The Madera Irrigation District (District or MID) has been awarded the Regional Director’s Award from the United States Bureau of Reclamation Mid-Pacific Region (USBR) for its commitment to improve water management practices, promoting water conservation, and efficiency.

The Mid-Pacific Region of the USBR covers a large geographic area spanning from the northern two-thirds of California and most of western Nevada to the southern part of Oregon with a large number of water and power contractors. The Mid-Pacific Region fulfills water obligations for agriculture, power generation, water conservation, water recycling, and reuse.

The USBR’s Mid-Pacific Region manages one of the largest water storage and transport systems in the world, the Central Valley Project (CVP). The CVP includes twenty (20) dams and reservoirs and eleven (11) power plants with a combined storage capacity of more than eleven (11) million acre-feet of water. The CVP serves farms, homes, and industry in California’s Central Valley. MID is a CVP contractor with water contracts from the Friant Unit (San Joaquin River) and Hidden Unit (Fresno River).

MID was awarded the Regional Director’s Award at the USBR’s Mid-Pacific Conference on January 20, 2016 for its “collaboration with Reclamation’s grant programs to conserve and better manage valuable water resources by implementing Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition projects, replacing approximately 100 farm turnout meters, installing flume gates, and equipping ditch tenders with real-time meter reading applications.” In addition, “the District has made significant progress in the realms of the water industry including infrastructure upgrades, operating under balanced budgets during drought years, promoting public education on water related topics, and fostering cooperation and partnerships with neighboring agencies.”

“This is one of the highest honors that Reclamation can award a district. MID is extremely proud to have received this recognition. This award shows the dedication and commitment of the District’s Board of Directors and staff to improve water management practices for the benefit of our District and our growers,” stated Thomas Greci, General Manager.
As you look toward to the east at the snow packed Sierras and the above average rainfall conditions this winter, you might believe that delivery of surface water from the Madera Irrigation District (MID) is a given that, however is not the situation MID is currently facing. Due to a number of environmental and operational factors, including delta export pumping operations, MID is bracing for a third year of zero allocation from the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) for Friant Dam supplies. It is hard to believe that this is possible as reservoirs are filling and the local mountains are covered with snow, but that is the reality of the water world in 2016. A zero allocation this year will not occur because of a lack of capacity in the system, inadequacy of infrastructure or storage availability, or any other physical constraint. The reason that MID and other Friant districts could face another year with no surface water supply from Friant is solely protection of endangered species and politics. Pumping restrictions in the Delta that are a result of efforts to protect Delta Smelt and preserve cold water in reservoirs for Salmon have significantly reduced south of delta supplies. Due to these constraints, the USBR’s ability to meet its obligations to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors from the Delta is questionable, which, in turn, creates uncertainty for the Friant Division Contractors. For a third year in a row, the USBR could release water down the San Joaquin River for delivery to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors. What does this mean to you? Another year of zero allocation will again limit, if not eliminate, MID’s ability to make any surface water deliveries. If surface water is not available, the entire area will be exclusively dependent on groundwater, which includes both urban and agricultural users. Despite the rainfall, one can expect groundwater levels and water quality to continue to decline in 2016 and water restrictions and regulations to be enforced unless things change soon.

How can the situation change? People voicing their concerns to elected officials is the primary way change can be evoked. Become knowledgeable on the issues affecting the water supply that is or is not being delivered to your land or your community. Time is of the essence as our water supply is being drained to the Pacific Ocean. Avoiding the need for the USBR to call on Friant Dam supplies to satisfy their obligations to the Exchange Contractors will result in a substandard ability to meet its obligations to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors, including MID. The time to act is now.

SAVING FAREWELL…

John Bese, Chief of Operations and Maintenance, has announced his retirement this year in August, after 30 years with the District. This decision was not an easy one as John has such a great passion for the work that he does at the District.

John Bese began his tenure with the District in 1986 as a Ditchtender, learning the various waterways and intricate channels of our distribution system. Over the 30 years he has held the positions of Mechanic, where he worked diligently on the repair and maintenance of the District’s heavy equipment and fleet, Equipment Operator, in which he was responsible for the operation of a variety of heavy power-driven equipment used in construction and maintenance projects, and lastly Chief of Operations and Maintenance, where he currently plans organizes and directs all operations of personnel engaged in ordering, delivering, monitoring, and recording water use in the District.

In his retirement, John plans to work on his ranch and train horses. He also looks forward to enjoying time with his family and friends. John has been a great asset to the District, and the knowledge that he has is invaluable.

MADERA IRRIGATION DISTRICT & CENTRAL VALLEY OPPORTUNITY CENTER (CVOC) PARTNERSHIP

In conjunction with the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) and La Cooperativa Campesina de California, CVOC is providing temporary employment opportunities to individuals and families who have been affected by the drought or have faced long-term unemployment and reside in a drought affected area.

The Madera Irrigation District currently has 17 program participants working in our Operations and Maintenance Department performing jobs such as cleaning canals, assisting in construction projects, and shadowing MID staff on infrastructure repair. MID also has two additional CVOC program participants working in the MID office, assisting office staff with administrative assignments. All of the CVOC employees are funded through the State of California and are provided to the District at absolutely no-cost. We are pleased to have started this partnership with CVOC and to be a part of helping members of our community find gainful employment.

THE DISTRICT WELCOMES…

Charles Contreras, Operations and Maintenance Manager, to our dynamic team! Charles relocated from Bakersfield, California where he served as the Operations and Maintenance Superintendent for the Buena Vista Water Storage District for 23 years performing all components of management. During his tenure with Buena Vista Water Storage District he was responsible for overseeing all operations of the District’s water delivery system, installation and repairs of various pipelines, as well as the maintenance and repair of heavy equipment and vehicle fleet. He led a large team of water delivery and maintenance staff, and regularly worked closely with engineering staff on projects.

Charles is known as a very conscientious manager with excellent people skills. He carries a level of competence, being able to organize various phases of projects and improvements resulting in better efficiency within his areas of responsibility. His work experience crosses many fields of executive level management including planning, budgeting, personnel, and many more. Charles reported to the District’s Operations and Maintenance Department on February 9, 2016. He has been working very closely alongside John Bese while acclimating to our District. Charles has expressed his excitement to be here and part of our amazing team.

We are delighted to have Charles join our District and look forward to many great accomplishments.