of Mariposa County. Lake McClure is a multi-benefit reservoir providing water for local irrigation, flood control, groundwater replenishment and recreation.

The city of 87,100 residents seeks to diversify its water portfolio while securing a reliable water supply to meet the needs of its 2030 General Plan. The City of Merced currently provides water to approximately 22,500 residential and commercial customer accounts with the water being developed directly from groundwater sources in eastern Merced County.

The City of Merced and the Merced Irrigation District have a lengthy partnership and history of collaborating on local water management issues through the Integrated Regional Water Management planning process, a state initiative that dates back to the 2002 Regional Water Management Planning Act. The Integrated Regional Water Management Act advocates local collaboration to identify regional self-reliance, reduce conflict, and manage water to concurrently achieve social, environmental and economic objectives.

Additionally, the City of Merced and the Merced Irrigation District are partners in a regional effort to combat groundwater overdraft through the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Under the 2014 statewide mandate, communities with over-drafted groundwater basins are expected to develop regional sustainability plans and partnerships to address the problem. MID and the City of Merced are currently within the Merced Irrigation Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency and are working to develop a plan for the eastern Merced Groundwater Sustainability Basin.

The approved MOU by both the City of Merced and the Merced Irrigation District does not constitute a legal agreement for a water transfer. Instead it is formalizing the two entities intent to seek such an agreement and to develop the appropriate terms for a mutually beneficial arrangement.

“MID operates a multi-benefit reservoir and irrigation system. This is a natural outgrowth of years of collaboration and reflects the mandates of state policies for regional and cooperative water management. We look forward to continuing this process with our partner,” said MID’s Koehn.

“This MOU addresses one of the City Council’s priorities, having a surface water project for the long-term needs of the City,” Murphy said. **“The agreement can also move us toward our goal of recharging the groundwater.”**

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