Madera Irrigation District (MID or District) will conclude its 2016 water season in the next few weeks, providing surface water to its landowners for nearly six months in 2016. This season marks the longest water season for the District in five years, with approximately 135,000 acre feet of water utilized by the District.

The MID 2016 water season started with an unexpected Friant “Uncontrolled Season” being declared by the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) in March along with a 30% Class 1 declaration. Uncontrolled Seasons are declared when the USBR determines that the reservoir is at risk of spilling. The Uncontrolled Season required MID to start its operations earlier than originally anticipated. With gradual increases in Class 1 declarations by the USBR and with other water supplies obtained by the District, MID was able to continue deliveries through the peak irrigation season with uninterrupted operations. The last adjustment to the Friant Class 1 declaration was received in the middle of July and brought the total to a 75% Class 1 supply.

Although MID has returned to a somewhat normal “dry year” operation, 2016 was far from normal. Uncertainties in water supplies remained well into August due to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) pumping constraints, creating a potential call by the USBR on the San Joaquin River to satisfy senior water rights south of the Delta. With northern California’s above average rainfall filling reservoirs, including flood releases at some northern California reservoirs, San Luis Reservoir still dropped to record low levels. These conditions proved that operational constraints created by environmental regulations are severely impacting water supplies statewide.

As the 2016 water season begins to wind down, the District will be transitioning into the construction and maintenance season. Recently, MID has received a significant number of requests from landowners within the District to connect to the delivery system. If you have a parcel that is not connected, has not taken water in many years, or if you have plans to modify your connection to MID’s system, please contact the MID Engineering Department at 559-673-3514 as soon as possible for assistance.

MID would like to thank our growers and staff for working together during this challenging water year. Amongst the water supply obstacles, the District implemented new canal operator schedules, trained a significant number of new staff, repaired and operated a delivery system which had not had water in over two years, and commissioned the new SCADA system. The District believes that the operations of the District in 2016 were a success for many reason including nearly six months of deliveries with record efficiencies. The District looks forward to a successful construction and maintenance season in anticipation of a great 2017 water season.
MADERA IRRIGATION DISTRICT BECOMES FIRST “EXCLUSIVE” GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY (GSA) IN MADERA COUNTY

After over a year of coordination efforts with other agencies in the Madera Subbasin, on April 13, 2016 the Madera Irrigation District filed with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to become a Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the majority of lands within the District. On July 12, 2016 the District was established under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) as an “Exclusive” GSA, the first in Madera County. Madera Irrigation District GSA will encompass all lands within the District with the exception of the City of Madera and Madera Water District, approximately 128,000 acres.

According to DWR, “a GSA is responsible for developing and implementing a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) to meet the sustainability goal of the basin and to ensure that it is operated within its sustainable yield, without causing undesirable results.” The District is currently working on data collection and data management for use in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The District is continuing to collaborate with the six other agencies in the Madera Subbasin which include the City of Madera, Madera Water District, Gravelly Ford Water District, New Stone Water District, Root Creek Water District, and the County of Madera.

On September 16, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a three-bill legislative package related to groundwater in the State of California. This three-bill legislation is known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014. The SGMA provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities, with a limited role for state legislation is known as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014. The SGMA provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities, with a limited role for state intervention only if necessary to protect the resource. The Act requires the formation of local GSAs that must assess conditions in their local water basins and adopt locally-based management plans. For the Madera Subbasin, a high priority basin, all GSAs must be formed by June 30, 2017.

MADERA IRRIGATION DISTRICT AWARDED TWO UNITED STATES BUREAU OF RECLAMATION WATERSMART GRANTS TOTALING OVER $870,000

In January 2016, Madera Irrigation District (MID or District) staff prepared two applications for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) WaterSMART: Water and Energy Efficiency grant program. On June 23, 2016, MID was notified that both projects were approved and would receive a total of $873,161 in Federal funds. The first application titled “Irrigation Water Conservation and Canal Automation Improvement Project” will expand the District’s existing Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system by installing 14 new solar-powered automated gates and meters throughout the District. The gates and meters can be remotely monitored and controlled by smart phones and are programmed to automatically open and close to maintain a constant flow within +/-2.5% accuracy, regardless of varying upstream water level. Upon completion, the project is estimated to conserve 3,600 acre-feet on average each year.

The second application titled “Lateral 24.2-17.0 Pipeline Improvement Project” will undergr0und approximately 6,500 feet of the existing Lateral 24.2-17.0 canal into a 36” pipeline to reduce seepage. Additionally, a small basin will be constructed to capture spill water and manage recharge within the District. Once constructed, the project is estimated to conserve 1,750 acre-feet on average each year.

The projects will be constructed outside of the irrigation season to avoid service interruption and are scheduled to be fully operational by October 2018. For more information, please contact the MID Engineering staff at (559) 673-3514.

BE SURE TO VISIT THE MADERA IRRIGATION DISTRICT BOOTH AT THE MADERA DISTRICT FAIR

MADERA IRRIGATION DISTRICT TO TRANSFER BILLING AND COLLECTION DUTIES TO COUNTY OF MADERA

Madera Irrigation District (MID or District) has partnered with the County of Madera (County) to transfer the billing and collection duties for the District’s assessments and standby charges to the County. The transfer will take effect this year with the 2017 assessments and 2016 standby charges. The assessments and standby charges will be included on the County’s property tax bill, which will be mailed by the County in mid-October. The District’s assessments and standby charges will be reflected on the County’s tax bill as a one-line item direct charge and will be subject to the due dates and penalties set by the County of Madera. While the District will no longer mail invoices for assessments and standby charges, the District will still bill for water usage. Also, prior years’ delinquent assessments will continue to be paid to MID. The District believes this change will be a benefit to all landowners, simplifying the payment process as one payment can be made for County property taxes, MID assessments, and MID standby charges. Also, as an added benefit, the County accepts a variety of payment options including credit card, debit card, electronic check, cash, cashier’s check, and money order (credit card, debit card, and electronic check payments will incur a convenience fee). If you have any questions regarding this change or your bill, please call Madera Irrigation District at 559-673-3514.

Madera Irrigation District to Transfer Billing and Collection Duties to County of MADERA

At a Madera City Council (Council) meeting in November of 2014, Parks & Community Services staff presented Council with landscaping and irrigation options for future median islands. In light of the extended recent drought conditions, the Council directed staff to proceed with a new desert landscape pallet along with a point of use irrigation system in two locations as demonstration projects. This action was made in advance of a Gubernatorial Executive Order issued in the spring of 2015 to mandate significant water conservation.

The landscape and irrigation design for these median islands represent a sharp departure from historical practice. Smarter irrigation using point-of-use bubblers rather than spray heads is being used. Fewer more drought tolerant plant varieties are used as are aesthetic landscape features. The City recognizes that it plays a key role in helping the area shift past landscape and irrigation practices to more sustainable ones.

Madera Irrigation District recently submitted for a Turf Replacement Grant and looks forward to implementing drought tolerant landscaping similar to the City of Madera.

KEY DATES

- Mid-October: County Tax Bills Mailed
- December 10, 2016: 1st Installment Due
- April 10, 2017: 2nd Installment Due

The one-line item direct charge on the property tax bill will include MID assessments and standby charges, if applicable.

CITY OF MADERA WATER CONSERVATION MEDIAN ISLAND PROJECT

WRITTEN BY MARYANN SEAY, DIRECTOR OF PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES, CITY OF MADERA

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One site of the demonstration project is the recently completed median island project along 4th Street from Sunset Avenue east toward Lake Street. The other will be located at Pine and Pecan Avenues adjacent to the Freedom Industrial project. The purpose of the collective projects is to analyze: installation costs, water conservation data over time, on-going maintenance expenses and public perception. While the City of Madera (City) has yet to accept the first of the two projects from the contractor, staff and Council have received praise from the public, including the City’s water conscious Beautification Committee, along with partners such as the Madera County Farm Bureau and the Madera Irrigation District.

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