



Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District April 7, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District** held its board of directors meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 by telephone. As you may have already read already **KDWCD** has posted a very helpful list of do's and don'ts for behaving well when on the phone. Posted at their website was the agenda with the call in number and passcode (hint it's the regular phone number plus #.) Previous attempts at attending teleconference meetings have resulted in so many folks calling in at the same time things get gummed up and so I called in early. The wait was much different. Perhaps all my years of reporting has led to this website and a voice to proclaim to the world – only once in my entire existence was the on-hold music worth listening to. I can't remember who I called but they were playing rock-a-billy and it was so cool. Which ever company Kaweah Delta used to host this conference call wasn't that cool but it did play news clips. Far better than the usual ear pudding of lo-fi, insipid smooth jazz rejects one is often subjected to.



The meeting was scheduled to start at 9:00 am and while General Manager **Mark Larsen** was getting things started someone said they got an inch and a half of rain west of Tulare. Chairman **Don Mills** kicked things off by having Larsen explain the rules KDWCD is adopting for telephone meetings. Larsen was clear this was audio only as Mills was still sitting around in his pajamas as I suspect others were as well. The agenda wasn't shorter but the coverage was more compact than normally.

Roll call resulted in a full quorum and there wasn't any public comment besides .

Water Master **Vic Hernandez** said the past two days yielded storms of more than two feet of new snow. He said DWR had just measured a couple of sites in the high country but they did it just before the snow. Central California has 64 percent of normal and Southern California has improved also which indicates the Kaweah River watershed is looking at better than 50 percent which means a run could start as early as this time next month. He also said the inflow to Terminus Dam is the highest of the year.

Larsen reported the CVP has doubled its Class I allocation on the Friant System to 40 percent. Engineer **Dennis Keller** reported the American River also picked up enough to help out at Folsom. He thinks there was enough storm to come in at Shasta to provide the US Bureau of Reclamation enough supplies to make the Exchange Contractors whole. He believes that's why the Friant allocation was doubled.

The next item Larsen presented. The Airborne Snow Observatory is a NASA based project that has been taken over by a private company, ASO Inc. The Stanislaus, Kings and San Joaquin Rivers are

contracting with ASO and Kaweah is looking carefully at entering into the contract as well. There will be more discussion in closed session with attorney **Aubrey Mauritson**.

Larsen then spoke about the Hannah Ranch Project saying staff, consultants and an ad hoc committee of the board met last week to assess the situation. It was determined there is much more work to be done. Using the current resources it is doubtful the project will be far enough along to meet a grant timeline. The group looked at leasing more equipment for a total of four sets of double scrappers. Ashland Scrappers and John Deere equipment best met the needs. The board looked over a spread sheet of current district equipment resources and what else is needed. There is also a need to hire more workers, about two or three and a \$100,000 in new equipment lease and a bunch more in rental will be offset by meeting the grant deadline. Spending more will yield more grant money – just about enough to pay for everything but the maintenance costs. Mills said he’s done a good deal of research and it will pencil out to lease more equipment. The board like the idea and voted to go with leasing more equipment.

Yanez Construction of Reedley has a need for dirt and it happens much of the dirt being removed from the Hannah Ranch property isn’t suitable for levee construction but will work just fine as fill for a development in Woodlake. Using the standard agreement Kaweah Delta will let Yanez move that dirt and save itself a big gob of money doing so.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 5th and Mills expressed hope it will be held in person in Farmersville at the headquarters. But who can say? With that the open session adjourned and we all hung up. Folks participating in the closed session have other numbers to call back for that portion of the meeting.

It went well. The rules were followed and the entire meeting took only 35 minutes. While seeing the people you see every month has great worth in building trust and relationships, sitting around in sweatpants for 35 minutes listening in on the phone verses driving two or more hours roundtrip to an hour and a half meeting has its charms as well. I don’t make many predictions but I’ll step out on a limb and say if enough folks support retaining the changes in the Brown Act that allow this type of meeting things will never go back to the normal pre-coronavirus way of doing business. We’ll see. Also, as I check my email from the comfort of my home office I see Semitropic has adopted the same conference call rules for its meeting. Good for them.

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Water Master – Victor Hernandez
Senior Equipment Operator - Tom Dilbeck & Doyle Pettyjohn
Accountant - Shelly Heier
Administrative Assistant - Kim Hollis
Board Coordinator - Anita Wilson
Office Assistant - Kathleen Halvorsen
Engineering Technician - Matthew Jacobus

Primary Consultants

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Dennis Keller - Civil Engineer (Keller/Wegley Consulting Engineers)
Aubrey Mauritsen - Attorney (Ruddell, Cochran, Stanton, Smith & Bixler, LLP)
Richard "Dick" Moss - Civil Engineer (Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group)
Shelley Orth - Editor/Wordsmith

From the Kaweah Delta website:

The Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (KDWCD) was formed in 1927, under the provisions of California state law known as the Water Conservation Act of 1927, for the purpose of conserving and storing waters of the Kaweah River and for conserving and protecting the underground waters of the Kaweah Delta. Later the Water Conservation Act, as well as the purpose of the District, was expanded to include power generation and distribution.

The District is located in the south-central portion of the San Joaquin Valley and lies in portions of both Tulare and Kings Counties. The total area of the District is about 340,000 acres with approximately 255,000 acres located in the western portion of Tulare County and the balance, or 85,000 acres, in the northeastern portion of the Kings County.

The District's lands are primarily agricultural in nature, although the cities of Visalia and Tulare constitute significant areas of urbanization. Farmersville is the other incorporated area. The population of the District is currently estimated to be in excess of 175,000 people with the principle crops being cotton, misc. field crops, deciduous fruit and nut trees as well as alfalfa.

Numerous public and private entities within the District's boundaries divert water from the Kaweah River and its distributaries. Nearly all of the lands served with Kaweah River water also are served irrigation water from groundwater, primarily due to the erratic and relatively undependable nature of flow on the Kaweah River. All municipal and industrial water uses within the District are supplied from groundwater.

KDWCD and Tulare Irrigation District (TID), which lies entirely within the boundaries of the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, has a long-term contract with the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) for water from the Friant Division of the CVP. TID has historically received substantial quantities of CVP water surplus to the demands of the District which augment the Kaweah River supply.

The District and the Kaweah River groundwater basin have experienced long-term groundwater overdraft estimated in 2007 to be as much as 40,000 acre-feet per year. The District has performed multiple studies of groundwater data to determine the extent and volume of groundwater overdraft within its boundaries. There are currently over 40 recharge basins within the District covering approximately 5,000 acres. While KDWCD owns and operates many of these groundwater recharge basins, it does not provide water banking services for others.