



Winter 2004-05

The mission of KRCRD is to provide flood protection, achieve a balanced and high quality water supply, and develop power resources on the Kings River for the public good.

Kings River Conservation District has established a speaker's service to discuss the innovative energy solutions that KRCRD Power has been pursuing to address the critical issue of reliability of electrical service for the central San Joaquin Valley.

This half hour program, in PowerPoint and DVD format, highlights KRCRD's activities to increase energy reliability as well as Community Choice.

There is no charge for the program and we would be happy to schedule a presentation. If interested, please phone Cristel Tufenkjian at 559-237-5567, ext. 118 or request via email to [ctufenkjian@krcd.org](mailto:ctufenkjian@krcd.org).

# KRCRD News

## Community Choice Power Moving Ahead

California's Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has adopted first phase rules for establishment of a Community Choice Aggregation power program that may propel KRCRD and several central San Joaquin Valley cities toward pursuit of such an energy program.

"The decision that came out was as good as we could have expected," said David Orth, KRCRD General Manager. "It is very favorable to those investigating Community Choice."

KRCRD Power is working with leaders of 14 cities and two counties on Community Choice. A memorandum of understanding to further advance the study process has been drafted and is being considered by the various local governments.

California law permits cities and counties to apply to purchase electricity from a supplier other

than the area's electrical utility and then make that power available to local customers. The investor-owned utility would continue to own, operate and maintain the distribution system and handle all billing.

KRCRD Power's goal is to add reliability and affordability to the region's electrical energy resources. To do so, KRCRD has proposed to be the supplier of electricity to cities and counties that decide to adopt Community Choice. KRCRD has development of a base-load, gas-fired power plant under study.

Another round of meetings is taking place with city councils as cities and KRCRD Power report excellent progress. Already four city councils, Dinuba, Kerman, Kingsburg and Fresno have agreed to act on the final MOU after other cities and counties have considered the agreement.

## A Golden Milestone For Pine Flat Dam

It is a modern landmark that spans a canyon and protects and provides water for a great and thirsty valley.

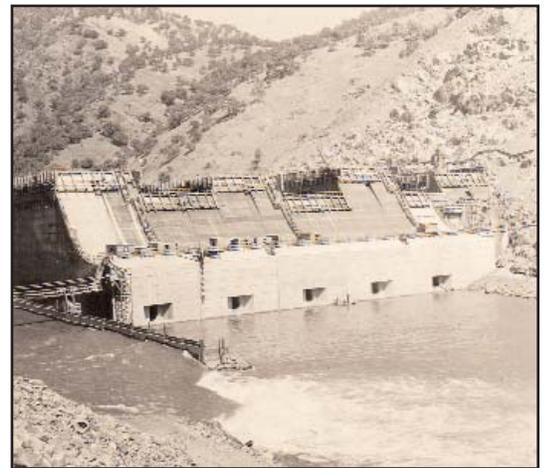
For 50 years, Pine Flat Dam has been quietly and efficiently doing its multiple jobs of controlling floods, and storing and conserving water for more effective irrigation deliveries. As extra benefits, the one million acre-feet of storage within Pine Flat Reservoir and summertime downstream releases for irrigation have created opportunities for recreation and environment enhancement, along with important hydroelectric power generation.

Pine Flat Dam today is taken so much for granted that its golden anniversary has slipped by nearly unnoticed.

The dam became fully operational in 1954, making reality out of a 70-year dream that included many disputes that were more like a nightmare.

California's earliest state engineers took note of the Kings River's water storage opportunities in the 1850s. The first serious survey did not occur until water engineer J.B. Lippincott mapped a dam and reservoir of 185,000 acre-feet as part of what he envisioned as a larger hydroelectric power project.

Power development would come much later but the storage concept began to generate interest.



*This picture, taken in May 1951, shows the Kings River being diverted (left) during the construction of the dam's bottom sluice gates. Two months later, the river would flow through those gates as construction continued.*

Kings River area farmers and other residents by then were well familiar with dealing with the river's fickle nature. The Kings made radical swings in flow (and supply) from season to season and year to year. In dry years and dry times of the year, little or no water was available. Then there were the floods, often extensive and frequently damaging.

Unfortunately, since the early 1880s, there had also been nearly constant uproar - complete

*continued on back*

## Watershed Snowpack Is Given Huge Lift

It has indeed been a Happy New Year for Kings River water users.

One big early winter storm after another struck before and after the New Year's holiday.

"These storms have left the watershed's snowpack at nearly twice what it would typically be in mid-January," said Kings River Watermaster Steve Haugen.

Automated snow sensing devices at seven remote Kings River watershed locations showed that as January 12 (as the current series of storms was ending) show average snowpack water content at 90 percent of what it should be when snow conditions peak on April 1. Two high Sierra sites, West Woodchuck and Upper Burnt Corral, have reached the average seasonal peak for water content.

In a "normal" year, half of the snowpack should have accumulated by mid-January.

Some sites gained up to 20 inches of snow water content during the storms, putting the current water year in a position to snap a string of six below average years in a row if late winter and spring storm activity is at least normal.

Haugen, who manages the Kings River Water Association, said the season's first Kings River snow surveys will be taken February 1 with the initial state runoff forecast due soon later.

## Howe Re-elected As KRCD Board Chair

Ceil W. Howe Jr. of Stratford will continue to preside over the Kings River Conservation District Board of Directors.

Howe, who represents KRCD's Division 6 in the Tulare Lake area, was re-elected President during the board's December 14 meeting.

Also re-elected was the board Vice President, Mark C. McKean of Riverdale. McKean represents Division 4, the North Fork area.



### General Manager's Report David Orth

## Why ERAF Is A Big Deal For KRCD

Chances are that "ERAF" means nothing to you. It should.

What may appear to be a meaningless lettering series is essentially a four-letter word for State Capitol robbery. The victims are you, me and tens of millions of our fellow Californians who have been bilked by state leaders out of tens of billions of dollars in local property taxes that were to have supported local and regional services.

Thus, ERAF is far more significant than simply being another among countless government acronyms. It stands for "educational revenue augmentation fund." This spelled-out version of ERAF has a deceptively noble ring to it.

Unfortunately for hundreds of California counties, cities, redevelopment agencies and special districts, the funds meant to "augment" educational revenues under ERAF have been lifted right out of local coffers. Now, under the latest ERAF twist, our own Kings River Conservation District faces a significant tax revenue hit.

This all started in 1992 when state leaders found themselves facing a large deficit position. State budget drafters realized their hands had been tied by passage of Proposition 98, which shifted allocation of local property tax revenues from local government to education. Thus, ERAF was born. County auditors were instructed by the state to deposit specified amounts of property taxes collected for counties, cities and special districts into the ERAFs to support schools. Modest amounts of funding were returned by Sacramento under a half-cent sales tax enacted under Proposition 172 to help pay for some public safety and justice services but most local government revenue streams were battered hard.

The shift escalated when California's economy took a nosedive in 2000-01. The state siphoned off more local funds. KRCD, a multi-county agency, escaped being hit until last summer.

The details are complex but what emerged were the greatest-yet forced contributions of local revenues into ERAF, more than \$6 billion annually for the next two years - and this time KRCD was included.

Under this budget year's property tax shift "deal" that led to passage of Proposition 1A (which is supposed to put the brakes on such state deviousness in the future), KRCD expects its annual ERAF share will be about \$264,000 out of the District's total property tax revenues of \$500,000.

The state is making its claim by categorizing KRCD as an "enterprise district" that must cough up 40 percent of its property taxes. Enterprise districts generally are involved in utility-type services. Our property tax allocation is used strictly for KRCD's non-enterprise activities, such as flood protection and maintenance along 170 river miles, as well as water resources and groundwater management. We have asked the State Controller to re-evaluate this issue in hopes of saving about \$150,000 in each of the next two years.

If the bigger tax-shift hit stands, KRCD will have no way to recoup the lost funds. KRCD's only other source of operating revenue is the Jeff L. Taylor Pine Flat Power Plant. Its ability to generate electricity depends solely upon each year's water supply. Power revenues have been down because of six straight dry years. Fortunately, the KRCD Board has developed financial reserves, which should help in dealing with this hopefully short-term issue.

Revenues that seem destined to go to ERAF are essential to the District's continued ability to provide needed services to constituents within its primarily rural service area. KRCD has done its job, efficiently and economically. Yet our District and other local agencies must pay a steep price to bail out the state's financial mess. It simply isn't right.

# Veteran KRCD Engineer Sinor Retires

Jack Sinor, who was a manager on every major Kings River Conservation District construction project and design effort for well over two decades, has retired.

Most recently, Sinor had served as KRCD's Assistant General Manager-Chief Engineer as well as Project Manager for the District's peaking power generation plant now under construction in Malaga.

"We are losing 23 years of experience with Jack's retirement," said David Orth, KRCD General Manager.

Sinor said, "There is no other agency I can think of that provides such a unique opportunity for someone as KRCD. I don't believe there is another agency that could put forth a vision and make it happen."

Sinor was raised in the shadow of a major water project. "I grew up in Friant just below

the dam and lived on the San Joaquin River," he said.

A graduate of Sierra High School, Sinor attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, as well as Fresno State College. At age 18, he began his career as an engineer student trainee with the California Department of Water Resources and later served the DWR in a variety of assignments and positions.

After serving in the Army (including Vietnam), Sinor worked in private industry and for two years operated his own business before joining KRCD in April 1982. A year later, he became a registered civil engineer.

Sinor worked on the Dinkey Creek and Rodgers Crossing project design and planning



*Jack Sinor stands next to the turbine bypass during its dedication ceremony in April 2003. One of the projects constructed during his time at KRCD.*

efforts before becoming Chief of Construction on KRCD's Pine Flat Power Plant. He became Assistant Manager in 1984 and Chief Engineer in 1992.

## Stay In Touch With Us At [www.krccd.org](http://www.krccd.org)

It is easier than ever to learn about the Kings River Conservation District and follow its many interesting and exciting activities.

You'll find the District's attractive website just a few clicks away at [www.krccd.org](http://www.krccd.org). Once there, you will navigate easily through information about Kings River water, KRCD power, the river's environment and KRCD's background.

There are also current and back copies of KRCD's newsletters, news releases, and board agendas and minutes.

Also available is information on Community Choice, the ag discharge waiver issue (including the ag discharge coalition application form) and KRCD's popular AgLine crop water use service. KRCD's latest regional groundwater conditions report is available in its entirety.

## State Grant Prepared For Groundwater Studies

Kings River Conservation District directors have authorized an application and agreement with the California Department of Water Resources for a grant that would lead to additional groundwater studies.

The grant, under AB 303, could potentially improve overall groundwater conditions

in an area along the Kings River's North Fork-Fresno Slough-James Bypass system, in western Fresno and Kings counties.

KRCD is seeking the grant on behalf of the North Fork Conjunctive Management Group, which also includes various irrigation districts and water companies.

Planning efforts also continue on the McMullin Recharge Project in western Fresno County with the possibility an extension in grant funding may be sought to build a test percolation pond. A feasibility report is nearing completion.

## Cloud Seeding Contract Renewed

Weather modification activities over the Kings River watershed are continuing to be provided by Atmospherics Inc. of Fresno under a 3-year contract renewal.

Kings River Conservation District directors approved the agreement with atmospherics President Tom Henderson in October. This winter's program is now fully operational.

Commonly known as cloud seeding, weather modification is undertaken to increase precipitation over the Sierra Nevada that

in turn increases the amount of water available for power generation and beneficial uses such as irrigation.

The Kings River program is one of the world's original weather modification programs.

KRCD, the Kings River Water Association, Pacific Gas and Electric Company and the California Department of Water Resources share program costs.

## Pine Flat Dam, *continued*

with costly litigation and damaging court decisions - over water rights, clouding the region with uncertainty.

Concerns over these factors began coming together in the pre-World War I era. Pioneer trappings were being left behind. There was a sense that a stable water supply should be part of the future.

An outburst of support for a Pine Flat Dam began in 1914. A dam was viewed as essential for the region's progress, to harness floods, conserve high flows for later irrigation use and generate power. Studies were made. Kings River water agencies joined to secure the reservoir site.

There was also recognition that the water fights had to be resolved if financing with which to build the project were ever to be obtained. That effort, ultimately successful, required well over a decade and included establishment of several irrigation districts that continue to serve today. In 1927, the Kings River Water Association was formed and the river's original water schedule and operating rules were adopted.

Even that landmark accomplishment was not enough to get the Pine Flat Project financed and developed. By 1927, the region's agricultural economy was in the throes of collapse. Two years later came the start of the Great Depression.

The KRWA looked to the federal government to take the lead. Two would-be Pine Flat builders emerged. These were the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which wanted to integrate Pine Flat storage with its Central Valley Project, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps saw Pine Flat as primarily a flood control project with storage and conservation benefits for his-



*This picture, taken on December 19, 1950, shows the receding flood waters of the Kings River above Piedra Bridge. The flow was approximately 30,000 cubic feet per second. At the peak of the flood, the flow was 91,000 cfs. At that time, the cars in the right of the picture would have been under six feet of water. In comparison, a more recent flood incident in 1997 saw a peak flow of over 50,000 cfs into the dam, which captured the entire flood event preventing any damage to property downstream.*

toric water users. KRWA, wanting nothing to do with the Bureau or the CVP, backed the Corps.

The two agencies and their backers battled for six years before Congress authorized Pine Flat (and 279 other projects) to be built by the Corps under the Flood Control Act of 1944.

Ground was broken in 1947 at the site above Piedra by Governor Earl Warren. Limited storage began in 1953. By 1954, the imposing concrete gravity barrier, standing 429 feet tall, was completed.

There were many other major issues to be overcome, such as the Bureau of Reclamation's lengthy later effort to impose Reclamation law on the Kings River (turned back by Congress in 1982). There was also KRWA's long struggle with the Bureau over negotiating contracts for storage, repayment and operation and maintenance charges (a task assigned by President Truman to the Reclamation agency) that led, in 1951, to creation of an entirely new pub-

lic agency, the Kings River Conservation District. Still later came modern environmental objections and questions.

Pine Flat's benefits were quickly seen. Less than 18 months after its completion, the new dam late in 1955 tamed what would have been at the time the greatest Kings River flood ever measured. Many other floods have been prevented.

Of equal importance was Pine Flat's tremendous conservation benefit. It permits winter and spring flows (and floodwaters) to be stored for release to irrigate the thirsty valley's crops during the hot summer months.

Cold water deliveries during the summer created an all-year cold water fishery below the dam where trout had naturally resided only seasonally. The river and reservoir became popular outdoor recreation attractions.

Now, a half century later, Pine Flat Dam continues to serve ever greater numbers of valley residents. It has done its duty well.

### KRCD News

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*Prepared by the Public Information Staff of KRCD*

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