

March 15, 2019



# South San Joaquin Irrigation District Spring 2019 Irrigation Newsletter

## 2019 Water Season kicks off on March 20th after Robust Winter

### Rain and Snowfall Conditions **SSJID Renews Out-Of-District Water Service Program**

Rainfall averages in California are usually statistical, and rarely are they experienced, which means that we are actually in a “feast or famine” mode when it comes to our statewide water supply. And yet, this year could be a true average year. It’s a stretch to imagine that all of the precipitation we have experienced would amount to anything less than average, but we are now at nearly average for rainfall totals for an entire water year.

For example, San Joaquin County receives about 14 inches of rain annually. As of March 14, the Stockton airport gauge measured 14 inches, meaning that if the weather turned dry from here on out, we will have actually experienced an average water year. Similar phenomena exists for the San Joaquin River 5-station index, measuring 39.6 inches to-date with a 40.2 inch annual average rainfall depth. Then again, it could keep raining and put us well above average.

For snowpack however, we are clearly above average this year. Snowpack historically in California reaches its peak around April 1 and currently, we are over 150% of the April 1 date in the Central Sierras, meaning that much of river hydrology this year will be driven by snow, not by rainfall.

Overall, we are expected to receive approximately 1,625,000 acre-feet of natural flow (141 percent of average) in the Stanislaus, with both SSJID and Oakdale Irrigation District receiving full water supplies for the 2019 irrigation season.

Given the high inflow, and above average storage in New Melones, the Districts have urged Reclamation to vigilantly plan for Stanislaus River operations. Carefully managing the necessary high-flow releases will be critical to prevent uncontrolled New Melones releases, protect property, and enhance spawning salmon in the fall.

A program to provide temporary irrigation service to land outside of SSJID boundaries is available for 2019. The program is designed to promote beneficial use of surface water and improve groundwater sustainability within the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin. Making surface water deliveries to neighboring areas improves sustainable groundwater management and offsets groundwater consumption.

Due to changes in land use patterns, ongoing conservation measures, facility improvements and other measures, the Board determined that it will have surplus water available this season.

Water deliveries under this program occur in a “retail” capacity, through direct connection to the existing SSJID agricultural distribution system, drainage system, or through existing waterways and drainages that flow through the District’s boundaries.

Customers who own property located outside the District boundaries and within the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin are eligible. Tenants, leaseholders or operators of such property can also take advantage of the program by obtaining all landowner approvals. Participation in the program is subject to certain terms and conditions outlined in the program.

A non-refundable deposit of \$200 is required and customers of the program will pay \$80 per acre-foot of water. Prior to delivery of the water under the agreement, customers need to provide an estimate of total water to be used and make payment for 50% of the total estimated volumetric water charges owed in addition to the non-refundable application fee. Refunds for undelivered water will be issued in October.

Applications and full details regarding terms and conditions can be obtained by contacting Dawn Driesen in our Engineering Department at (209) 249-4619 or dawn@ssjid.com.

### Groundwater Sustainability Plan to Take Shape in 2019

SSJID continues its partnership with the cities of Escalon and Ripon in the South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) to meet requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Together, the entities are working with 16 other groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) within the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin to develop and submit a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) before January 1, 2020.

The 17 GSAs, organized under the umbrella of the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority, are working with consultants Woodard and Curran to develop a GSP that does the following:

- describes the condition of our regional groundwater subbasin
- determines minimum thresholds and monitoring plans to prevent undesirable impacts to groundwater supply and quality
- proposes management actions and projects to bring the subbasin into sustainability over a 20-year period.

The Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin is considered critically overdrafted by DWR, and as a result, local GSAs are required to submit the plan two years earlier than other less critical subbasins.

SSJID directors and staff, in conjunction with council members and staff from the cities, continue to work collaboratively with the rest of the basin to develop a sustainability plan that protects both ag and urban groundwater interests. There is still much to do in order for the subbasin stakeholders to reach the 2020 deadline, and SSJID, and our partners in Escalon and Ripon, will continue to be engaged in this process.

## Design Phase to Begin on Planned Canyon Tunnel

In an effort to increase reliability of water delivery into the next century, SSJID is exploring the possibility of constructing a bypass tunnel for its Joint Supply Canal (JSC). The JSC conveys water from the Goodwin Dam diversion on the Stanislaus River to both OID and SSJID, with SSJID using approximately 72 percent of the canal capacity. On January 15, 2019 the South San Joaquin Irrigation District's Board of Directors approved a contract with Condor Earth to initiate the feasibility study and 30-percent design for the approximately 13,000 foot long tunnel.

Previously, Condor Earth studied potential risks and work that SSJID should perform to ensure the long-term reliability of the JSC facilities. The Canyon Tunnel proposal was developed based on a recommendation from Condor Earth following an update to the Phase 2 Improvement Evaluation Study (Hazard Study) completed in the fall of 2017. The study identified potential hazards and difficult conditions that threaten the reliability and safety of those facilities. The Hazard Study recommended significant repair, maintenance, and stabilization activities, which resulted in significant costs to mitigate for those hazards. Those costs could be avoided through construction of a tunnel bypassing all of those hazard areas. The Canyon Tunnel would provide a long-term, low-maintenance solution that

would significantly enhance reliability and safety over the next century.

The new tunnel would be located immediately downstream of Goodwin Dam and would extend approximately 13,000 feet downstream to a point where the JSC departs from the Stanislaus River canyon.

Condor Earth's 30-percent design for the bypass tunnel will include the following at a cost of \$702,740:

- Evaluate preliminary tunnel construction costs and feasibility
- Obtain site and subsurface data for this preliminary 30% design phase (via boring)—to also be used in later design phases
- Evaluate a scope of services for the 60% design phase—this design phase will include additional boring, updated plans, initiation



2013 Landslide on Joint Supply Canal

of land/easement acquisition, environmental permitting, and scoping for a 90% design.

Condor has indicated that a ballpark cost estimate to construct the contemplated Canyon Tunnel could fall in the \$25 to \$30 million range. It is expected that the tunnel could take seven to 10 years to complete, with five to seven years of planning, and two to three years of construction.

## District Continues Efforts to Become Your Electric Utility

South San Joaquin Irrigation District has been making the argument for quite a while now that SSJID would be a much more suitable provider of electric utility service to our farms, homes, schools and businesses in Manteca, Escalon, Ripon and surrounding rural areas. And PG&E keeps proving our case.

The for-profit utility giant just filed for bankruptcy again – its second since 2001 – and has been found responsible for a number of preventable disasters and safety violations. From a natural gas pipe explosion in San Bruno in 2010 that killed eight, to 18 wildfires in 2017, and potentially 2018's Camp Fire in Paradise that killed 80, PG&E has proven repeatedly it is simply too big to succeed. Its inability to improve its safety practices and culture – despite repeated accidents, penalties, and orders to do so – shows a failing not only of the utility, but in California's regulatory structures and systems overseeing PG&E.

In fact, throughout PG&E's repeated safety violations, financial challenges and errors, one thing that has remained constant is PG&E's generous donations to political candidates and officeholders, and the more than \$10 million it spent on lobbying efforts in 2018 alone. All while raising electric rates by 42% since 2008.

We believe that PG&E is not the best utility to serve our communities. That's why SSJID has been working for years to become the electric provider for our communities, and why we'll continue pursuing that goal.

### New Opportunities

For nearly fifteen years, we've been working with local governments, regulatory agencies, and the court system and have received overwhelming public support for our retail electric plan. We proved to the San Joaquin County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) that we could provide electric service to our cities at rates 15% lower than PG&E's, provide

local control and responsive customer service. We sought and received county approval but PG&E sued and that avenue remains tied up in court.

However, PG&E's ongoing failures have opened up new avenues, and we are exploring both of them. The first is an investigation by the state Public Utilities Commission about how PG&E's corporate structure and culture affect safety. The PUC is collecting evidence and public comments, and SSJID submitted our own documenting how smaller, publicly-owned utilities provide better service and safety than the profit-focused gargantuan that is PG&E. Where municipalities and agencies like SSJID are ready, willing and able to provide superior utility service to their residents, the PUC should order PG&E to relinquish those territories to the local public agencies.

The other avenue we are examining is bankruptcy court. PG&E no doubt will propose a restructuring plan that minimizes its financial responsibilities and obligations, while attempting to preserve its structure and protect its profits. What the court orders, however, may be something different, and we will monitor those developments closely to see if that something different might include a change of utility provider in South San Joaquin County.

### The Bottom Line

The bottom line in all of this hasn't changed in the years we've been working on the issue: SSJID can provide retail electric service in our region that is cheaper, safer and more accountable to our customers than PG&E. As long as that's true, we're committed to pursuing every opportunity to make it happen and keeping you informed of our progress. We thank you for your continued support on this vital project for our communities.

## SSJID, OID Join Lawsuit Filed Against State over Plans to Increase River Flows

On January 10, 2019 the Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts joined with other members of the San Joaquin Tributaries Authority (SJTA) in a lawsuit challenging the state's right to arbitrarily increase flows in the Stanislaus and two other rivers. The injunction request was filed in Tuolumne County Superior Court against the State Water Resources Control Board over its proposed Bay-Delta Phase I unimpaired flow proposal, adopted December 12, 2018. The plaintiffs are OID, SSJID, the Turlock Irrigation District, and the City and County of San Francisco.

The lawsuit contends that the water board's plan to require 40 percent in unimpaired flows, with a range of 30 percent to 50 percent between February and June, "directly and irreparably" harms the SJTA members. The plan "will cause substantial losses to the surface water supply relied upon by the SJTA member agencies for agricultural production, municipal supply, recreational use, and hydropower generation, among other things. Implementation will also cause direct impacts to groundwater resources relied upon by the SJTA member agencies." These impacts will devastate local water supplies for ag and urban communities and severely impact the regional economy.

"We file suit not because we prefer conflict over collaboration. On the contrary, we continue to encourage and invite settlement discussions on our rivers, and support science on the Stanislaus. But we also have an indisputable responsibility to reserve our legal rights and protect our ag and urban customers," said Peter Rietkerk, General Manager of SSJID.

Continued on page 3

## Division Realignment Brings Efficiency to Water Delivery

Beginning in the fall of 2018, SSJID formed a new employee committee called the District Innovation & Research Team (DIRT). As a cross-disciplinary team of SSJID employees, DIRT's purpose is to utilize our workforce knowledge, diversity, and expertise to improve customer service, explore new methods of efficiency in operations and optimize how we deliver irrigation water to our customers.

The first project tackled by the team was a realignment of District service divisions. The team's goals included:

- Provide better customer service
- Balance division workloads across all divisions within the District
- Provide adequate time to patrol and maintain facilities within each division.

Review of irrigation event data and telephone

data proved that the divisions were unequally weighted, impacting the District's ability to provide a high level of customer service. The heaviest to lightest workloads were Division 1, 5, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

The committee was tasked with developing alternatives for division realignment. Current division managers and ditch tenders also reviewed and provided input on the proposed alternatives. Ultimately, after some iteration, a final alternative was chosen that includes the Control Room staff to maintain current customers on the Main Distribution Canal only.

In addition to the team's initial goals, other benefits will hopefully be realized:

- Improved customer service by allowing division managers more time to spend with each customer on the phone and in person

- More efficient, safe, and balanced operations due to reduced travel time from one side of a division to another
- More efficient training for new personnel.

The board approved the proposed division realignment on January 15, 2019. Before the 2019 Irrigation Season, customers were notified of the changes and SSJID staff initiated training of division managers with the newly assigned laterals to assure a seamless transition for the coming year. District documents and databases, including new GIS mapping, phone directory, Tru-Point (billing), and the District's webpage were also updated.

Please refer to our website or contact Julie Vrieling at (209) 249-4675 or [jvrieling@ssjid.com](mailto:jvrieling@ssjid.com) for more information on the realignment effort.

### Lawsuit Filed Against State over Plans to Increase River Flows, Continued

The lawsuit claims that "the board's own analysis estimates the project will impact more than 1 million acres of agricultural land in the San Joaquin Valley, the majority of which, 65 percent is designated as 'prime' or 'unique farmland,' or 'farmland of statewide importance.'" All this loss of productive agriculture to gain 1,103 more salmon a year— per the state's own analysis— doesn't make sense.

Among other claims, the lawsuit alleges the water board adopted a wholly different plan than it analyzed, violated state and federal due process laws, and unlawfully segmented the environmental review of the plan by initially requiring higher flows from only three of the lower San Joaquin River tributaries, excluding the upper San Joaquin River and the larger Sacramento River and its tributaries, which provides the majority of the water to the Delta.

The suit also argues that the water board does not sufficiently describe the legal authority to implement the plan on senior water right holders and on local and federally-funded reservoirs. The lawsuit is the unfortunate culmination of an effort begun five years ago by state agencies in concert with the SJTA at developing voluntary settlement agreements to avoid the draconian flow demands being proposed by the water board in their Phase I document. As a result of a hard deadline set by the water board and a change in state government due to elections, that effort ended in a majority of the basin agencies not able to finish their negotiations, despite being extremely close.

SSJID and OID have not yet been invited back to the settlement table by Governor Newsom's administration, but we stand ready to return to the table if that door is opened. The lawsuit, however, is a necessary action to preserve the SJTA's legal rights in court should that not occur.

*In Memory of*  
**"Sheriff" Joe Lourenco**  
 August 5, 1959—February 11, 2019  
 SSJID Division Manager  
 Forever in our Hearts...



## 2019 Water Department Contact Information

<b>Division 1</b>	Sean Jefferson Patrick Mays	652-9793	<b>Division 6</b>	Michael Donahue Mark Schneringer	652-2409
<b>Division 2</b>	Andrew McDonald Bob Anderson	652-9784	<b>Division 4-6 Relief</b>	Jeff Hammond Connor Stevens	
<b>Division 1-2 Relief</b>	Nathan Walker Andrew Teicheira		<b>Rover #1</b>	Anthony Podesto	
			<b>Rover #2</b>	Eddie DeFreitas	
<b>Division 3</b>	Randy Sprinkle Awaiting assignment	652-9775	<b>Irrigation Operations Manager</b>	Frank Avila	652-5480
<b>Division 4</b>	Josh Stanley/Collin Hodge Rob Shipman	652-7025	<b>Irrigation Services Supervisor</b>	Joe Hasten	652-9888
<b>Division 3-4 Relief</b>	Trenton Fereria Ken Bedsaul		<b>Field Maintenance Supervisor</b>	John Briggs	652-2857
<b>Division 5</b>	Jason Wirstlin Awaiting assignment	652-3427	<b>24 Hour Emergency # (209)249-4632</b>		



Providing Reliable, Affordable Water 1909-2019

South San Joaquin Irrigation District  
11011 E. Highway 120  
Manteca, CA 95336

### SSJID Leadership

Key staff and elected officials include:

President **Dave Kamper**

Vice President **Robert Holmes**

Director **Dale Kuil**

Director **John Holbrook**

Director **Ralph Roos**

General Manager:

**Peter Rietkerk**

Assistant General Manager:

**Bere Lindley**

General Counsel:

**Mia Brown**

The SSJID Board meets at 9:00 AM every second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Meetings are open to the public and are held at the SSJID Headquarters located at 11011 East Highway 120 in Manteca. If you would like more information, please visit our website at [www.ssjid.com](http://www.ssjid.com), where you can view upcoming agendas, approved Board minutes, and a map of District divisions.

## Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results Will Help Guide District's Efforts Toward Excellence

As a key feature of SSJID's Strategic Plan and our continued commitment to provide customer service excellence for our growers, last October we conducted our first Customer Service Satisfaction Survey.

Utilizing a mailer with a postage paid return section, the goal was to learn directly from our customers how satisfied you are with various aspects of our service and utilize that information for feedback and coaching opportunities with staff. The survey was anonymous and it was optional for the customer to provide us with their name/ phone number. We also asked if there were any services not currently offered that customers would like SSJID to provide and included space for additional comments.

Nearly 92 percent of the returned survey responses indicated very positive satisfaction with SSJID's customer service. There were a small number of concerns, and some helpful suggestions for improvements—mostly related to the water delivery aspects of SSJID service. We summarized the results and began working with managers and supervisors to address specific concerns and determine actions to improve customer service.

Acting on the survey results and suggestions, managers in customer service areas were immediately informed of customer concerns

or suggestions, although there were only a few. In cases where specific information such as location or contact information was provided, irrigation operations management reviewed the issue, contacted customers, and took actions to address the concerns when possible.

The District will continue measuring customer service satisfaction and will utilize your feed-

back to encourage excellent service for our customers. In several months, we will be providing a link to a survey on our website ([ssjid.com](http://ssjid.com)) and will notify you as soon as this feature is available. We hope that you will take this opportunity to let us know what we are doing well, how we can improve, and to give us your ideas that will help further enhance District services.

