

Water Wrights



Tulare Irrigation District May 12, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Tulare Irrigation District** held its board of directors meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 by teleconference. The web cast program wouldn't expect my computer's microphone even though I wasn't trying to speak. It also couldn't figure out how to send the audio to my speakers. I could see the meeting had started but then a bunch of popups appeared and then it sent my machine to the infamous Blue Screen of Death. So all of that took up 15-minutes or more and I entered late. Since Chairman **David Bixler** was present I'm just guessing he started the meeting on time at 9:00am.

After the digital revolution settled down I joined the meeting as **TID Water Master Marco Crenshaw** said there are maybe 20-days of water deliveries ending on July 7th. Deliveries could be delayed in June to stretch it out longer in July and there could be a bigger CVP allocation. General Manager **Aaron Fukuda** said a



recent Friant Water Authority managers meeting the US Bureau of Reclamation said there is more water up there than has been accounted for at this time and there could be a late June allocation. Directors **Mike Thomas** and **Rick Borges** both said they think it would be best to revisit this next month. Fukuda said a June allocation is iffy but there could be five percent here and there. Fukuda also said TID is a back stop for other districts during dry years like this. Those supplies were figured in to TID's net supplies for this meeting.

TID Superintendent **Wayne Fox** was next and he said the crew has been working like whirling dervishes to get the system ready and it is ready. One of the employees has been out due to COVID-19 and another one is working with Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District running an earth mover. Fukuda praised Fox for his diligence in keeping his crew following all the safety precautions in dealing with the virus.

There was a bit of a delay as we waited for the financial report which gave me a chance to write the first paragraph. TID Controller **Kathi Artis** was soon on the line and she presented the board with a full report which was approved. Interest rates have gone down lately and there are opportunities for TID to refinance some bonds and a receive a benefit. Under accounts payable Fukuda said when he first saw the report he was surprised how low the bills were then he realized they paid the Friant charges last month. The Mid Kaweah GSA has been going through management changes so in the

meantime until the new signatures are set up TID paid a couple of MKGSA bills as a one time deal and will be reimbursed. The board approved paying the expenses.

TID Engineer **Jeremy Barrows** was next with his reports. Before he began everyone who had video wanted to know what happened to Borges. I had phone access only so I couldn't tell but it turned out he kicked a wire under his desk and disconnect his rig. But it was up and running.

Barrows reported AT&T's tin cans and string has proven inadequate in a post coronavirus world. Fukuda said it may cost more but it is time to get started on updating the phone and internet system. I don't know what's happening with AT&T. That's who I have my cell service with and every two months or so I'll get two or three bars for ten seconds or less but most of the time I'm like Oliver Douglas climbing a phone pole in Hooterville trying to get one bar to stay put. Anyway starting up a new system after deliveries are concluded is on the TID schedule.

Fukuda gave a virus update saying the crew and staff have enough personal protection masks and germ killer. The offices are closed and payments collected by drop box and moved inside for accounting. Until notified differently or until everyone is comfortable things will be done this way.

Fukuda next gave the SGMA update. TID is a member of the MKGSA and he said the GSP and further studies strongly indicate the area is moving in the right direction to achieve sustainability. He also said the MKGSA GSP has received a letter from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife. He's working with attorney **Valarie Kincaid** to draft a response letter. The CDFW has sent comments to many if not all GSPs in the Valley. All the letters have four comments stating the GSP doesn't meet SGMA requirements. This is puzzling because CDFW never attended any meetings, doesn't have the authority to determine what SGMA requirements are since the law leaves that up to the GSAs and all the recipients of the letter find it problematic. By my observations CDFW is beginning to show a common trait of government agencies – trying to grow its power becomes a bigger objective than pursuing its duties.

Fukuda was appointed as the interim GM for the Mid Kaweah GSA. The agreement has a termination date at the end of this year or until a permanent GM is hired. TID will bill MKGSA \$120 per hour for Fukuda's GSA work. There isn't a candidate for the position in the wings at this time.

Under Friant matters FWA has entered into the lawsuit against the state's lawsuit to block the new federal biops. Also, the Milk Producers Counsel's **Geoff Vandenheuvel** alerted the meeting a federal judge in Fresno has granted a temporary restraining order blocking the operations of the Delta under the new biops. California's water system has taken a large step backwards because of political concerns. Fukuda also said a recent meeting has revealed when it comes to funding for the Friant Kern Canal fix will come from the contractors with the possibility of being reimbursed.

TID is working on a strategic plan based on board discussion last December. A draft was presented to the board and Fukuda asked them to get comments together for next month's meeting. Then they can decide to go forth with adoption in July or wait another month. He said the financial side of the plan is shaping up well and credited Artis for her work.

TID is involved in a project involving McKay Point and sand and gravel. I'm not familiar with this project but there has to be a rewrite since a new partner has replaced Cemex. There's a consultant on board who will rewrite the CEQA and it won't be cheap. But there is a cost share and that will drop TID's costs to about \$80,000.

The district could be eligible for \$135 per a/f unreleased restoration flows up to 2,000 a/f I believe was said. The board went for it.

TID has been a founding funder of the Cultivate California outreach efforts with ties to the California Farm Water Coalition. It's a website that brings folks in for recipes and shows them how

food is grown, processed and distributed to people. Fukuda asked the board to continue its support and the board approved a nice monetary gift.

Board reports were next and Borges said it was decided People's Ditch Company and other small districts should start deliveries in June. Kaweah Delta has hired an employee to take over all water sampling. That was it and the meeting went into closed session to be joined by attorney Alex Peltzer.

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TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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Board: David G. Bixler- President, Richard S. Borges, Jr.-Vice President, Scott Rogers, Dave Martin & Michael Thomas

Staff: Aaron Fukuda-General Manager, Jeremy Barroll-Engineer, Kathi Artis-District Controller, Wayne Fox-Superintendent, Marco Crenshaw-District Watermaster & Alex Peltzer-Attorney.

About: The Tulare Irrigation District was organized September 21, 1889. The original proposal for the formation of an irrigation district covering 219,000 acres, extending from the Sierra Nevada foothills to Tulare Lake, was eventually reduced to 32,500 acres. The District continued in this status until January of 1948 when the so-called Kaweah Lands" (approximately 11,000 acres) were annexed. In October of 1948, approximately 31,000 acres, comprising the area served by the Packwood Canal Company were annexed to the District. A U.S. Bureau of Reclamation contract was signed in 1950 providing an annual supply of 30,000 acre-feet of Class 1 water, and up to 141,000 acre-feet of Class 2 water from the Friant-Kern Canal. The District and the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District have coordinated efforts to enhance the recharge of groundwater within the Kaweah Basin. During high flow times KDWCD may use the recharge basins with the District for recharge purposes. Further, KDWCD has historically provided for a financial incentive program through which the District sustains the level of groundwater recharge from supply sources into the District. This historical program was recently reinstated by both districts in lieu of the District's plans to concrete-line this canal to conserve the surface water. TID is a member of the Mid Kaweah GSA.