



# IRRIGATION NEWSLETTER

## Water Supply Conditions Very Dry, but Likely Doable for SSJID in 2021

### District Relying on Modernization Efforts and Efficient Operations to Assure Adequate Water Supplies

The nursery rhyme "Rain, rain, go away..." often comes to mind after an unrelenting wet winter. Unfortunately, the lack of rainfall over the past two years has cause for a more ominous poem:

*"Rain, rain, why do you lack? Please don't let the drought come back!"*

As we enter the 2021 irrigation season, rainfall is measuring only 54% of average this year. This year's bleak water supply comes on the back of a 2020 year that saw only 61% of average rainfall, suggesting that we may be slipping into another multi-year drought period if conditions do not improve. The drought concern caused the SSJID Board in February to consider allocation limits and other conservation measures that helped irrigators stretch available water supplies through persistent drought conditions in 2015. As conditions improved in 2016, allocation limits were no longer needed.

The Board has chosen not to implement drought-conservation actions for 2021. Recent March storms have slightly improved water supplies in the Stanislaus watershed. Updated water supply projections suggest that SSJID should have enough water for our ag and urban customers this year, but just barely. These projections do include some expectation of additional spring rain though, and the Board may consider other measures to stretch water supplies if the spring remains unseasonably dry.

We are asking our customers to consider ways to conserve water by improving the efficiency of their irrigation means and methods, and by working closely with your SSJID division manager to assure prompt irrigation deliveries and changes. Our division managers will be using new modernization/ automation projects, along with daily operational measures, to efficiently run our distribution system and stretch surface water deliveries for all of our customers through the entire irrigation season.

### Spring Pulse Flow Proposed, but Only if Conditions Allow

SSJID and Oakdale Irrigation District (OID) are considering a multi-benefit spring pulse flow/water sale. Similar to years past, this action proposes to augment spring fishery pulse flows for out-migrating salmon in the Stanislaus, if surplus water supplies are available. Once released flows have met fishery needs, the water is purchased and made available to farms and communities in the San Joaquin Valley who are in dire need of supply this year. Revenues from these actions help OID and SSJID to continue modernizing our distribution systems, and support fishery studies and prudent water management in the Stanislaus River.

So, why would SSJID consider something like this when the weather has been so dry? SSJID approved an agreement for the proposed release in February, in order to give adequate lead-time to coordinate with various governmental agencies and comply with California Environmental Quality Act. The Board's approval of the sale was conditional: it may only occur if regulatory agencies approve, and if our customers have an adequate water supply first. March has brought some rain and somewhat favorable cloud cover, but April snow surveys will determine the availability of any surplus supplies for the proposed pulse flow action.

### BILLING REMINDER

All outstanding balances from 2020 must be paid in full to receive irrigation service in 2021. Manage your account online at [www.ssjid.com](http://www.ssjid.com) or call the District office at 249-4600.

## SSJID Irrigation Rates Among Lowest in the Region

We take pride in offering a high quality water supply that is both reliable and inexpensive. Irrigation rates have stayed almost the same for 25 years. This has been possible, despite rising costs, because SSJID is fortunate to have other sources of income that significantly subsidize our irrigation rates.

Operating costs have grown because of inflation, increasing government regulation, and technological improvements to improve the efficiency of water deliveries. Costs of operating the irrigation system have been rising at about 5% each year. There is also a chance certain non-rate revenues that subsidize irrigation rates will decline in coming years.

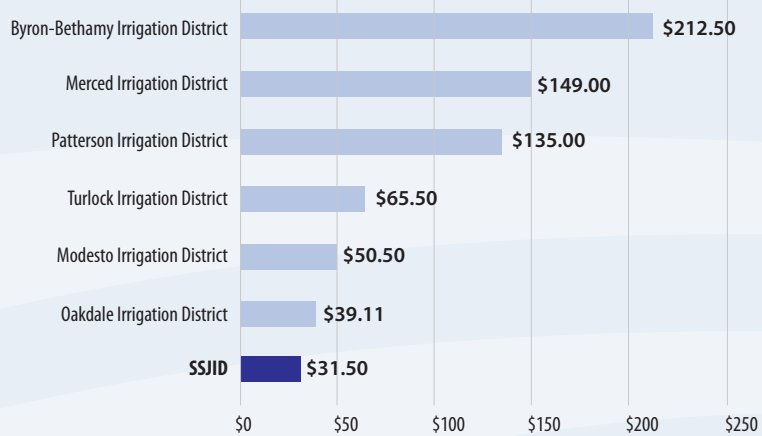
Without proper planning, the annual expenses will eventually surpass income, and SSJID will run out of cash to operate; a reality we cannot ignore. In the coming

months, SSJID will continue to look at ways to slow the growth in operating expenses, how to develop other sources of

non-rate income, and lastly, how much irrigation rates must be increased to cover operating expenses.

### Yearly Cost to Irrigate 1 Acre of Farmland

Assuming 30 inches of District Water Used



## 2020-21 Maintenance Season Review

Last October, our team switched their ball caps for hard hats in the transition from irrigation season to construction and maintenance. Over the last five months, in an effort to better serve our customers, we have relined nearly 4,000 lineal feet of ditches, performed pipeline repairs at 133 locations, installed 10 automated gates, and more. A few highlights of other projects accomplished this year include:

### Stabilized Upper Bank of Joint Supply Canal (JSC)

The rocky hillsides along the JSC, SSJID's main artery in conveying water from the Stanislaus River to the District's service area, were shored up in the most critical areas to minimize the risk of rockslides that could render the canal inoperable and cut-off the District from its water supply. Construction efforts require specialty contractors who scale the hillside with climbing ropes, dislodging large rocks and boulders with little more than crow bars and pneumatic pressure. Once the loose debris is removed, rock bolt anchors and shotcrete are placed to secure the hillside.

### Completed 22 Cut Down Pour-Over Wall Projects

A concept developed by the SSJID engineering team, these projects consist of cutting down the middle pour-over wall (weir) of a control box and installing a slide gate in its place. This allows division managers to adjust the height of the weir as needed to better serve flood and sprinkler customers. A control box maintains the upstream water level in a pipeline. Reducing the weir height reduces pressure inside the pipeline and extends the life of the infrastructure as it will be less prone to stress fractures and leaks.

### Fresh Face for Woodward Dam and Outlet Tower

Cracks that had developed in the face of the dam were filled and the 100+ year old concrete tower and catwalk were resurfaced, reversing damage that time and UV rays had left behind. Every drop of SSJID water delivered to the irrigation system or water treatment facility passes through the Woodward Reservoir outlet tower, which has been in operation since 1916. Future plans for the tower include upgrading components of the three head gates to improve actuation and allow for control from remote locations.



## Permits Required for Easement Encroachments

SSJID delivers water through a system of over 300 miles of ditches, canals and underground pipelines throughout the District. The District's easements for these facilities, whether recorded or unrecorded, require landowners to seek permission from the District before performing work within the easement area or installing improvements that might damage or interfere with the District's facilities or use of its easements. Easements around these facilities allow the District the space it needs to properly operate and maintain the infrastructure.

### SSJID Standard Easements for Pipelines

Width = 30 feet, centered on pipeline

No tree or other deep-rooted crop shall be placed or permitted within 15 feet from the edge of the pipeline and no building, structure, explosive, well, or guy wire shall be placed within the easement area.

**Encroachments made or placed within a District easement without a permit from the District may result in removal at the property owner's expense.**

### We are here to help

To prevent conflicts within District easements, please call before beginning an improvement project or new orchard development:

**Call Dawn Driesen in the Engineering Department at 209-249-4619.** The District will locate and mark District easements located within your property and determine if any permits are required. Structure permits are free and encroachment permits cost \$200 to cover county recording costs.

### Dial 8-1-1 to Call Before You Dig.

California law requires that you call Underground Service Alert – Northern California (USA-North) at least two working days, but no more than fourteen calendar days, prior to commencing excavation. Once you have notified USA-North, all utility owners (including SSJID) are required to locate and mark their facilities within the defined area.



## Meet The Crew

### Your 2021 Irrigation Division Managers

Division 1 209-652-9793	Division 2 209-652-9784	Division 3 209-652-9775
Sean Jefferson	Austin Jackson	Randy Sprinkle
Andrew Betschart	Brandon Scott	Ken Bedsaul
Nathan Walker	Nathan Walker	Clint Carter
Andrew Teicheira	Andrew Teicheira	Colin Sparkman
Andrew Pitcock	Travis Streich	Vince Tomao
Division 4 209-652-7025	Division 5 209-652-3427	Division 6 209-652-2409
Josh Stanley	Jason Wirstlin	Patrick Mays
Joey Costa	Jason Andre	Michael Travao
Clint Carter	Chris Sousa	Chris Sousa
Colin Sparkman	Cody Williams	Cody Williams
Hunter Day		Michael Cole

Visit [www.ssjid.com](http://www.ssjid.com) to view division service area maps.

## TUNE IN

The SSJID Board meets at 9:00 am every second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Meetings are open to the public and are currently held over Zoom. Please visit [www.ssjid.com](http://www.ssjid.com) to join Board meetings, view upcoming agendas, prior meeting minutes and maps of Directors' service areas.

