

Spring 2005

The mission of KRCDD 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 KRCDD 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 KRCDD'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@krcdd.org.

KRCDD News

Peaking Power Plant Nearing Completion

Electrical energy resources within the central San Joaquin Valley are about to get a big boost on days and at times when they need it the most.

The Kings River Conservation District's \$43 million peaking power plant in Malaga is expected to go into commercial operation in June, creating a locally generated energy reserve that has been sorely lacking within the Fresno area. It will meet the demands of 97,000 homes.

"We've said all along that KRCDD Power's interest and objectives are to add value, certainty and reliability to our region's electrical grid," said David Orth, KRCDD General Manager.

"That's exactly what KRCDD is doing with this new power plant and it's what we hope to accomplish with our region's cities and counties with our Community Choice program and base load power plant development in the months and years to come," Orth said.

He said the plant will be fully ready to help meet summer's peak energy needs created largely with hot temperatures result in untold thousands of air conditioning units being turned on. KRCDD must have the plant ready to go on line at any time requested by California's Independent System Operator.

Construction is down to the finishing touches on the 97-megawatt, gas-fired facility. Plans call for the plant's new transmission line to Pacific Gas and Electric Company's nearby Malaga substation to be energized by PG&E on May 1, followed two weeks later by the start of the plant's commissioning process. Performance testing is to take place May 23-June 1. After some final equipment work to fur-



One of two 120 foot tall stacks is erected using one of the largest cranes in the region.

ther improve operational efficiency, commercial operation is scheduled to begin June 20 less than nine months after ground was broken.

It has been "fast-track" project since state officials late in 2002 offered a pair of peaking-power generating units to KRCDD to help combat energy generation shortfalls and related system weaknesses and needs that became evident during California's 2000-01 energy shortage.

The Department of Water Resources will pay all fixed and variable costs, including debt service. California utility customers in the Fresno region will receive reliable, low-cost peaking power. The plant will belong to KRCDD Power in 10 years.

Celebration Will Take Place At Reedley Beach

A celebration of the Kings River Discovery Bicentennial will take place Saturday, May 14, from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. in Reedley.

A special ceremony and program marking the 200th anniversary of the river's discovery will begin at 11 a.m.

The event will take place alongside the river at Reedley Beach, next to the Olsen Avenue bridge, in Reedley. There is no charge.

A living history re-enactment of the river's discovery in January 1805 by Spanish explorer Lt.

Gabriel Moraga will be among the program's highlights.

Other living history personalities from out of the past will take part in the program before visiting with those attending the event.

"This is going to be an occasion for history and education," said Toni Munoz, KRCDD's Public Affairs Associate who is helping coordinate the event. "It will be a terrific family event and a great opportunity to learn about an important part of the San Joaquin Valley's past."

Kings River History Talk Is May 12

The Kings River's colorful history will be in the spotlight on the evening of Thursday, May 12, as a feature of Reedley College's Speaker Series.

J. Randall McFarland, a Fresno County historian and public information consultant for KRCD and Kings River Water Association, will make the presentation.

It will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Reedley College Forum building.

"I plan to range from the river's discovery and the region's native conditions to the water development struggles of more than a century ago and the resources we enjoy today," McFarland said.

McFarland's talk will help kick off the Kings River Discovery Bicentennial Celebration that will continue with a living history re-enactment at Reedley Beach on Saturday, May 14. (Please see related stories on Page 1 and 4.)

McFarland, a Selma resident, is author or editor of five local history books, including "Water For a Thirsty Land," a Kings River-Consolidated Irrigation District history.

He chairs the Fresno County Historical Landmarks Commission and the Fresno Historical Society Editorial Board.

Celebration, *continued*

Informational and educational exhibits are planned by a number of agencies.

There will also be musical entertainment provided by the the String Bandits. Games will be provided for children.

Sponsoring the event are the Kings River Conservation District, Kings River Water Association, Central Valley Water Awareness Committee, El Rio Reyes Trust, City of Reedley, Kings Canyon Unified School District, Reedley Historical Society, KSEE-Channel 24, Univision and the Fresno County Office of Education.



General Manager's Report David Orth

Bright Springtime Views

This is proving to be a heartening spring season all along the Kings River and the vast, fruitful region its waters serve.

On a number of fronts, the river community's news is good and it begins with this year's water conditions. Thanks to exceptionally productive and well-timed storms, water users within the one million acre Kings River service area are starting to enjoy a great water supply. Forecasters tell us that the Kings River's runoff from April 1-July 31, when the snowmelt period is at its peak, is likely to be around 143 percent of average.

In fact, it seems increasingly likely that we may have too much of a good thing. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency that operates and maintains Pine Flat Dam and is in charge of overseeing flood control, is looking closely at the numbers to see if a flood release will be needed.

Our Kings River Conservation District flood management staff is ready for that possibility. Elsewhere, irrigation districts and water companies are gearing up for long water runs and possibly even some much-needed groundwater recharge activity.

These are exactly the sorts of positive water supply situations and conditions toward which a new regional planning effort, of which KRCD is a part, is being directed. With assistance and interest from a surprising array of interests, KRCD and the Fresno, Consolidated and Alta irrigation districts, have led the organization of what is being called the Upper Kings River Basin Water Forum.

Regional approaches to meeting water supply are nothing new but more than ever before they are the way of the future. Here on the Kings River, regional planning resulted long ago in development of Pine Flat Dam, so vital to providing flood protection and water conservation storage, as well as the many successful projects and activities in which KRCD is a recognized leader.

Now, number of cities, counties and environmental organization members have joined with KRCD, FID, Alta and Consolidated to frame what they hope will ultimately result in development of additional infrastructure that will be needed in the decades ahead. There are 17 agencies involved.

Declining groundwater levels, that problem for which we're hoping this year's good water supplies will help in temporarily easing, remain a concern. So do long-term water supplies for agriculture and urban users, and the newest "big issue" facing us, water quality. As a backdrop to all of these concerns are increasing environmental expectations.

State leaders have made it clear that they expect regional planning and cooperation to take place as a precursor for project funding. The Water Forum hopes to be involved deeply in both and do so with a voluntary, collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach. Whatever is done must complement Kings River water rights.

We're hoping an integrated regional water plan will result, followed by the opportunity to secure state funding from Proposition 50 bond money with which to develop innovating projects that will benefit localities and the region as a whole. About the only downside for budget-battered local government agencies that there is modest local funding involved. Overall, the outlook is good.

Conditions are also highly promising this spring for outstanding hydroelectric production at KRCD's Jeff L. Taylor-Pine Flat Power Plant, and that will benefit power users and Kings River agencies that share in the power revenue.

And, speaking of power (although they have nothing to do with the river), KRCD's Community Choice program is advancing and our new peaking power plant in Malaga is nearly complete and ready to help meet our region's needs. That's terrific springtime news for all of us.

Big Snowpack May Spawn Kings Flood Release

A water year that has kept growing and growing is starting to pay off in outstanding irrigation supplies with the possibility that there may be a late spring flood release.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is in total charge of Kings River flood management decisions, is working closely with the Kings River Water Association and Kings River Conservation District before its officials decide whether extra water will need to be released from Pine Flat Reservoir.

As of April 12, the California Department of Water Resources predicted Kings River runoff in the key April-July period would be 143 percent of average, or 1.77 million acre-feet, if normal amounts of rain and Sierra snow were to continue to occur. The worst-case scenario calls for runoff to be no less than 132 percent of average.

Pine Flat Reservoir storage has climbed steadily since the big winter storms began and as of April 20 stood at more than 640,000 acre-feet (64 percent of capacity). That is more water than the reservoir held at any time during the previous water year with peak runoff not likely to occur until May and June.

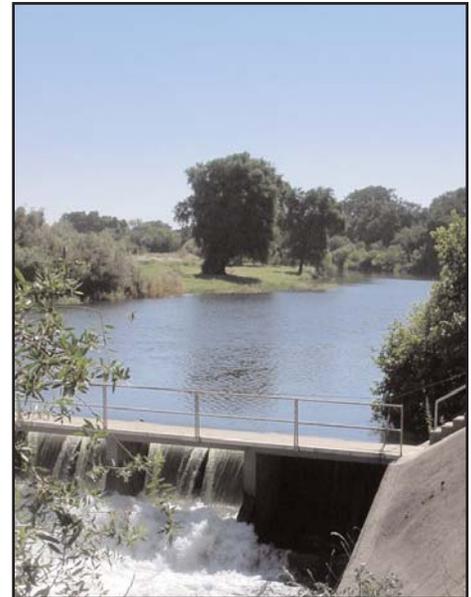
When snow conditions peaked April 1, snow surveyors found Kings River watershed water content readings averaging 163 percent of normal with the highest percentage of water content at elevations below 9,800 feet.

If there is a flood release, the Kings River's water operations agreements would encourage the river's 28 agencies with Kings rights and entitlements to divert and beneficially use all the water they can.

Such situations are particularly valuable for filling groundwater recharge basins and battling the region's long-term decline in water table conditions.

On the other hand, a flood release would also result in water being lost to the one million acre Kings River service area. Even though there has been no flood release in six years because of drought conditions, Kings River flood releases average 200,000 acre-feet of water lost to the service area on an annual basis. The Corps usually directs Kings River flood release water out the North Fork-James Bypass system and into the San Joaquin River.

There will be full irrigation operations throughout the spring and summer with



Full channels will be the rule this summer along the Kings River.

lower Kings River units coordinating a water run beginning May 1 in order to share and minimize channel losses. Several districts and canal companies have already started water deliveries.

KRCD's flood management staff, based in Riverdale, reports that the lower river channel and levee system is in excellent condition in case a flood release is ordered.

West Side Recharge Project Study Is Extended

Completion of a feasibility study for the McMullin Recharge Project in western Fresno County has been extended by the California Department of Water Resources.

The Department of Water Resources approved a Kings River Conservation District request to extend a grant contract administering Proposition 13 funding to permit a feasibility study to be completed by November 30 with its report to be finished two months later.

Additional work will include construction of a percolation pond and installation of groundwater monitoring equipment.

Along with KRCD, participants are the James and Tranquillity irrigation districts, Mid-Valley and Raisin City water districts, and Terranova Management Company, LLC.

The program hopes to ultimately enhance groundwater conditions in an area east of the Kings River's James Bypass flood control channel that has no surface water rights or service.

Budget Cuts For Pine Flat Spark Concern

Budget cuts proposed by the administration have drawn concern from Kings River water agencies and the region's members of Congress over possible impact they may have in Pine Flat Dam operation and maintenance. A 12 percent budget reduction in Pine Flat operation and maintenance funding has been proposed.

As now framed, the budget would force the Corps to reduce staff and services. That \$462,000 reduction might leave enough funding to cover operation and maintenance work, but would not include funds for recreation at popular Pine Flat Lake.

The Kings River Conservation District and Kings River Water Association are con-

cerned because the current budget has resulted in deferred maintenance.

In a letter to House and senate budget leaders, similar concerns were voiced by valley Reps. Devin Nunes, George Radanovich and Jim Costa. They noted the proposed cuts come "at a time when costs are rising across the board."

Discovering 'The River of the Holy Kings'

On an early January day in a new century in a land that was, except by its native peoples, largely an unknown wilderness, modern Kings River history was born.

Into this great, nameless and largely unfamiliar valley of Spanish California had come a party stirred by a spirit of discovery as well as a colonial desire to spread threads of civilization, political control and religion.

Heading this group was a remarkable individual named Gabriel Moraga, a Lieutenant in the Spanish Army.

What his party came across, on January 5 of that long-ago year, and named a day later in honor of a religious feast was what we know as the Kings River.

Two hundred years later, Moraga's discovery will be commemorated (and re-enacted) Saturday, May 14, at Reedley Beach as part of the Kings River Discovery Bicentennial (please see front page), an event that gets under way at 9:30 a.m. The program itself begins at 11 a.m. on the river's shore. It will examine not only the Kings' discovery and naming but the effects its waters have had in shaping the region's settlement and development.

Many of the discovery's circumstances are familiar parts of valley history but there are also unknowns. For starters, there is the question of the location where Moraga's party chanced to find the river. The fact is, simply, that no one knows. The only account of the Kings discovery was written well after it happened.



There is also a question of what year it took place. A close examination of the best available records suggests strongly that Moraga made his discovery on or about January 5, 1805, but many accounts say it occurred a year later.

The Discovery Bicentennial's organizers have chosen to split the difference and, rather than conduct a ceremony under the cold and wet winter weather that must have greeted Moraga, celebrate in the springtime.

Moraga's party of soldiers and Franciscan clergy made this and other such journeys in search of possible mission sites and information about the country for the government of Spanish California in Monterey.

The expedition's religious aspect had a major effect upon the newly discovered stream as Moraga's party remained camped along its banks the following day, January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany.

In honor of that occasion, the river was named El Rio de los Santos Reyes, or River of the Holy Kings.

Father Pedro Munoz, Moraga's diarist, accompanied another Moraga expedition the valley 22 months later and, in October 1806, noted the latter part's arrival at "the

Rio de Los Santos Reyes, which had been discovered the previous year, 1805."

Munoz said of the river, "All the meadows are well covered with oak, alder cottonwood and willow. The river abounds with beaver and fish. It is a location suitable for a mission, although there would also have to be a presidio (fort)."

Some accounts say Moraga explored the river downstream to old Tulare Lake and up into the Sierra Nevada as well. National Park Service researchers contend Moraga was the first European to view Kings Canyon.

Aside from the name, which relatively quickly was shortened by popular use to Kings River, Moraga had no further effect on the river's development.

Few, however, were ever able to match Moraga as a discoverer and christener of California geographical features. He named such streams as the San Joaquin, Sacramento and Calaveras rivers, and Mariposa Creek. Like the Kings, all eventually became namesakes for counties and "San Joaquin" became the valley's name. Moraga discovered Pacheco Pass and many other features, and was a well-known Spanish Californian. His were the Central Valley's first significant explorations.

KRCD News

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