

Oakdale Irrigation District Newsletter

1205 East F Street
Oakdale, Ca 95361

October 2003

OID Strategic Plan

Where are we going? A question often asked of public agencies, but not often answered. The Board of Directors has bucked that trend and at their July 15, 2003 Board meeting adopted a Strategic Plan for the OID. The Plan has been nearly a year in the making and captures the vision for the direction of OID of both the community and the directors.

In fulfillment of that vision, the Board on September 2,

2003 approved a three-year action plan that addresses the near-term needs of OID in meeting its strategic goals. The plan contains goals that were deemed priority in the coming years for the staff and Board to focus on. Quarterly, the Board will review the action plan as a means of measuring the progress of the District. If you would like a copy of the District's three-year action plan, please give us a call or drop by our offices to pick one up.

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South Main Canal Reconstruction

Earlier this year, the Board approved a hazard assessment of the South Main Canal. In operation since 1912, the canal was due for a professional assessment of its condition. Condor Earth Technologies, a Stockton geotechnical firm specializing in this area, spent a number of weeks this winter doing just that. The report was not good. It was evident that OID needed to do some major repairs this winter work season if it wanted to reduce some of the high hazard problem areas that were discovered.

As a result, OID is looking at investing \$5-\$7 million in reconstruction work on the

South Main Canal this winter. In addition, potentially \$2 million will need to be spent in each year of 2004-05 and 2005-06 to correct many of the deficiencies identified. Two major tunnel rehabilitation projects, a half-dozen slope stabilizing measures and new gunite and gunite replacement projects are planned. Monies for these expenses will come out of cash reserves built up over the past few years.

In furtherance of insuring the continued flow of water to our area, a relocation of the South Main Canal is being considered from Two-Mile Bar to just

upstream of the Highway 108/120 crossing. This existing stretch of the South Main Canal is built upon unstable rock material. Evidence of subsidence and creep failure along this stretch makes relocation a more attractive option over rehabilitation or replacement in-place. Much more investigation will be needed on this and we'll keep you informed as it progresses.

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OID'S Water Department has generated an estimated water savings of 6%

2003 Water Season Progress

OID's Water Operations Department, through an increased water conservation effort this season, has generated an estimated water savings of 6%. That amount equates to about 15,000 acre feet. Those efforts were achieved through the following:

- A reduction of hours on approximately 160 parcels of land through discussions with conscientious landowners;
- A reduction in deep well usage of 4,400 acre feet over last year (as measured against October 1 to

August 1 usage for 2002 and 2003); and

- A reduction in water diversions of 9,600 acre feet (as measured against October 1 to August 1 usage for 2002 and 2003). All this with July being tied with the warmest July on record.

We want to thank all those cooperative water users for doing their part this year.

Why is this important? As explained in our Water User Notice mailed out

in March of this year, irrigation districts are charged under State Law to insure that the water they deliver is put to reasonable and beneficial uses. Not doing so puts those water rights at risk. Conversely, if you're not doing your part as a water user your actions are equally detrimental to those rights.

We can't do what we do without your help. We ask that you continue to cooperate with us as we move forward in implementing additional water conservation measures in the 2004 water season. We'll talk more about this in our Spring Newsletter.

Ag Waiver Update

Of all challenges facing our agricultural community, this one is at the top of the list. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted a new agricultural waiver program on July 11th for all discharges leaving farmlands. The whole program has the goal of eliminating all traces of fertilizer, pesticides, sediment, nutrients, etc. from waters leaving farmland, whether if be from irrigation or storm water runoff, within the next 10 years. The waiver adopted by the CVRWQCB offered two options for agricultural dischargers to meet the water quality compliance requirements; Option 1: Form and become part of a watershed group; Option 2: "Go it alone", file a Notice of Intent and a General Report and comply with the requirements of the waiver.

Prior to July, irrigation districts saw Option 1, the watershed approach, as the most amenable for itself and its water users. However, since the RWQCB released the waiver, the requirements for this option have

grown to become too excessive and burdensome. Going this route required farmer identification, which had never been a palatable option for irrigation districts. Besides listing farmers by name, field identification, acreage farmed, crop type and history, irrigation practices, pesticide use and history, drainage pathways, etc. were also required. This took the form of irrigation districts being the "Big Brother" for the Regional Board. Neither a position OID nor the other irrigation districts wanted to be in. In addition, the waiver received for this effort was only good until January 2004. If in January, this approach didn't have enough farmer sign-ups the Regional Board could dissolve the watershed group and place everyone under a discharge permit or what's called a WDR. A WDR is the type of permit a sewer treatment plant operates under.

OID has decided to "go it alone". This means we will file the necessary paperwork to be compliant with the Ag waiver for our lateral spills and drainage waters we generate. OID will not provide nor include any of its farmers

within that application. In essence, we want to be treated just like everyone of the other 25,000 Ag dischargers in the Central Valley, and deal with whatever the RWQCB hands down. OID estimates that their compliance costs will be \$250,000 to \$350,000 annually, depending on the extent of monitoring, which hasn't been set yet. That could mean a \$5-\$7 per acre increase in your water rates; and those costs don't include any program money to clean the water up.

Keep in mind the Ag coalitions have filed an appeal to the Regional Board's actions. They also filed a Stay for the deliverables the Regional Board demanded by November 1. A final decision should be made by mid to late November. However, under the current Regional Board mandate, those farmers who wish coverage under the Ag waiver must file by November 1 as either being a part of a watershed/coalition member or a "go it alone" discharger. Not doing one or the other will put you at risk of being out of compliance with state law.

Inside the OID



General Manager's Two-Cents

Recent Retirees

Wayne Truhett, Supervisor of Facilities and Rights-of-Way retired in January of this year after serving 37 years at the OID. Wayne held nearly every position at OID except General Manager. He started out as an equipment operator in June of 1965 and held responsible positions as Foreman, Equipment Operator Supervisor, Equipment Operator Leadman, Assistant Field Supervisor, Field Superintendent, Co-Interim Support Services Manager, Support Services Supervisor, and Supervisor of Facilities and Rights-of-Way. He was an extremely versatile, practical and knowledgeable person on District matters and his absence will be missed.

Mike Evans, Watermaster over Water Operations, has decided to retire September 30th after completing 23 years of service with OID. Mike was hired in March of 1980 and spent his entire career in the Water Operations Department holding positions as Ditchtender, Temporary Assistant Watermaster, Assistant Watermaster and Watermaster. Mike is also a wealth of knowledge about OID and his water operations experience will be dearly missed as well.

New Hires

Recent retirements over the last couple of years has presented OID the opportunity to reassess its personnel needs in meeting the chal-

lenges identified in its Strategic Plan. The Board of Directors discussed this issue at their August 19, 2003 meeting and took action to reclassify and fill two technical staff positions that have been vacant for some time. The Board decided to reclassify the vacant Senior Engineering Technician position to an Assistant Engineer or Engineer and to reclassify the Supervisor of Facilities and Rights-of-Way position to that of a Special Projects Coordinator.

In filling one of those positions, the OID recruited Kevin King to fill the Special Project Coordinator position. Kevin is a graduate of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and has been working at Patterson Irrigation District since that time. We will profile Kevin more in our spring newsletter.

The filling of these two positions will increase OID's staffing level to 64 positions; 2 under its approved 66 position authorization.

Professional Management Hires in the Works

OID is continuing to pursue the filling of its Manager, Support Services position (vacant since fall 2001) and the recently vacated position of Manager, Water Operations. Similar to the new hire philosophy discussed above, OID is looking for two aggressive management

professionals to fill these positions. Shannon Executive Search of Sacramento is the management recruitment firm being utilized for this recruitment, which ends October 17th.

Atta-Boy Letters

Our field staff, ditchtenders and construction maintenance workers must be doing something right! OID has received dozens of thank you letters from our customers for work or services performed by its staff this year. Not well known, but our ditchtenders make about 55,000 service calls during the water season and our construction and maintenance crews respond to over 100 emergency repair calls during that same time. Water season is a hectic time and often our crews and staff need to be reminded that people like you do appreciate the work they do. We wanted to let you know our staff appreciates those letters and cards and for you taking the time to send them.



Safety Award

The Board of Directors presented Mr. Lee Scully with a \$50.00 check from our insurance provider, ACWA/JPIA. This safety award was given to Lee in recognition of his strict adherence to safety procedures and policies regarding a hazardous material spill on July 3, 2002.

It's been a little over 20 months since I arrived here in Oakdale and I have been very pleased with the progress our organization has made under our Board's direction. I hope that those improvements have translated to noticeable improvements in customer service as well. Our new mission statement, "To protect and develop OID water resources for the maximum benefit of the Oakdale Irrigation District community by providing excellent irrigation and domestic water service" says much about our focal point. We would like you all to know that the Board, management and staff at OID are committed to the continual betterment of our organization as we move forward; and moving forward is the key. Not only have we made great progress this year, we look forward to even more accomplishments in 2004.

As a side note, OID will begin putting out two newsletters a year; a fall and spring edition so we can do a better job of keeping you informed. We also had good feedback on the Water User Notice we put out and may use that form to communicate and discuss single issue events. If you have any other ideas on how we can do a better job, please drop by our offices, we'd like to hear from you.

Tri-Dam Re-licensing Status

Tri-Dam Projects, under Board direction from South San Joaquin and Oakdale Irrigation Districts, is actively pursuing the re-licensing of its hydro-electric facilities at Lake Tulloch, Beardsley Lake and Donnell's Reservoir. That effort will hopefully conclude by January 1, 2005.

Along with that effort, both irrigation district boards are interviewing potential buyers of its electricity. These buyers have expressed interest in purchasing the power generation from Tri-Dam Projects when it

is available post re-licensing. The Tri-Dam Project Board acted at its September 18th meeting to get on as quickly as possible a power contract/negotiator to begin this process. With him/her or them on board, negotiations can proceed in earnest to solidify a power contract to the benefit of both irrigation districts.



OID Board of Directors

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Water Resources Planning Activities

OID recognizes that development of a water resources plan is critical to the long-term security and protection of its water rights. The Plan will also prove critical in addressing many of the water resource issues to be faced by OID in the coming years. Without a good plan and a foundation upon which to base decisions, it will be difficult to be assured of making the right decisions when we have to. It is for these reasons that the OID Board is pressing to hire a consultant by early 2004 to begin the development of this planning effort. It is estimated that this effort will cost between \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000.

In the meantime, a key component of that plan is water measurement. Earlier this year the OID Board approved the development of a Water Measurement Plan. This Plan will identify the means and extent of water measurement stations within the district to start quantifying the water uses and losses of water in our service area. This will be critical in deciding where economical water conservation efforts will need to be installed to get the most "bang-for-the-buck". OID's 2004 budget will contain about \$250,000 for this effort. The draft of the Water Measurement Plan will become final in the coming weeks.

Included in that Plan is a "first-cut" of OID's water balance and the results are less than im-

pressive on OID's water use efficiency. In round numbers, nearly one-third (1/3) of our water leaves our area in the form of surface water runoff; that being tail water and operational spill water from canals. That water loss currently provides no economic value or return to this community. Outside our community, to those other irrigation districts and Ag folks who pick this water up for free, and use this water at no cost to enhance their bottom line, they love OID's inefficiency. Our loss is their economic gain and that needs to stop.

It is the opinion of the OID Board and management staff that the best and highest return on OID's water needs to be decided by the community from which it comes. Water flowing out in drains and canals, across county roads and uncultivated fields could be, and should be, put to use enhancing the economic engine of OUR area and not that of our neighbors. The Water Resources Plan will identify the best uses for our water and will identify how best to manage that resource to the benefit of our community in the years to come. It will take time to develop, about 18-24 months, but the outcome will be worth the benefit to the Oakdale area.

Election November 4, 2003

Two Director positions were up for election this fall; Division 1 Director Frank B. Clark, appointed to the Board on January 2, 2002 and Division 4 Director Louis F. Brichetto whose term began on December 1, 2001. By the end of the nomination period there were no other candidates filing candidacy forms for these seats. As a result of good fortune, these experienced Board members will be appointed to the positions they currently hold by the Board of Supervisors. Their new terms of office will expire at the end of December 2007.

OID will budget
\$250,000 in 2004 for the
implementation of the
Water Measurement Plan