

**BEYOND IRRIGATION**

THE HEROES OF SSJID

The beginning of this year's irrigation season was an unusual one to be sure, with the start date postponed numerous times due to wet weather. The season officially began April 13, the first time in 25 years that we've seen a mid-April start date! While this year's storms eased drought concerns, they certainly kept our team on its toes. I hope you'll join me in thanking our employees for their commitment to helping our water system "weather" the storms by clearing debris, keeping water flowing through drains, and making repairs to keep the system operating – all while staying on top of regular maintenance and replacement projects. Their resiliency in the face of such a unique challenge deserves recognition.

Water is the foundation of our communities and regional economy. SSJID's role is to provide reliable water to local growers and communities in a responsible and efficient manner. This legislative season, we are watching numerous new bills that could undermine our mission. These bills could affect our senior pre-1914 water rights, rearranging the water rights system and giving more authority to the State Water Resources Control Board. SSJID is actively advocating at the legislative level to protect our rights and will closely monitor these bills over the next two years. Likewise, the California Air Resources Board has approved a new regulation that will change the way our medium and heavy-duty fleet operates. This rule is short-sighted and neglects to recognize the needs of special districts and the service reliability that our customers depend on. Because of this, SSJID has signed on to legislation that will ensure that we are able to operate our fleets with additional flexibility, especially in emergency situations.

Long-term planning and financing are key components of our ability to provide dependable water. Our Water Master Plan was approved by the Board of Directors in December 2022. The plan outlines capital improvements that will keep our system functioning into the future, looking ahead to 30 years of sustainable operations. With the necessary improvements comes cost. The Water Master Plan demonstrated the need to evaluate rates and the District has retained an independent expert to conduct a cost of service study. SSJID is dedicated to providing cost-effective service while still ensuring reliability. Learn more on page 4.

As always, SSJID remains committed to the area's farmers and local communities. Our team's dedication is evident through our day-to-day work and in how we engage with those we serve. I want to commend our employees for their unending devotion, which extends beyond water service and into the community through event participation, volunteerism, education and donations. I am proud to lead such a remarkable crew and am honored that SSJID was voted Favorite Business to Work For as a 2023 Manteca Bulletin Readers' Choice Winner.

In the community or in the field, SSJID is here for you.



Peter Rietkerk
General Manager



PETER TALKS POWERED BY PURPOSE

Hear Peter discuss SSJID's bid for local power on the Local Energy Rules Podcast! Check it out at bit.ly/Peter-Talks.

"Local ownership is going to provide a level of transparency and accountability that will really continue to foster and breed that reliability and that safety within the region."

- Peter Rietkerk





Frank Avila, Irrigation Operations Manager

MAINTENANCE SEASON: IN AN UNUSUALLY WET YEAR

This maintenance season was full, with many upgrades and improvements to ensure reliable service. Despite a heavy rainy season, SSJID was able to conduct its scheduled maintenance this winter and even added an extra 700-foot pipe lining project.

Here are a few of the key items completed:

- ✓ **Supply Canals** – SSJID crews efficiently handled rockslides, storm cleanup and preparations to the Joint Supply Canal. In addition, many locations along the Main Supply Canal required floor and wall repairs, including two wall collapses that were more than 40 feet long.
- ✓ **Pipe Re-lining** – This maintenance season, SSJID piloted a trenchless pipeline rehabilitation program, performed by SSJID crews, that aims to extend the useful life of existing pipeline infrastructure. This year, the District was able to test the new method and troubleshoot equipment, completing about 3,000 feet of pipe. As part of the District's Water Master Plan, the trenchless rehabilitation program has a target of completing around 21,000 feet of pipe per year.
- ✓ **Tbb Line and Ditch Project** – Crews repaired two 1,650-foot lines that leaked. The team modified the ditch to allow for: better control of the water; a steady level on the ditch for sprinklers and head pressure; better water monitoring; and accurate measuring capabilities.
- ✓ **Storm Repair** – The wet season caused extra maintenance needs that our crews completed effectively and efficiently. For the most part, our drains successfully handled the rain we received. The SSJID team ensured that all road crossings were clear of debris, trash was picked up and ditch banks were maintained as needed. Heavier work was required at the Campbell drain in Escalon, where the rain was so heavy crews had to allow time to pass before the drain could handle all the water coming out of the fields. Our crews managed to keep the drain flowing and had almost all the water out and the roads clear by the next morning.





WATER MASTER PLAN:

ROADMAP TO A SECURE WATER FUTURE

Forrest Killingsworth, Engineering Manager

The eagle has landed! For more than five years, District staff worked diligently to develop SSJID's first Water Master Plan (WMP). On December 13, 2022, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to adopt the plan as presented. This effort is likely the most comprehensive capital improvement planning document the District has developed to date. The WMP provides a long-term planning document that ensures day-to-day decisions are aligned with future objectives. ***The plan provides well-defined answers to questions that were previously unknown or unclear, such as:***



- How can SSJID improve water availability and flexibility for customers?
- How much longer will our infrastructure last and are we replacing it fast enough?
- What will agricultural and domestic water demand look like in 15 or more years?
- Are we building resiliency in our water supplies to protect against threats?
- What is the definition of "exceptional service" as stated in our mission statement?
- Is District-wide pressurization a realistic future for SSJID?
- Do we need to increase rates to maintain and improve the District? And by how much?
- How do we schedule capital infrastructure improvements in a manner that is fiscally responsible for the District and its ratepayers?



The WMP development team organized statistics, strategies and recommendations in an attempt to answer these questions. The WMP identifies 30 years of capital improvement and rehabilitation projects that will enhance service to customers, embrace technological advancements, and ensure sustainable operations for several generations. The selected projects were balanced with the District's financial capabilities. Prior to Board adoption, the plan was vetted by a 30-member Grower Advisory Committee specifically formed to support plan development.

The Water Master Plan is available on the District's website at ssjid.com/water-master-plan.

A Dose of Reality

The WMP is a valuable guide that balances the need for substantial infrastructure investment with consideration of reasonable irrigation rate increases in the future. While nearly every imaginable detail has been taken into consideration, the WMP is simply a recommendation at a particular moment in time. The District will be faced with many uncertainties and challenges in the future that will require SSJID to adapt at regular intervals. Perhaps the most beneficial outcome of the WMP is not the 30-year project list or the financial projections, but rather the knowledge and tools acquired throughout the development process. The District is now armed with the ability to forecast future trends and identify solutions and strategies that align with our mission, putting us in a powerful position for success.



RATE STUDY:

BALANCING RELIABILITY AND COST OF SERVICE

SSJID is committed to providing an affordable, dependable water supply and outstanding service to our irrigation customers, while maintaining fiscal responsibility. SSJID's irrigation customers have benefited from expanding services that produce revenue, such as hydropower generation through the Tri-Dam Partnership and allocations of local property tax revenues. As a result of these efforts, ***SSJID's irrigation rates have not increased since 2000.***

Current irrigation service costs exceed irrigation rate revenue. As part of the Water Master Plan (WMP) process (see WMP update on page 3), it became evident that continuing to provide irrigation service at a loss and supplementing irrigation rate revenues with other District revenues at such a high level is unsustainable. Through the WMP process, the District concluded that irrigation rate increases would be necessary to:



Afford ongoing operations and maintenance



Conduct timely infrastructure repair, rehabilitation, and replacement



Accelerate an aggressive capital improvement program



Maintain financial stability



If SSJID does not implement the identified WMP capital improvement program, it would lead to a declining level of service for certain District customers and leave the District no choice but to run parts of the irrigation system to failure.

In response to the WMP, SSJID initiated the process of evaluating an increase in irrigation rates in accordance with the California Constitution (Proposition 218). The District hired an independent consultant to review rates and the cost of service.

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rates have not
increased since
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Irrigation customers will receive a notice in the mail, which will provide information on the proposed rate increases and details on how to provide comments or submit a written protest. SSJID will host irrigation customer meetings and the SSJID Board of Directors will conduct a public hearing prior to approving any rate increases. Dates for the customer meetings and public hearing will be set soon.

SSJID values our customers' feedback, and we encourage participation and engagement during this process. Our goal is to maintain financial strength so SSJID can continue to provide exceptional services for the next 100 years and beyond. Additional information will be available soon at ssjid.com/rates.

Please reach out to the SSJID office at (209) 249-4600 with any questions.





NATURE'S SURPRISE:

UNEXPECTED RELIEF FROM DROUGHT

Brandon Nakagawa, Water Resources Coordinator

When Mother Nature changes her mind, watch out! After three consecutive drought years and a nearly depleted New Melones Reservoir, a fourth dry year seemed imminent. How fortunes can change at a moment's notice... As we rang in the new year, we were reminded that the end of a drought often starts with a flood. With near-record rainfall this winter, SSJID crews were tasked with keeping canals and drains free of debris and our team worked around the clock to keep flooding at bay.

SSJID's water supply outlook for 2023 is rather rosy, with a projected full supply of 300,000 acre-feet. It's important to remember that a full water supply is only as good as the irrigation

system that conveys and delivers the water to customers. SSJID's conveyance system is robust and durable and has stood the test of time, but not without repair and rehabilitation. Significant storm events like those of January 2023 often cause substantial damage to SSJID's canals and drains. Our talented and dedicated SSJID crews stepped up to the challenge of making necessary repairs to the system and we are ready to provide exceptional irrigation service through the 2023 season.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

In December, the SSJID Board of Directors recognized the long-time commitment and outstanding service of former President Bob Holmes, who served on the Board for 12 years. The Board also welcomed elected member David Roos, a third-generation local farmer representing Division 1.

In January 2023, the Board conducted its annual officer elections, naming Director Mike Weststeyn as President and Director Glenn Spyksma as Vice President.

Learn more about the Board at ssjid.com/about-us/board-of-directors.



Elected Director David Roos



Former President Bob Holmes and current President Mike Weststeyn

THANK YOU, READERS!

SSJID was honored to be voted Favorite Business to Work For as a 2023 Manteca Bulletin Readers' Choice Winner! The District is proud to have a remarkable crew and appreciates your confidence in our dedication to the communities we serve.





WATER = FOOD = LIFE ART CONTEST

Nearly 100 local students submitted their artwork to SSJID's "Water = Food = Life" art contest earlier this year. **Second grader Vivienne Vega of Colony Oak Elementary in Ripon was named the grand prize winner**, improving from a third place in her category last year. *Vega's winning masterpiece will be featured on SSJID's irrigation trucks for the 2023 season.*

See the winning artwork, browse all the submissions and learn more about the contest at ssjid.com/education/vehicle-wrap-art-contest.



#SSJIDCARES!

From hosting tours for high school agricultural teachers to participating in local AgVenture programs for third graders, SSJID is active in our community. We are volunteering where it matters most and engaging with community members at key events like Ripon's Main Street Day, Escalon's Farmer's Market, and Manteca's Pumpkin Fair. Look for us to make more appearances in local events and holiday parades!



Agriculture teacher tour to learn more about fishery science on the Stanislaus River and SSJID's pressurized irrigation



AgVenture in Manteca teaches kids about water resources, conservation and the value of water in agriculture



Manteca Pumpkin Fair, one of many local community events SSJID is proud to support