



KRCDD News

California Energy Commission Launches Power Plant's Review Process

Winter 2007-08

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



Looking over the Parlier area site of KRCDD's proposed Community Power Plant are (from left) California Energy Commission Hearing Officer Kenneth Celli, KRCDD Manager of Power Resources Jim Richards and KRCDD General Manager David Orth.

Speakers' Bureau Programs

Kings River Conservation District has available speakers' bureau presentations to discuss issues relating to the valley's environmental, energy and water needs.

There is no charge for the programs and we would be happy to schedule a presentation. If interested, please e-mail or phone Toni Munoz-Woods at 559-237-5567, ext. 105 or tmunoz@krcdd.org.

To learn more about the Kings River Conservation District, visit our website at www.krcdd.org.

What is expected to be a year-long public review process has been started by the California Energy Commission (CEC) for the Kings River Conservation District's proposed 565-megawatt community power plant.

A commission committee held a January 14 informational hearing at the University of California's Kearney Research Center in Parlier, about three miles from the property (along Bethel Avenue between Dinuba and Manning avenues) proposed by KRCDD as the natural gas-fired plant's location. A site tour preceded the hearing.

The hearing came just over a month after a 5-0 CEC vote determined that KRCDD's ap-

plication for certification is "data adequate." That means the CEC was satisfied it had enough information with which to begin the licensing review process. Commissioners will have sole responsibility in determining whether to permit the facility.

KRCDD, which has long been in the electrical energy generation business with its Jeff L. Taylor-Pine Flat Power Plant, began its effort to develop the base-load power plant in conjunction with a new power process known as Community Choice.

KRCDD General Manager David Orth, said the plant would potentially provide the
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Valley Cities, Counties and Irrigation Districts Called Back for Water Grant

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Resources Control Board have invited the Upper Kings Basin Water Forum (Water Forum) back for Round Two to vie for funds from Proposition 50.

The effort is part of DWR's Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grants Program encouraging integrated regional strategies for management of water resources.

In August, KRCDD submitted an application for grant funding from DWR on behalf of the Water Forum. The grant, in the amount of \$9 million if awarded, will be used on water supply and quality projects that were identified in the Water Forum's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan. The Water Management Plan is a result of over two years of collaborative planning by the Water Forum, a multi-stakeholder group made up of local cities,

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Storms Create Happy New Year for Water Supply Hopes

A series of major New Year's week storms has significantly brightened Kings River water supply hopes and boosted early January's snow water content to about average.

Three big storm events in as many days that began late January 3 brought significant amounts of snow to higher ranges and heavy rains at lower elevations.

"These were by far the most productive storms we have had in two years, and although it is much too soon to tell how this water year will turn out, conditions are much improved over what they were on New Year's Day," said Kings River Watermaster Steve Haugen.

Haugen, who manages the Kings River Water Association and administers water supplies and deliveries for the 28 agencies with Kings River water rights, said the season's outlook would become more definite when the first snow surveys are taken February 1.

"With Pine Flat Reservoir storage at only about 24 percent of capacity because of last year's very dry conditions, we certainly could use more storms," Haugen said.

Still, as of January 13, the seven automated snow sensors in the Kings River watershed reported an average snowpack water content of 15.4 inches, 49.2% of the average on April 1, the date upon which snow conditions traditionally reach their peak.

Normal snowpack accumulation through January 13 should be 46% of the April 1 average.

The California Department of Water Resources' initial Kings River runoff forecast will follow the February 1 snow survey. Weekly updates will continue until June.

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General Manager's Report
David Orth

Kings River Flood Channels Ready for Action

Among the certainties of climate and weather is the absolute guarantee that there will be flooding. We may not know from one year to the next when it will occur, but there will always be big water years.

Flood control work and readiness have been an ongoing part of KRCD's responsibilities for a long time. Flood control, particularly along the lower Kings River, has been among the District's responsibilities for the past 36 years. KRCD came about in 1951 as one of many tools utilized successfully by Kings River water users in developing water conservation storage through the building of Pine Flat Dam. Then as now, the need for flood protection was recognized.

The result was the federal Flood Control Act of 1944, which authorized the Pine Flat Project. That measure also provided for downstream channel improvements in portions of Kings and Fresno counties to provide protection for low-lying areas in which flooding was a frequent and frustrating ritual.

KRCD stepped forward, on behalf of all Kings River interests, as the local agency best suited to take over the lower river's flood control system. On November 9, 1959, KRCD formally assumed channel improvement sponsorship. The District agreed to provide without cost to the federal government all necessary lands, easements and rights of way; to hold the United States free of damages due to construction works; and to operate and maintain the completed system. The District accepted the first segment for operation and maintenance in 1972.

In those days, it wasn't much of a system. The North Fork, which today is carrying flows as its capacity of 4,750 cubic feet per second (cfs), then couldn't handle a flow of about 3,000 cfs. The Clark's Fork-South Fork system had similar problems. Had the lower river's flood carrying capabilities not been enhanced, the amount of Pine Flat Reservoir carryover storage permitted by the Corps would have been curtailed significantly.

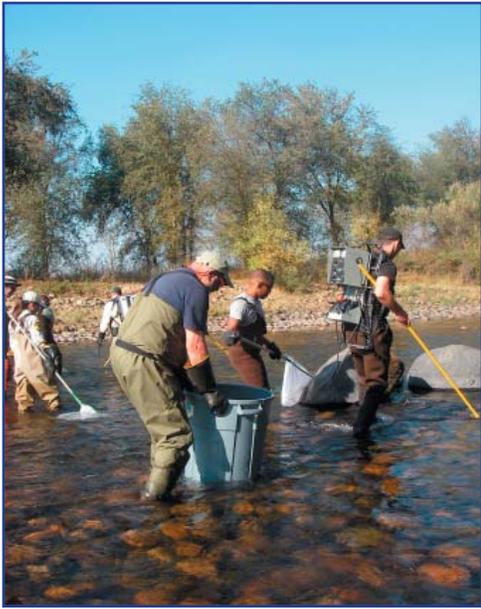
The process took time but paid off in the flood year of 1969, when the highest ever Pine Flat releases - 17,000 cfs. - had to be made by the Corps. Many of the improvements were by then in place. Others followed over the next several years.

Now, the KRCD operates and maintains the lower Kings River and some key channels from Eight Avenue (southwest of Kingsburg) to Empire NO. 2 Weir (southwest of Stratford) on the South Fork. KRCD also operates and maintains the North Fork as far downstream as McMullen Grade (Highway 145), and Cole Slough, Dutch John Cut and the Crescent Bypass.

KRCD's Riverdale-based staff conducts continuous weed, brush and rodent control, channel clearing and sand removal. During flood releases, the staff maintains 24-hour patrols.

KRCD staff has worked hard to keep the lower river in good shape. It is important, often unheralded work but another way in which KRCD cares for the Kings River, one of our region's most precious natural resources.

'Census' Finds Many Fish to Count in Kings River



An electrofishing survey team stuns and then collects fish for counting and observation. The fish are returned to their habitat unharmed.

An expanded annual count has found fish by the thousands in Kings River waters downstream from Pine Flat Dam.

Although data is still being analyzed, those working on the project were encouraged to find so many fish of different species living in the river.

Electrofishing, conducted each fall after the Kings River irrigation season, was modified and spread out by the Kings River Fisheries Management Program in November 2007 to focus on nine separate sites.

Under the program, fish were stunned (but not harmed) with a brief electrical charge before being collected, identified as to species, weighed, evaluated, counted by biologists and returned to the river.

Many others assisted from the Fisheries Management Program's partnering agencies, the Kings River Conservation District, the Kings River Water Association and the California Department of Fish and Game, along with members of the program's Public Advisory Group and individual anglers.

KRCD provided GIS and GPS services to document exact locations at which fish were found and counted.

Data is still preliminary but some 9,800 fish were counted with eight different species identified, many of which were non-game fish.

Despite very heavy fishing pressure, there were 123 rainbow trout found by surveyors, of which 42 were determined to be "wild."

Power Plant's Review Process, *continued*

base Community Choice energy supply for members and customers of the new San Joaquin Valley Power Authority.

KRCD's regional public agency status and lack of a profit motive would make it possible to generate power less expensively. The plant has been sited to use treated wastewater from Parlier's adjacent treatment plant for cooling, with a backup supply of wastewater from nearby Sanger, in order to minimize effects on the aquifer while improving groundwater quality.

Orth testified that the power plant would be set back from Bethel Avenue as far as possible and would utilize extensive landscaping and barriers such as berms to mitigate visual issues.

The January 14 hearing, which attracted an audience of approximately 90 is the first of what is expected to be a series of workshops and more formal hearings in coming months.

Several people commenting cited air quality worries. Others voiced concerns over a variety of land use issues,

including farmland preservation, the location of nearby Indianola School and effects of transmission lines on farm values. Water quality fears were voiced as were worries over groundwater impacts, traffic and noise.

That did not surprise the hearing officer, Kenneth Celli. "Typically most people are here because they oppose the project," Celli said.

KRCD officials again repeated that the District believes it will successfully address and resolve all issues, including air quality.

KRCD Manager Orth said the District's board has directed that acquisition of air quality "offsets" to mitigate power plant emissions from other locations focus on local area solutions.

"We want to demonstrate net air quality benefit from stationary sources," Orth said. "I think we can accomplish that." KRCD officials said the District is negotiating with a local landowner and that KRCD wishes to preserve other farm property in perpetuity in exchange for removing the

proposed plant site from a Williamson (farmland preservation) Act contract.

Lou Martinez, Parlier City Manager, said City Council and Chamber of Commerce members support the project. "Our community is informed and supportive," Martinez said. "We believe the project is safe."

Che McFarlin, Energy Commission project manager, said big issues identified thus far include land use, and the need to place new electrical conductors on more than 53 miles of transmission line to transport the new power supply.

He said a preliminary staff assessment could be completed in May with a final staff assessment possible in July, followed by evidentiary hearings and a final decision by December.

Energy Commission officials encouraged public involvement. A website has been established for the case. It is: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/siting-cases/communitypower/index.html>.

Called Back for Water Grant, *continued*

counties, water districts and environmental organizations.

“Out of 28 applications, the Water Forum was one of eight applicants to be considered for the second round of funding,” explained David Orth, KRCD general manager. “The Water Forum participants recognize the advantage of approaching prospective funding opportunities from a regional perspective, and this call back by the State represents the benefit of our integrated approach to water management.”

Historically, the management of water resources has been limited to independent operations by overlying local water agencies and individual water users. The Water Forum was formed to increase communication and collaboration to create regional solutions for

water resources management.

Members of the Water Forum include the cities of Clovis, Dinuba, Fresno, Fowler, Kerman, Kingsburg, Parlier, Reedley, Sanger and Selma; the counties of Kings, Tulare and Fresno; environmental organizations including the Fresno Audubon Society, Sierra Club, California Native Plant Society, and the Kings River Fisheries Public Advisory Group; water agencies including the Fresno, Consolidated and Alta irrigation districts, Kings River Conservation District, Kings River Water Association, California Water Institute, Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish & Game and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

As identified in the Water Forum’s Integrated Regional Water Manage-

ment Plan, overdraft of the groundwater resource is the primary issue to be addressed in the Kings River basin. Over the past 40 years, water levels in the Fresno area have dropped by 40 feet. In the Raisin City area, they have dropped by 150 feet. This is a result of water demand that has exceeded the available surface and groundwater supplies as they are currently developed and managed. The continued groundwater overdraft is not sustainable and the urban growth pressure in the region, coupled with the need to sustain the agricultural economy, calls for improved water resource management in the Kings River basin.

New water supply infrastructure is needed today to meet future demands from urban growth, environmental needs and agricultural usage.

Storms Create Happy New Year, *continued*

“Future weather conditions are the key,” Haugen said. “If productive storm activity continues, it could be a good water year.” Should there be little or no additional mountain precipitation, runoff next spring could end up well below average.

An improved supply after last year’s runoff of just 39 percent of normal would be welcomed by Kings River water users. There were several storms with minor to modest precipitation yields during the fall months and early winter weeks, but mountain and valley

rain and snowfall totals were running considerably below average until the early January events hit.

That changed quickly. Over a 3-day span, most higher-elevation Kings River watershed locations gained 5 to 9 inches of precipitation. As much as 90 inches of snow fell at remote Blackcap Basin.

Runoff into Pine Flat Reservoir, which earlier had amounted to only a few hundred cubic feet per second, swelled during the storm, peaking out at more than 13,000 c.f.s. before set-

ling down to approximately 2000 c.f.s. within 24 hours.

Mill Creek, which enters the river below Pine Flat Dam, had a peak flow of 1,100 c.f.s. At least one irrigation district, Consolidated, briefly diverted from the Mill Creek flows for groundwater recharge purposes.

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Kings River Conservation District News

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