

Water Wrights



Tulare Irrigation District September 8, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Tulare Irrigation District** held its board of directors meeting on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 remotely on Webex from its headquarters west of Tulare. It's harvest time in the Valley and Directors **Scott Rogers** and **Mike Thomas** weren't online at least at the beginning. Chairman **David Bixler** called the meeting to order at 9:05am.

The first item was public comments and **Geoff Vandeneuvel** told the board to pay attention to what happened at last week's Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency meetings. A company called Aquilogic gave a presentation about subsidence and it doesn't appear the problem is contained near the just the Friant Kern Canal.

Reports

Water Master **Marco Crenshaw** gave the water report saying Lake Kaweah is at 13,000 a/f holding steady and Millerton Lake is at 200,000 a/f and still drawing down a little. He said there are still some unreleased restoration flows available. Director **David Martin** asked what's dead pool at Millerton Lake. I think he said 130,000 a/f. **TID** General Manager **Aaron Fukuda** said there was hope to get an extra two percent allocation on Friant supplies but he doesn't think that's going to happen.

Superintendent **Wayne Fox** reported crews have been mowing and grading the canals. He said the district's system been covered with sprayers. A short report. Controller **Kathi Artis** gave the financial report and asked the board to pay its bills.

The board did so. Fukuda answered one question about flows saying Friant pays Banta Carbona ID \$130 per a/f for pumping San Joaquin River water into the Delta Mendota Canal. There was also a \$100 fine from the smog Nazis at the Air Pollution Control Board for topping of fuel tanks on TID trucks. Well, since the fine was pretty small maybe that organization aren't Nazis after all. Don't want Antifa getting any more stupid. Wasn't just this time last year you could make a joke (even the poor, unfunny jokes I specialize in) and not have certain folks sprout a red glowing horn?

Jeremy Barroll gave the engineering report saying the Watte Measuring Structure wasn't completed to specifications. Refurbishing attempts failed. It was poor concrete work and the contractor had to redo the entire structure. Barroll said the newly finished work was much better with an improved technique for pouring the cement. Fukuda said the contractor was very helpful, rarely helpful. He didn't charge a penny to redo it and make sure it was correct.



Basin Projects

Fukuda gave his GM report saying the Big Marxist Virus plan adopted last month has been presented to the staff. He said studies show one in 32 Tulare County residents has been exposed to the virus. TID has enough masks and hand sanitizer to make it through the fall. There may be a way for the district to get some of the expense back through an ACWA program.

TID is trying to put in a basin project at Okieville. There has been a major snag from FEMA in as much as FEMA isn't responding to any communication. Cal OSE, the state version of FEMA has found some new \$50 million grant money from – I swear I heard Fukuda say – from FEMA. The problem is the landowner is interested in selling the land if the project doesn't start soon. There was a great deal of audio trouble but that got semi-straightened out. Fukuda said if the current property isn't available there are other locations but more expensive.

Refinancing a Loan

Next **Mike Cavanaugh** of Hill Top Securities reported he has reached out to 20 banks to refinance TID's Bank of America loan. He said there are now three bids, including Citizens Bank. He asked CB to lower its rate and maybe they can swing a deal. Hill Top makes me think of that Merle Haggard song "They're Tearing the Labor Camps Down". The song mentions a Hill Top Market in Tulare. Cavanaugh said the other bids were very good as well but CB is considering waving its closing costs. Martin asked about the call feature and Cavanaugh said TID can call the bond back but there could be a penalty and a minimum time before it can be called. Fukuda said the rates are pretty low and he recommended moving forward. The board directed Fukuda to go forward with CB. I thought that's what was said. The board likes to go with local banks which gives CB a leg up.

SGMA

Fukuda said CV Salts has become a bigger deal. There is now a Kaweah Water Foundation to deal with the Regional Board. KWF is nonprofit and Director **Rick Borges** represents the district. He said this is a water quality matter. Under Prop 68 Grant matters the Mid Kaweah GSA has met with Fresno State and signed a contract for well metering. FSU is seeking sample equipment from vendors. That's exciting. Have to learn more about that. There is also work on resource conservation to plan for species and habitat. One question waiting to be answered is what does habitat look like in smaller parcels? Martin asked if this RCIS program is a requirement and the answer is no. It is a way to get funding. The East Kaweah GSA started this process. Martin said the consultants started out fast and had to be told to pump the breaks until some answers are provided. He said this program is asking him to stop farming land on the off chance an animal will come along. He didn't sound like a champion for the program. He said it's just a tool. Fukuda agreed the consultants were too much in the lead and since it has to be controlled by landowners. Fukuda said the consultants said there is no requirement a species shows up but to get the money the habitat has to be prepped. Martin said if you want habitat give the Valley more water. In the Sacramento Valley canals serve as habitat.

Fukuda said the water marketing strategy is moving forward. He said public outreach is difficult at this time. A committee of elected officials and landowners need to be members. The MID GSA is housed within TID and represents the Cities of Visalia and Tulare as well as the district. He emphasized this needs to be driven by stakeholders and not staff and consultants. **Johnny Gailey**, Executive Director Delta View Water Association said this is step one; before the habitat and the rest. The allocation in the GSP will be the starting point. The modern day board member ends up on several boards and committees and briefings and can be exposed to meeting fatigue. Martin said the water community needs young men and women to get involved as the average water guy is in his or hers late 50s. There are three seats on the Mid Kaweah GSA advisory committee. GSP comments have been boiled down to categories that can be addressed globally. There is nothing carved in stone at this time

and the GSP can be modified as more data, study and experience comes about. The comments are legitimate and the GSA can't see into the future so things can change. Fukuda said there is an immediate need for a new MKGSA GM and having sat in that chair he has some ideas to pass on to the whoever that is.

The closed session portion of the meeting was next. There were other open session items and TID usually completes them before closed session but there some scheduling constraints and evidently some very timely matters to attend to. I counted seven items in closed session. Two real estate, two litigation, two employee matters and a liability claim. That was that.

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TULARE IRRIGATION DISTRICT

6826 Ave 240, Tulare, CA 93274 Office: 559/686-3425

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.