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2004 WATER YEAR TURNS UP BELOW NORMAL

A promising start to the 2004 water year took a dismal turn for the worse after the first of the year, promising yet another below-normal water supply year. However, thanks to the District's large Class 1 water supply, growers in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District can anticipate no prorate for 2004.

April 13th.

At its water supply meeting held last week, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation declared 100 percent of the contracted Class 1 supply would be



Things would have been desperate had it not been for a series of late February and early March storms that piled the San Joaquin River watershed snow packs to near-normal depths. But the lack of significant precipitation since that time has taken its toll, reducing the average to just 56 percent of the April 1st average as of

available and 5 percent of the Class 2. To DEID that results in a supply of just over 118,000 acre-feet after adding the 5,869 acre-feet of unused 2003 water that was carried over into the 2004 water year. That should be sufficient (just barely so) to provide the irrigation demands of water users into the fall.

The 2004 accumulated

snow pack peaked during the first week in March when measurements taken showed slightly over 90 percent of the April 1st average was on the ground. After that, the accumulated snow pack began a steep decline given no new storms, higher than normal temperatures, and an observed lack of an "ice cap" on the snow pack that helps to delay premature runoff.

Grower demand in 2004 could exceed 126,00 acre-feet if we experience continued lackluster rainfall during the balance of the spring and into the fall months. That would make winter supplies very tight. Thankfully, winter demands are small and can be borrowed from 2005 water supplies if necessary.

2004 CROP CENSUS TRENDS



Growers in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District are continuing their trend of increasing permanent plantings and reducing fallow ground according to water applications submitted for the 2004 water year.

For the past two years, growers have been asked to identify cropping information that the District is required to collect as part of its water service contract with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. In previous years, staff would collect the information through time-consuming wind-shield surveys. By asking

for crop information along with the annual water applications, accurate cropping data was collected from 98 percent of the lands in the District without any field visits.

The information collected also helps the District predict water demands for the water year.

Trending information can also be garnered that is useful for planning and statistical purposes. For example, the crop census information shows that permanent plantings in the District

are up by 2 percent for a total of 83 percent. Non-crop land was reduced from 12 percent to 11 percent. More significantly, non-crop land is much less than the 18 percent high that was recorded in 2002.

Grapes continue to be the predominant crop in DEID, with 31,839 acres (57 percent of the total acreage in the District), followed by Almonds at 6,464 acres and pistachios at 3,427 acres.

Only 73 acres of cotton remained in DEID in 2004.

San Joaquin River Runoff

Water Year Pct/

Avg.

1998-99

84%

1999-00

93%

2000-01

57%

2004 IS SIXTH BELOW-NORMAL YEAR

Unless it snows a bunch in late April and into May, the 2004 water year will be the sixth year in a row that the San Joaquin River watershed has been below normal.

Growers in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District have weathered the dry years well, thanks to the District's large Class

1 contract, and a little bit of luck.

The last string of above-average water years were between 1992 and 1998 when five of the six years were wet.

Average annual runoff for the San Joaquin River is 1,861,000 acre-

feet. With that amount of runoff, DEID would have approximately 140,000 acre-feet of water.

Anticipated runoff for the current 2003-04 water year is 1,118,000 acre-feet. With normal rainfall from April through June, runoff could reach 1.3 million acre-feet.

NEW FACES AT DEID

You may have noticed that our District staff has a couple of new additions lately.

Joining us last November was Miguel Bravo on our Operations and Maintenance staff. Miguel lives in Delano with his wife and children.

Also joining our staff just this past month is David Ross-Smith. David is a Bakersfield native and will be handling most of the traditional watermaster duties of the District as well as providing other administrative support.

Other changes that have

occurred is the departure of Maintenance Operations Supervisor Roland Gross.

Calvin Wallis has been advanced to Operations Supervisor with oversight responsibilities covering both water operations and maintenance activities.



Miguel Bravo



David Ross-Smith

AGREEMENT REACHED WITH WESTLANDS

Following years of contention and distrust, Friant districts and the Westlands Water District have buried the hatchet.

Leaders from both sides of the valley have signed an historic agreement that settles the controversy that arose when, in 2000, Westlands Water District filed a water rights application on the San Joaquin River with the State. Westlands asserted that it had a prior right to water from the river under "area of origin" laws.

DEID Director Nick Canata and General Manager Dale Brogan

were part of the negotiating team that worked with representatives from Westlands that hammered out the agreement. "Our agreement with WWD is a real win-win situation for all" said Canata.

The agreement provides a framework of cooperation that includes exploration of mutually beneficial water supply projects, support of Westlands' land retirement program that deals with Westside drainage problems, and cooperative efforts to address environmental concerns on the San Joaquin River.

Additionally, the pact calls for a mutual effort to "jointly develop and pursue legislation that will expressly provide that the so-called "watershed of origin" and the so-called "county of origin" statutes are inapplicable to Friant Division water supplies or that otherwise resolves to the satisfaction of the Friant the issues of future applicability of those statues to Friant Division water supplies". This is considered by most as one of the most important, positive aspects of the agreement to those that rely on Friant water.

"Our agreement with WWD is a real win-win situation for all"

DEID Director and Negotiation Team member Nick Canata on the historic agreement with Westlands Water District

*PROVIDING
INFORMATION
ON ISSUES OF
INTEREST TO
WATER USERS
AND GROWERS
IN THE DELANO-
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IRRIGATION
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Your "Food Grows Where Water Flows" bumper sticker in-

DISTRICT HIT WITH NEW STATE FEES

As the California legislature dealt with the budget crisis at the end of 2003, funding for many agencies were scrutinized. But rather than looking at the mission and cost-effectiveness of each agency, our lawmakers decided to simply shift the cost to others. When it came to the State Water Resources Control Board, the State's water users were left holding the bag.

The SWRCB is now funded through "water rights users fees". And its broad net caught Delano-Earlimart Irriga-

tion District and other Friant districts too.

The State Board billed individual districts under an apparent belief that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which actually holds the Friant Division water right permits, would not pay on the grounds of sovereign immunity. That meant that the State reached to the individual districts instead.

To DEID that meant an immediate hit of over \$68,000 in January. The projected bill that we expect this coming July will be double that,

about \$140,000. That adds an additional \$1.18 per acre-foot in costs to the anticipated 2004 water supply. Despite that and other increases, the DEID Board of Directors has vowed to hold the price of water to its water users at the 2003 rate.

A lawsuit challenging the fees as an illegal tax has been filed by the Central Valley Project Water Association and others. In addition, legislation that would lessen the impact of the fees on water districts has been introduced .

Included in this issue of the DEID Pipeline is a "Food Grows Where Water Flows" bumper sticker that has been provided by the California Farm Water Coalition. DEID is a strong supporter of the Coalition and the work it does to spread irrigated agriculture's message.

Please contact us if you would like