

# Water Wrights



## Tulare Irrigation District December 8, 2020

By Don A. Wright

**T**he **Tulare Irrigation District** held its board of directors meeting on Tuesday, December 8, 2020 remotely from its Tulare County headquarters on Zoom. After approving the minutes the meeting went directly into closed session at 9:00am and didn't come back until past 10:30am. The agenda showed two property negotiations, initiation of litigation, existing litigation and anticipated litigation as well as a labor negotiation and a liability claim. Maybe the rest of the meeting will go fast. Chairman **Dave Bixler** said there was no action taken in closed session. General Manager **Aaron Fukuda** said the meeting will go back into closed session again and there may be something to report there.

### Water Report

Water Master

**Marco Crenshaw** said there hasn't been much change since the last report. In flow on Lake Kaweah is low. The Friant Kern Canal is shut down so the only water leaving Millerton Lake is going down the San Joaquin River. The El Nino blob is still hanging out in



the middle of the Pacific Ocean and being blamed for the high pressure off of California's coast that's sending storms to the north and bypassing us. If I understood Crenshaw correctly there's just a trickle of water moving through the **TID** system.

Crenshaw gave the fall groundwater report saying groundwater has dropped on average 18 feet after last year's dry times. Some parts of the district didn't receive more than two weeks of surface deliveries. The spring groundwater report is almost always better due to winter rain. Next Fukuda posted some modern art somewhere between cubism and Pollock. I'm sorry, it was a color-coded contour map of groundwater levels throughout the district comparing last year with this. There are three areas within the district, the most north easterly, just west of the City of Tulare and one smaller depression on the west/central area where most of the groundwater lost has occurred. Fortunately, there are new recharge basins located next to the two of them furthest from the city. Fukuda said if this winds up another dry year groundwater conditions could become as bad as during the 2014-2015 drought. Both Crenshaw and Fukuda said a good year could turn things around. Director **Dave Martin** asked Fukuda if he has a plan dealing with double cropping. Fukuda said he'll write a letter explaining the situation and with SGMA's impact double cropping may have to be restricted. Director **Rick**

**Borges** said he believes there have been some draw downs in his area that could soon impact domestic wells and agreed a letter needs to go out.

### **Superintendent Report**

Superintendent **Wayne Fox** reported on maintenance and repairs. He said grading for better flow to help make deliveries to recharge basins is ongoing. Most of the mowing along the canals is complete. I believe Fox recently won an award from ACWA JPIA for having one of the safest workplaces in all of the State. Good for him. Director **Mike Thomas** congratulated Fox who said it's the crew staying safe. He said the district isn't allowing workers to share trucks due to the China biological warfare attack – I'm sorry the COVID-19 concerns. Fox told the board to not freak out if there are four trucks at a job site. He didn't actually say freak out. I can't see TID's board freaking out, they're amongst the most stable of boards in the water world.

### **Financials**

Controller **Kathi Artis** gave her financial reports. She repeated a development we've all heard many times. The Local Area Invest Fund returns have dropped from .62 percent to .576 percent. Remember if you need more detail about district finances than provided in these reports, all of this information is available to public. Artis does a great job. Almost always water special district finances are scrupulously maintained. As an example TID's Artis has five farmers to please who live in the area. They know what's going on and so do their neighbors. For instance TID paid Ivanhoe ID \$2 for a very small parcel. That's pretty transparent. The board approved the financial and accounts payable reports.

TID's **Beth Holms** gave the Assessor's report saying almost 40 percent has been collected with another 12-days to the deadline. There are only four water users with an outstanding balance totaling a mere \$11,000 overdue out the millions of dollars of water sold this past year. Holms show a comparison to years past saying the percentage paid at this time is very comparable. Fukuda said it usually gets busy this time of year as the deadline approaching.

### **Engineering**

Engineer **Jeremy Barroll** reported the headworks on a ditch feeding one of the recharge basins is being swapped out for a bigger one. He said there will be an 11 member committee formed to manage the Kaweah Water Quality Area, I think. Barroll reported the contractor for the new computer system is trying to get a better price for cable and other materials.

Fukuda updated the board on C Virus measures. He said new science indicates the 14-day quarantine should be reduced. He said the current TID COVID policy will hold until the end of the year when he can check with consultants for a refinements starting in January.

### **SGMA**

Fukuda said the GSP data monitoring system is being looked at. All three of the GSAs in the Kaweah Sub Basins a tilting to the Montgomery and Associates modeling. Annual reports are an ongoing cost but efficiency is improving with experience. There is \$26 million Prop 68 grant funds for critically overdrafted sub basins to implement projects. The Kaweah Sub Basin is looking at \$10 million. He had to tell one of the cities their project wasn't ready for a grant – there wasn't enough data for the application. The other city's project scored low because it wasn't directed to disadvantaged needs. Provost & Pritchard is putting the grant application together as we sleep. I mean as we speak. The deadline to apply as the new Mid Kaweah GSA manager is December 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Friant**

Fukuda reported on Friant matters saying the strategic plan meeting on the coast last month was productive. He said the consensus was to look closer at the San Luis Delta Mendota costs in the Central Valley Project. He said that is the costliest portion of the Friant budget. He also said the San

Joaquin River Water Blueprint was discussed. There were some districts disturbed by the idea of a lower quality State Water Project supply being recharged on their land. The other big topic was the repairs on the Friant Kern Canal. The consensus was to go after funding from the culprits who over drafted the subsidence area.

Borges is TID's Friant director and he said the retreat was successful but there was a tremendous amount of material to have covered. He's still studying what was discussed but felt it was a worthwhile expenditure of time.

### **Other Matters**

Fukuda reported on the McKay Point project EIR. There were two late comments but they are incorporating them into the review. He said operations plan should be completed by sometime in January.

A while back TID retained Capitol Core Group to help track federal infrastructure bills and everyone was hoping for a Lame Duck bill but that doesn't look likely. But there are expectations some bill that could send taxpayer money back to the Valley and they are staying on top to opportunities. Fukuda reported the California Farm Water Coalition membership fee is once again due. CFWC is a fine organization and the board didn't blink an eye and voted to continue supporting it with its membership.

Next the board was shown two quitclaim matters. One is an abandoned pipeline no longer used by TID. It runs through a parcel and there is a desire to develop that property. Staff thought it reasonable to quitclaim the pipeline easement. The board agreed. The next quitclaim was for yet another easement TID no longer uses. The board agreed yet again.

### **Directors Reports**

Directors reports was the last item in open session. Borges reported the Kaweah St. Johns River Association meeting was long and mostly about one issue. He said the new power plant owners will be looking in closely KSJRA meetings so they can learn more to aid in the management of the plant. There is a new SCADA plan being put in place and it don't come cheap. Director **Dave Martin** concurred as I believe he also attends those meetings. Borges said the Kaweah Water Foundation had a meeting to discuss an initial budget under \$500,000 for 2021. He said that could go up. The KWF was put together to deal with the CV Salts issues. They signed an agreement with Sacramento State University to help with outreach. The organization is seeking an administrator. Provost & Pritchard is acting as the interim administrator. Martin had nothing to say and Thomas reported on the Watchumna Water Company assessments and they are about \$300 this year. I'm not sure if that is per acre foot or acre or how the private company works.

Fukuda wished everyone a merry Christmas. The meeting then went back into closed session and that was that. Be good to each other.

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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.