

Fall 2005

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.

A Way To Learn About KRCRD Power

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

This half hour program 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 Melissa Hunter at 559-237-5567, ext. 116 or request via email to ctufenkjian@krcd.org.

KRCRD News

KRCRD Presents Views To Cabinet Secretary

Governor Schwarzenegger's cabinet secretary has been given a first-hand view of Kings River Conservation District frustrations on how the Central Valley's agricultural discharge waiver process has been handled.

KRCRD General Manager David Orth met with Terry Tamminen November 4 before addressing the Cabinet Secretary during a town hall-type meeting in Tulare.

State Senator Roy Ashburn (R-Bakersfield) arranged the forum in which Orth and other valley water leaders spoke.

"We believe a watershed focus will show results," Orth said of the ag discharge waiver program. "On-farm regulation will not."

Orth, who serves as Southern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Coordinator, said that during a private meeting, "I shared with him our frustrations with the ag waiver. He was aware of the problems."



David Orth, one of several valley water forum speakers, presented KRCRD's position on water quality issues before Cabinet Secretary, Terry Tamminen.

KRCRD and other south valley water agencies are struggling to deal with ag discharge program regulatory moves that frequently stem from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's staff.

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Draft PUC Rules Are Highly Favorable To Community Choice Power Program

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has issued draft rules that appear to be favorable to establishment of a Community Choice power supply program.

Should the CPUC adopt the draft rules as final, one of the major potential concerns over establishment of Community Choice would be removed.

KRCRD is working with 11 cities and Kings County to establish the program. State law permits cities and counties to purchase power from a generation source other than the traditional investor owned utility. KRCRD proposes to build a new gas-fired, base-load power plant to be the power supplier.

As of November 23, nine agencies have given the nod to moving ahead with preparation of an implementation plan that would lead toward an application with the CPUC. It is possible the energy program could be operating by early 2007.

An administrative law judge's draft rules state that the CPUC has little to no authority over Community Choice and will not resolve disputes between Community Choice purveyors and their customers.

Utilities could not market to Community Choice customers and there would be no limits on phasing in the program. All new customers would belong to Community Choice. And transfers of generation service between Community Choice purveyors and utilities would be limited. There are several other highly favorable conditions.

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Pine Flat Power Plant Concludes A Big Generation Year

A big water year kept the turbines spinning until early November at the Kings River Conservation District's Jeff L. Taylor-Pine Flat Power Plant.

The plant, located at the base of Pine Flat Dam, operated through the evening of November 4 when the Kings River's extended irrigation season ended.

The facility is a stream-flow plant and can operate only when releases for irrigation demand or flood releases exceed about 500 cubic feet per second.

During 2005, the plant generated 594,002,880 kilowatt-hours of electricity. The biggest month was July when 144,436,608 kilowatt-hours were generated.

The plant is now in its off-season maintenance mode.

All electricity generated at Pine Flat is sold to the California Department of Water Resources for use in powering pumps in the State Water Project.

The actual energy is distributed into Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Fresno region system with an equivalent amount of energy actually delivered to the Department of Water Resources.

Draft PUC, *continued*

Meanwhile, a feasibility report financed by KRCD and its dozen municipal partners has concluded potential benefits of a regional Community Choice Program appear to be significant from cost savings, improved reliability and local control perspectives.

It further recommends that KRCD and the communities move forward with the development of an implementation plan.

The report shows a conservative potential savings of 4-6 percent of generation costs, totaling \$779 million for the region during the 25-year study period while increasing power and rate reliability plus local control.



General Manager's Report David Orth

The Target Is You

Water-related issues are so frequent that they are practically a routine part of valley life. Once in a while an issue pops up that threatens to be far more than a distraction or annoyance.

So it is right now in the Central Valley's water quality arena. Owners and operators of irrigated farmland are squarely in the bull's eye of regulators who keep making matters more difficult by constantly changing the scope of what they seek to control.

The issue involves the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's agricultural discharge regulations and waiver program.

This has been an elusive target for water agencies ever since it mushroomed late in 2002 when a 20-year agricultural water discharge exemption from needing permits ended.

Since then, the Regional Board and its staff have developed a series of conditional waiver programs and rules that have become steadily more onerous. The regulators and environmental community seems to presume that growers are guilty until proven innocent.

Almost daily, we find ourselves being hit with a new regulatory stance. It is a situation that quite frankly can only be described as critical.

Key issues are:

- **Fees** to be imposed on irrigated acreage to fund the Regional Board's enforcement ag water discharge actions. The Southern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, which KRCD helps manage, has offered to pay 12 cents for each of the 800,000 acres we believe have a potential to discharge rather than the much higher fees on millions of additional acres the Regional Board staff wants to assess. The agency seems willing to accept our \$96,000 payment but is refusing to cap future assessments.

- **Membership** - the State has requested lists of members in coalitions. On the Kings River, more than 500,000 acres are enrolled. The state also wants lists of coalition non-participants. KRCD and its partnering agencies are resisting this demand, which is obviously aimed at broadening ag discharge enforcement. We have agreed only to use assessor parcel maps to identify areas that are areas of concern, except for those landowners who have joined the Kings River coalition. Our proposal has not been accepted.

KRCD and other water agencies have struggled to find solutions that would keep individual farmers from having to apply for discharge permits and establish incredibly costly plans and monitoring programs for their ranches.

We do have hope. There are three new Regional Board members (including Paul Betancourt of Kerman) with strong ties to irrigated agriculture. The Board recently approved a 6-month extension of the current waiver. In addition, the south valley is seeking to address ag discharge issues in the Tulare Lake Basin watershed with a general order containing more potential restrictions but a much longer term.

What KRCD will not become is a water quality regulatory agency. Our roles are to conduct river monitoring, represent water users and find constructive solutions. We encourage you to join KRCD's Kings River coalition. See our website, www.krkd.org, or call us at 237-5567 for details.

River Bank Erosion At Key Structure Is Repaired



Kings River water flows around a rubble weir near Kingsburg prior to repairs that stabilized a bank that had given way.

Bank erosion and a partial washout near a rubble weir used to help take important lower Kings River water measurements have resulted in a major repair project.

The problem arose just as last summer's water run was ending and occurred about a mile downstream on Highway 99 near Kingsburg and a short distance below People's Weir. The gap created by the erosion was about 75-feet wide.

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Fisheries Program Gives Boost To Minimum Flows

Higher late fall and winter minimum Kings River fishery flows, anticipated under the six-year-old Kings River Fisheries Management Program, have become reality.

The additional flows, which began November 5 after the irrigation season ended, are being monitored closely to obtain technical data.

Under agreements that implemented the landmark program in May 1999, Kings River Water Association (KRWA) member agencies began voluntarily making fishery releases of 250 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.) which are also known as exhibit "D" flows.

While not required under the program, the higher flows were set as a goal to be triggered by high runoff years. The KRWA and its members are providing those flows this year.

"These flows will continue over the winter months between Pine Flat Dam and Fresno Weir," Kings River Watermaster and Fisheries Management Program Executive Director Steve Haugen said.

The weir, nine miles downstream from Pine Flat Dam, marks the headworks of two large canal systems. Haugen said flows over Fresno Weir and into the lower Kings River that are called for in the program's agreements will continue to be made.

KRWA, the Kings River Conservation District (KRCD), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and the Kings River Fisheries Management Program's Public Advisory Group (PAG) began planning for the higher fall flows last spring. The three agencies are the Fisheries Management Program's formal partners and the PAG has emerged as a valued collaborator.

"We knew by early spring from the big snowpack and above-average runoff forecasts that we would reach the Fisheries Management Program threshold under which the goal of 250 c.f.s. minimum flows would be triggered," said Haugen .

William Loudermilk, the CDFG's Central California manager in Fresno, pointed out that the above-average water conditions were the

first since the Fisheries Management Program was established

"Since 1999, Kings River water users have been making available minimum releases of 100 c.f.s.," Loudermilk said. "That is twice what was provided under a 1964 agreement between our agency and KRWA. Cooperating to provide this additional water and working so diligently to improve the fishery are what has made the Kings River program such a great model."

Haugen said KRWA, KRCD, CDFG and the PAG are anxious to gather as much knowledge and data as possible about fishery habitat expanded by the flows, as well as fish behavior.

The Fisheries Management Program has stepped up monitoring along with construction and development of fishery habitat enhancements.

Work this fall and winter will include a significant amount of boulder and spawning gravel placement along with other enhancements.

KRCD Flood Fighters Have Kings System Ready

Flood protection and facilities along the Kings River are in a high state of readiness as the winter season begins.

"There have been many concerns expressed in the wake of the New Orleans disaster in Hurricane Katrina over the condition of levees in California but none are better maintained or constructed than those that protect property along the Kings River," said General Manager David Orth.

Richard N. Hoelzel, Chief of the Kings River Conservation District's Flood Control Maintenance Division, says intense channel maintenance operations have followed flood releases that occurred without incident last spring and summer.

Vegetation was trimmed and shredded, sand deposits were removed and levee improvements were carried out by the Riverdale-based KRCD flood manage-

ment staff. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted flood readiness inspections of the lower Kings River.

KRCD is responsible for flood maintenance and operations along portions of Cole Slough, Dutch John Cut, the main Kings River, Clark's Fork, part of the South Fork and portions of the North Fork-Fresno Slough-James Bypass channels.

Lack Of Storm Activity Gets Water Year Off To A Slow Start

Effects of above-average precipitation during 2004-05 are lingering but the new water year that began October 1 is off to a dry start.

There has been one of the sort of potent storms that brought heavy fall rain and snow to the Kings River watershed a year ago, beginning a water year that ended up with runoff that was 158% of average.

Upper watershed snow sensors on December 7 were detecting snowpack water contents ranging generally from 4-8 inches that mostly occurred during the December 1-2 storm. There have only been few other light periods of precipitation this fall.

Despite the early season dry conditions, Pine Flat Reservoir's mid-fall

storage is higher than it has been in years.

Kings River Watermaster Steve Haugen said the lake's December 7 storage was 473,153 acre-feet, or 47 percent of capacity.

The year's storage low point of 440,220 acre-feet was reached November 5 when the irrigation season ended.

Haugen, who manages the Kings River Water Association, said storage within but not far below the lake's flood control criteria, meaning "we could be one storm away from a flood release."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reserves wintertime storage to handle any rainflood events.

Repair, *continued*

Repairs took place during October. To facilitate repairs a 1,000-foot construction road was created to allow material to be delivered to the repair site.

Rick Hoelzel, KRCD Chief-Flood Operations and Maintenance said, "Creating the construction road was the most time-consuming part of the repair. Approximately 30-40 truckloads of concrete rubble and approximately 100 cubic yards of concrete slurry were used for the repair."

Other types of equipment utilized in the repair included a water truck for dust control and material stabilization. A D-6 bulldozer was used to place eroded material back into the eroded section.

An excavator was used to remove accumulated debris, reshape the bank and place rubble to finish the repair.

KRCD possesses a permit with the Department of Fish and Game that allows for work to be conducted within the designated floodway. Work generally consists of maintenance and repair of the channels and levees.

The rubble weir pools water for a crucial measurement point downstream of from People's Weir, a large control structure.

KRCD Presents Views, *continued*

"We had a chance to brief the Secretary on what we've done, including river monitoring, under the ag waiver and why the south valley is different than watersheds north of us," Orth said.

Orth also outlined KRCD's power program. That effort recently added a 97-megawatt peaking power plant in Malaga to the valley's electrical energy resources and is partnering with a dozen local agencies to

establish a Community Choice program and major new base-load power plant.

Alta Irrigation District Manager Chris Kapheim discussed work by the new stakeholder- and consensus-based Upper Kings River Water Forum and its regional water planning and cooperation.

"We are trying to balance some of these regional goals to make things happen," Kapheim said. "Local and state partnerships work."

KRCD News

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Please send subscription requests to:
Kings River Conservation District
4886 E. Jensen Ave.
Fresno, California 93725

Telephone: (559) 237-5567
Website: www.krkd.org

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Kings River Conservation District
4886 E. Jensen Avenue
Fresno, CA 93725

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