

MID Announces a Reduction in Water Prices for Sphere-of-Influence (SOI) Water Users for the Remainder of 2010 SOI Season

Merced, California. June 15, 2010. On the heels of a wet winter, Merced Irrigation District (MID) expects to make flood control releases from Exchequer Dam in the range of 60,000 acre-feet to 160,000 acre-feet during September and October of this year, depending on various factors impacting inflow to Lake McClure.

At its June 15th Board Meeting, the MID Board of Directors unanimously approved a reduction in the price per acre-foot for SOI users from \$60 to \$35, effective June 15, 2010. Active SOI growers will finish their existing irrigations at the \$60/AF and will be able to take advantage of the lower rate thereafter. For growers using constant uninterrupted flow from the beginning of the irrigation season, the new rate will be introduced as a new irrigation request effective June 15, 2010.

“We are introducing this rate to increase the consumption of surface water and turn off groundwater wells. This Board is aiming to save groundwater and make the best use of our ample surface water supply this year,” said Wil Hunter, President of MID Board. “We encourage all SOI growers having access to MID surface water to turn off their groundwater wells and take advantage of the available precious surface water resource.”

While the SOI irrigation season is totally dependent on the amount of the flow in Merced River upstream from Lake McClure, MID staff preliminary anticipate the SOI season to last to the end of July this year.

“This is an experiment of supply and demand and MID’s goal is to increase surface water sales thereby relieving the reliance on groundwater, while not impacting the District Budget” said John Sweigard, General Manager.

Merced Irrigation District is a conjunctive use district, where the District relies mainly on surface water in normal water years and invokes groundwater pumping in drought years. This year the District will capitalize on surface water, reduce groundwater pumping, and also increase groundwater recharge through the percolation of increased surface water irrigation deliveries. “MID has a long history of in-lieu recharge efforts where we replace groundwater usage with surface water usage at every opportunity” said Hicham Eltal, Deputy General Manager. “Various conjunctive use practices typically reduce groundwater pumping by 60,000 acre-feet in the basin.”

For interested SOI growers who have not used water this year, please contact MID Customer Service at (209)722-2720 and place a deposit and a water order to receive your water.

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