



Spring 2008

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

## 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](mailto:tmunoz@krcdd.org).

To learn more about the Kings River Conservation District, visit our website at [www.krcdd.org](http://www.krcdd.org).

# KRCDD News

## Upper Kings Basin Water Forum Wins \$6 Million Groundwater Facilities Grant

More than \$6 million has been granted by the State of California for construction of projects to deal with the region's chronic depletion of groundwater.

The Upper Kings Basin Water Forum, of which the Kings River Conservation District is a member, sought the funding for a pair of major projects in order to put elements of its new integrated regional water management plan to work.

The grant will help fund two projects.

- Fresno Irrigation District and Kings County Water District will expand the Kings County Water District's existing Apex Ranch Water Banking Facility south of Kingsburg by 220 acres for recharge and recovery to provide an estimated 10,000-14,000 acre-feet of dry-year water yield.

- Alta Irrigation District will construct the proposed Traver Groundwater Banking Facility to capture available surface water supply during the project's first phase in order to enhance local groundwater levels. In the future, it will support a surface water treatment plant that will reduce the use of lesser quality groundwater for municipal purposes in the easterly portion of the district.

KRCDD Deputy General Manager David Cone called the grant "a huge accomplishment for our region." The Water Forum's grant proposal was the second highest ranking application.

KRCDD is a partner in the regional planning process with the Kings River Water Association; Alta, Consolidated and Fresno irrigation districts; Raisin City Water District; California Department of Water Resources (DWR); cities and counties within the planning area; and a number of varied stakeholders.

The Kings region overlies the Kings Groundwater Basin, a critically important common resource shared by all of the overlying water users to meet agricultural, municipal, and domestic water demands by conjunctively using a combination of surface water and groundwater to meet overall water needs.

Surface water does not meet all needs and heavy groundwater pumping more often than not results in an "overdraft" situation in which, on average, more water is removed from the aquifer than is replaced. Urban growth is further stressing this imbalance,

*continued on page 4*

## Kings Water Supply On The Low Side



What started out looking like a normal Kings River runoff season has turned out to be another one of "those years" in which supply will fall well short of demands.

On March 1, after a series of productive January and February storm events overcame effects of a fairly dry fall, forecasters were saying unimpaired Kings River runoff to Pine Flat Reservoir would be 100 percent – exactly normal – during the peak April-through-July season.

That prediction assumed average precipitation would fall during the remainder of the season. Instead, virtually no snow or rain fell from March through May. Since the bulk of the winter's snowpack accumulated at lower and mid-

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## KRCD Considers Labor Agreement

KRCD has come under attack in recent months by the Associated Builders and Contractors as KRCD's board of directors considers whether to sign a Project Labor Agreement for the proposed KRCD Community Power Plant.

Most of the large power plants in California have been successfully built using Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) with organized labor. The proposed KRCD Community Power Plant will be a large, gas-fired power plant (CPP) that will require large numbers of skilled labor to construct. The Associated Builders and Contractors Association (ABC) wants KRCD to construct it without a PLA.

ABC argues that PLAs increase costs. As a public agency employer, California law requires that KRCD pay prevailing wage for labor on major projects whether under a PLA or not. In KRCD's experience, PLAs provide other benefits – a skilled and reliable labor force, protection from labor strike, on-site security and drug protection – that translate into lower costs and protected schedules.

KRCD's board has positive experience with PLAs. Both the Malaga Peaking Plant and the Jeff L. Taylor – Pine Flat Power Plant were constructed by organized labor under a PLA. Both were extremely successful. The PLAs provided secured, skilled labor with no labor disputes, and projects completed on-time and under budget.

KRCD staff is negotiating a PLA for the CPP to provide these important assurances as the District moves forward on this important project. KRCD's Board will ultimately determine whether that PLA meets those objectives.



*General Manager's Report*  
*David Orth*

## Keeping Out Mussels

Water managers and directors along the Kings River are used to having to fight to protect water supplies, and now they have a new battle against tiny aquatic foes capable of inflicting all sorts of grief.

These enemies that every Kings River agency desperately wants to repel are quagga and zebra mussels. The reason is simple. Humans have proven to be no match for these thumb-size mollusks and the damage they can inflict with amazing swiftness.

They are invasive. They kill ecosystems and completely clog irrigation systems, pipelines and pumps. They frustrate operations in power plants. They foul shorelines and the bottoms of rivers, streams and lakes – not to mention the in-the-water sides of boats and any type of structure. They are incredibly prolific and multiply by the billions. Once established, they cannot be eradicated.

The Kings River, Pine Flat Reservoir and nearly all other central and northern California rivers, streams and lakes thus far have fortunately been spared. Quagga mussels, however, have infested lakes, aqueducts and conduits in ever-widening portions of southern California since they were discovered in Lake Mead and the Colorado River just over two years ago. Earlier this year, their first cousins – zebra mussels – were detected in tiny San Justo Reservoir in San Benito County.

How they got to the West from the Great Lakes and rivers in the Midwest where mussels have been wreaking havoc since discovered in 1989 is no mystery. Mussels are fond of attaching themselves to boats – including any puddling on the inside – and love to hitchhike when a boat is moved from one lake or river to another. The original American infestation apparently was the result of ships' ballast water contaminated with mussels from their native Ukraine, Poland and the Balkan states.

The Kings River Water Association (KRWA), its 28 member agencies and KRCD are very concerned. The reasons are obvious: The Kings River is our region's greatest single natural resource. It is not only the source of irrigation for the world's most valuable and productive farmland, but it is now used directly (as well as through the aquifer) as a municipal source of water as well as the "fuel" to generate clean electrical energy in KRCD's Jeff L. Taylor - Pine Flat Power Plant. At risk within the river itself is a wonderful riparian habitat, the focus of the Kings River Fisheries Management Program managed by KRCD, KRWA, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and their Public Advisory Group.

The best weapon against a mussel's infestation that could irreparably damage the Kings or any river is prevention.

Although they are not currently planned on the Kings, boat inspections are already occurring in some areas. Several water bodies have been closed to recreation because of infestation or the threat of one. We want to avoid that sort of residual negative impact if at all possible.

All Kings River agencies are joining with the state departments of Fish and Game, Water Resources, Parks and Recreation, and Boating and Waterways in urging boaters to clean, drain and dry their vessels between uses and regularly inspect all exposed surfaces for mussels. A CDFG web page, <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/invasives/quaggamussel/>, offers detailed advice and information.

This is one water fight we can't afford to lose.

# KRCD Has Channels, Levees Ready But Has No Floods To Control



Miles and miles of Kings River channels and levees are in tip-top condition as they await floodwaters that are not going to arrive during the current water year.

For the second straight year, the Kings River Conservation District's flood management staff has had no flood release water from Pine Flat Dam with which to deal because of dry winter conditions.

Pine Flat Reservoir storage throughout the winter and spring has been far below the criteria that would prompt the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to order a flood release.

Among the activities undertaken by KRCD's Riverdale-based river operations staff have been channel sediment removal, weed control and brush control. Twelve miles of levee surface along Clark's Fork and the Crescent Bypass were recently graded and repaired.

*By mid-April after weeks of dry weather, distant Sierra Nevada peaks did not seem over burdened with snow cover, and Pine Flat Reservoir had the look of another drought year.*

# KRCD's Pine Flat Power Plant Receives Award for Safety During 2007

On April 22, 2008, the American Public Power Association (APPA) awarded KRCD's Jeff L. Taylor - Pine Flat Power Plant the Electric Utility Safety Award for safe operating practices in 2007. The first place award is under the category Group C for systems with 30,000 to 59,999 worker-hours of exposure. There were 18 first-place awards, one second-place award, and one third-place award including an honorable mention in this category.

Of more than 200 entries, only 88 entries received awards. Eight categories based primarily upon size of the system distinguished the entries. "Implementing safe utility practices requires the commitment and hard

work of the entire utility," said Terry Huval, chair of the APPA board of directors and director of utilities of Lafayette, La., Utilities System. "This collaborative effort to ensure the safety of employees is well demonstrated by these recognized utilities."

John Moore, KRCD's manager of hydro generation, commented, "Safety is the most important consideration in every task we perform at Pine Flat. We are extremely proud of our safety record." APPA is the national organization representing more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community- and state-owned electric utilities. This is the 46th year of this annual contest.

# Graham Honored for Achievements



Kings River Conservation District Director Brent L. Graham has concluded a career of nearly 40 years managing the Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District and has been

well honored in the process.

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) presented its Lifetime Achievement Award to Graham during its spring conference this May.

Graham retired May 31, although the Hanford area resident will remain an active member of the water community. He has represented Division 5 on the KRCD board since 2006 and serves as vice president.

His involvement with ACWA spans four decades and includes leadership roles on the association's board of directors under four different executive directors. He served on a number of ACWA committees and chaired ACWA's Region 7 for several terms.

"Brent has been a dedicated and steadfast participant in ACWA activities and a strong leader for the water community," ACWA President Glen Peterson said. "He has contributed so much to our association and our industry. California's water community owes its success to individuals such as Brent."

He currently chairs the Lower River Board of Directors and is the long-time secretary of the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Water Committee. He is also secretary-treasurer of the newly formed Valley Ag Water Coalition as well as vice chair of both the California Farm Water Coalition and the State Project Water Contractors Authority.

## \$6 Million Groundwater Grant, *continued*

which the DWR has termed “critical,” despite a number of highly effective and successful groundwater recharge operations that have long been in existence.

“KRCD has long been involved in groundwater management planning and monitoring, but the regional effort undertaken by the Water Forum is likely to enhance previous work significantly,” said David Orth, KRCD general manager.

He said the plan is aimed at expanding groundwater recharge and decreasing overdraft conditions, expanding the Kings water supply portfolio, improving water quality, using existing and improved conveyance, and building new facilities to increase operational flexibility.

DWR’s computerized water modeling found that the Kings region’s average annual overdraft is approximately 162,000 acre-feet,

leading to major declines in the water table. About 6.5 million acre-feet of groundwater were mined from the Kings groundwater basin during the past 40 years and an additional 4 million acre-feet may be removed from storage in the next four decades.

The plan also seeks to increase water supply reliability, enhance operational flexibility, and reduce system constraints while improving the environment, water quality, and providing additional flood control.

## Kings River Water Supply, *continued*

dle elevations instead of in the highest ranges, snow began melting earlier.

“On our snow measurement courses, snow this year tended to be heavier at lower elevations with a lower percentage at higher elevations. Unfortunately, the bulk of our watershed is at the higher elevations,” said Kings River Watermaster Steve Haugen.

Kings River snow surveyors on April 1, the date upon which the snowpack is assumed to have peaked, actually found all of the snow sampling poles they had poked on March 1.

“Since March is generally a good snow accumulation month, it was not a good sign, said Haugen. It was the Kings River’s seventh driest March on record. Things didn’t get any better in April. Only an unexpectedly stubborn

Memorial Day weekend storm, which brought 1.5-2 inches of precipitation and some light snow across much of the Kings watershed, prevented May from being equally parched.

The California Department of Water Resources has concluded that a totally dry end to the spring rain and snow season will result in natural Kings River runoff – as it would have occurred if there were no dams – amounting to some 70 percent of average, or 860,000 acre-feet for the April-July period.

That is much more than the 38 percent runoff measured during the 2006-07 drought water year, but there is a catch.

“The volume of water released this year will look very similar to last

year,” said Haugen, who manages the Kings River Water Association for the 28 member agencies with Kings River water entitlements.

“Last year we had a dry year but did have carryover storage supply available, he said. “This year we have more runoff but very little carryover.”

There is likely to be even less carryover storage going into the 2008-09 water year in October. Haugen said Kings River water users are probably going to maximize the available supply, meaning Pine Flat Reservoir storage is apt to decline rapidly as the irrigation season peaks and natural runoff drops.

Pine Flat storage as of June 9 was just over 510,000 acre-feet – or a bit more than half of its capacity of one million acre-feet.

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