

Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, August 20, 2020

By Michael Young

On Thursday, August 20th the **Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID)** held its monthly board of directors meeting, originally scheduled for August 6th. Board President, **Donald R. Bransford** started the meeting, only minutes after 9:00 a.m., by welcoming those attending in person and those on the teleconference line. With no one slotted for public participation, the meeting went straight to the consent agenda, of which approved items included general fund payments, general operations expenditures, to the approval of the July 16th, 2020 meeting minutes.

The GCID is considered the largest irrigation district in the Sacramento Valley, covering

roughly 175,000 acres of which eighty percent of the land is regularly farmed. Water supplied throughout the winter months provides rice lands valuable habitats for waterfowl migration - a fantastic sight to see. Because of this, the district has developed a deep commitment to sustainable practices - both in water supply management, as well as environmental preservation and protection of fish and wildlife in the region. The five-member board of directors operates an annual \$15 million budget, all while governing the districts' 65-mile long main canal which conveys water into a complex system of nearly 1,000 miles of canals, laterals, and drains, much of it constructed in the early 1900s.

Following a quick approval of payments to be made to the Colusa County Farm Bureau, various administrative tasks and general reports were dispensed with. Discussion on general business items kicked off by reviewing and considering the approval of Easement Agreement Petitions for GCID to assume operation and maintenance of certain private laterals.

Louis Jarvis, GCID's Finance Director and Treasurer, then led the conversation relating to a pilot partnership with **The Nature Conservancy**. Through a detailed and lengthy discussion, the partnership would strive for the short-term transfer of the Conservancy's Mill Creek water rights to augment the winter water supply for the creation of a Shorebird wetland habitat. The Nature Conservancy initially approached staff regarding this ask that would call for 1,000 acres of wetlands to be created in the months of September 2020 and February 2021 for wildlife. Given that GCID is known for their continuous loyalty toward sustainability, many in the room seemed willing to make the partnership work for both parties involved.

After wrapping up informational reports from the GCID General Manager, **Thaddeus L. Bettner**, discussions transitioned into closed session to discuss the legal counsel with the board's attorney. Although public access was limited, the agenda hinted that topics would cover points on anticipated litigation to current litigation issues such as their current federal lawsuit, **Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District vs. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**.

To close out the late morning, the group moved into their highly anticipated "Board Workshop" to work collaboratively on items ranging from water rate assessment strategies to a Capital



Improvement Plan (CIP) and then to various policy matters - of which I'm sure the board will talk about during next month's board meeting.

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Michael Young brings a professional portfolio of public policy and government relations with and agri-marketing and communications foundational background.

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530/934-8881 www.GCID.net

Board: Donald R. Bransford – President, Peter Knight – Vice President, John Amaro, Logan Dennis, Blake Vann

Staff: Thaddeus L. Bettner – General Manager, Cynthia F. Davis – Personnel & Communications Director, Zac Dickens – District Engineer & Kevin Nelson – Maintenance Superintendent. Attorney: Andy Hitchings

GCID is the largest irrigation district in the Sacramento Valley. The district boundaries cover approximately 175,000 acres; of which approximately 140,000 farmed. There are 1,076 landowners in the District and an additional 200 tenant water users. Additionally, GCID services 1,200 acres of private habitat land and 21,000 acres of protected federal wildlife refuges. Winter water supplied by GCID to thousands of acres of rice land provides valuable habitat for migrating waterfowl during the winter months.

Current water supplies are diverted under the "Settlement Water Contracts" with the US Bureau of Reclamation. The first Settlement Contracts were established in 1964 to allow the Bureau to operate and divert water for the newly constructed Central Valley Project. The contract was renewed for another 40-year term in 2005. The contract provides GCID with water supply for the months of April through October for 720,000 acre-feet of base supply, and 105,000 acre-feet of Central Valley Project water that is purchased during the months of July and August. During a designated critical year when natural inflow to Shasta Reservoir is less than 3.2 million acre-feet, GCID's total supply is reduced by 25%, to a total of 618,000 acre-feet.

Additionally, the District has rights under a State Water Resources Control Board permit to "winter water." These rights run from November 1 through March 31 at a 1,200 cubic feet per second (cfs) diversion rate. This water supply is used for rice straw decomposition and waterfowl habitat. Source GCIC.net

GCID is in the Glenn Groundwater Authority GSA DWR #5-021.52