

# THE IRRIGATOR



*Modesto Irrigation District Water Operations Newsletter*



**START DATE** - Friday, March 31 start date, with first water deliveries on Wednesday, April 5

**ALLOCATION** - 42 inches per irrigated acre with surplus water available

**CROP FORECASTS** - It is crucial to complete and return your crop forecasts by **Monday, May 1**. If your crop forecast is not returned by May 1, whatever MID has on file from the past year will apply for the 2023 irrigation season. If you have any new land leases or purchases, please be sure to include these in your forecast. Additionally, should you plan to irrigate these properties, make sure that they are in irrigation status prior to the start of the 2023 irrigation season.

## 2023 IRRIGATION SEASON OVERVIEW

### 2023 IRRIGATION PROGRAMS

**FARMER TO FARMER DELIVERY PROGRAM** – Farmers may transfer all or a portion of their surface water allocation to another farmer within MID’s irrigation boundaries. Applications available at [www.mid.org/water/irrigation](http://www.mid.org/water/irrigation).

**TRANSFER POLICY** – MID’s standard transfer policy for any parcel you own, lease or rent is still in place.

**GROUNDWATER REPLENISHMENT PLAN** – The 2023 Groundwater Replenishment Plan is a voluntary plan that allows Modesto Irrigation District to deliver surface water to eligible landowners outside of MID’s irrigation boundaries, but within MID’s sphere of influence for the purposes of groundwater replenishment. More details on the eligibility criteria is available at [www.mid.org/water/irrigation](http://www.mid.org/water/irrigation).

## 2023 WATER RATES

Following a Proposition 218 public review process and in a public hearing on Tuesday, April 11, the MID Board of Directors reviewed, discussed and approved the 2023 water rates. The 2023 rates were set as follows. More information on rates, the public hearing and the 2023 irrigation season are available at [www.mid.org](http://www.mid.org).

CATEGORY	2022 RATES	2023 RATES
FIXED CHARGE	\$44.00/ACRE	\$53.00/ACRE
VOLUMETRIC - TIER 1 (UP TO 24")	\$2.00/AF	\$2.00/AF
VOLUMETRIC - TIER 2 (24" UP TO 36")	\$5.00/AF	\$5.00/AF
VOLUMETRIC - TIER 3 (36" UP TO 42")	\$11.25/AF	\$11.25/AF
VOLUMETRIC - TIER 4 (MORE THAN 42")	\$40/AF	\$40/AF
MINIMUM CHARGE (LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 5 ACRES)	\$0	\$265
FACILITIES MAINTENANCE CHARGE	\$22.00/ACRE	\$26.50/ACRE

### ONLINE TOOLS AVAILABLE

**ONLINE PORTAL** - Stay up to date on your water usage and billing with MID's online irrigation account portal. If you previously signed up, your online account is still active with your same user ID and password. More information on how to sign up is available at [www.mid.org/water/irrigation](http://www.mid.org/water/irrigation).

**ONLINE BILLING** - You can now pay your irrigation bill online through the irrigation account portal. This is a convenient and secure way to ensure that your bill is paid on time.

**EMAIL UPDATES** - Are you interested in receiving email updates on MID's water operations activities? Send your email to [PublicAffairs@mid.org](mailto:PublicAffairs@mid.org) and we'll add you to our distribution list!

## WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK

The 2023 water year began with a gloomy tone as all of California was experiencing some form of drought, with the San Joaquin Valley classified under the Exceptional Drought designation of the United States Department of Agriculture. Long-range regional model forecasts projected a continuation of drought, driven by the presence of La Niña conditions positioned in the eastern Pacific Ocean for the previous three years. October and November were slightly drier than average, and the concerns about a potential repeat of the historic 2012-2016 California drought were quickly solidified.

Fortunately, nature had other plans for California. Winter season of this water year had a strong start with robust December and January precipitation accumulations throughout California – including the Tuolumne River watershed – thanks to nine landfalling atmospheric rivers. A brief change of conditions followed in the first half of February, with offshore high pressure forcing moisture-rich systems around the region. In late February, a frigid arctic airmass descended landward of the high pressure, delivering cold air and snow to much of the west coast, with large accumulations down to 3,000 feet elevation.

As February ended, the high pressure softened and shifted southward, allowing the jet stream to transport sub-tropical moisture into the state. Early storms in March have taxed many watersheds and reservoirs in California, and our own Tuolumne River watershed is no exception. Forecasts called for significant melting of the low elevation snow from warm rains, and this materialized as higher-than-average inflows to Don Pedro Reservoir. In response, MID and TID began dynamically releasing water from the 2.03 million-acre-feet reservoir to the lower Tuolumne River to create storage space for the inevitable snowmelt to occur in late spring and early summer. The Districts continuously monitor and adjust our releases, balancing them with what we observe in the San Joaquin river system. We also shape the releases to mitigate downstream impacts and account for uncontrolled Dry Creek flow to help ensure that flood-prone areas in Modesto remain dry.

In March, Airborne Snow Observatories Inc. (ASO) performed an aerial survey of the upper Tuolumne River basin, measuring approximately 2,501,000 acre-feet of snow-water equivalent at elevations between 3,000 and 12,500 feet. ASO technology, utilized in the Tuolumne basin for nearly a decade, measures snow depth/density and compares snowpack depth in a given geographic area against snow-free periods (summer) for the same area. ASO measurements perform quite well against traditional ski-based snow surveys and permanent Sno-Tel sites – stations that provide snowpack water content data via a pressure-sensing snow pillow. Also, when coupled with the latest modeling efforts, ASO has proven to be a valuable tool in forecasting timing and magnitude of future runoff.

With so much of the water year left to go, it is safe to say that all Tuolumne precipitation and snow indices will end the water year significantly above their historic averages, perhaps even breaking historic records that have held for nearly 40 years.

## 2022/2023 WINTER PROJECTS

This winter proved to be a historic rain season for California. Despite the saturated conditions, MID staff completed significant construction activities. The following projects were completed by a joint venture of engineering and construction maintenance staff over the course of the winter months.

### LATERAL 1 HEADWORKS MODERNIZATION

Lateral 1 Headworks is located along the MID Main Canal, west of Waterford. This facility has two automated canal gates controlling water flow. Similar to the Waterford Upper Main Headworks, the canal gates were experiencing operational issues due to the length of service and deterioration of the gate components. The existing gates were replaced with automated gates that can adjust to field conditions. This site can be controlled remotely through the District's SCADA system to ensure steady water level.



### WATERFORD UPPER MAIN HEADWORKS MODERNIZATION

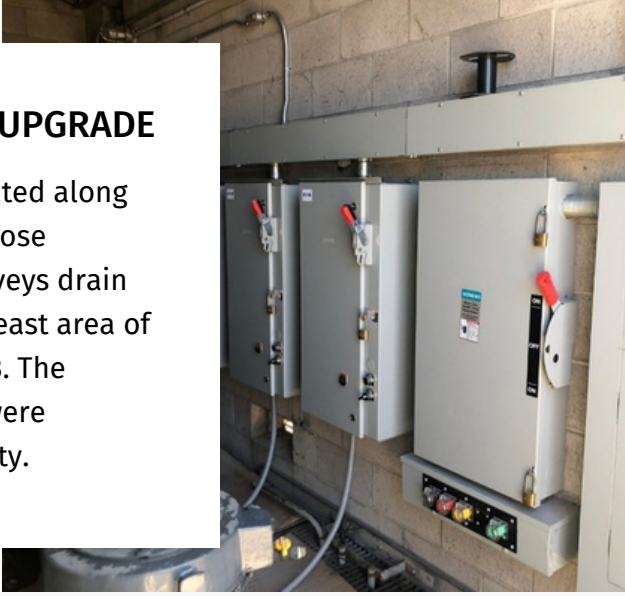
Waterford Upper Main Headworks is located east of the Modesto Reservoir and consists of two manual canal gates controlling water flow. The gates were experiencing operational issues due to the length of service and deterioration of the gate components. The existing gates were replaced, and one gate was modernized to an automated gate that can adjust to field conditions. This site can be controlled remotely through the District's SCADA system to ensure steady water level.





**ROSE AVENUE PUMP STATION UPGRADE**

The Rose Avenue Pump Station is located along Lateral 3, at Briggsmore Avenue and Rose Avenue. This facility receives and conveys drain water and stormwater from the northeast area of Modesto and discharges into Lateral 3. The existing pumps and system controls were upgraded to increase pumping capacity.

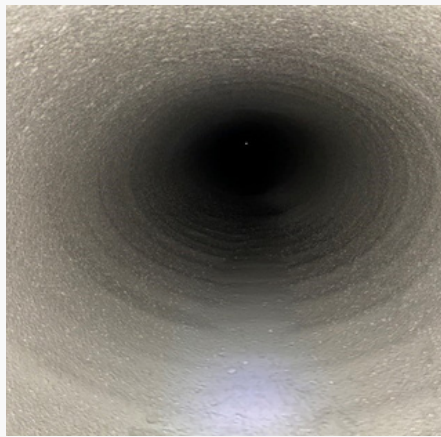


**TIDEWATER PUMP STATION UPGRADE**

The Tidewater Pump Station is located along Lateral 3, at Briggsmore Avenue and the Virginia Corridor. This facility receives and conveys drain water and stormwater from the northern areas of Modesto through the Cavil Drain and discharges into Lateral 3. The existing facility was experiencing vandalism and dumping of debris. The fenced facility was rehabilitated with a masonry building, upgraded pumps, controls, and safety grates.



**SEALED ALL SIX JOINTS AT THE DRY CREEK FLUME**



**REPAIRED 2,500 FEET OF PIPELINE LINING**



**SPRAYED 3,500 CUBIC-YARDS OF GUNITE FOR CANAL LINING**

## CIVIL ENGINEERING PLANNING

Fifteen years ago, MID Water Operations coordinated with the Irrigation Training & Research Center (ITRC) to develop a long-term plan for modernizing our irrigation water delivery system. With the ITRC, MID gathered data, conducted field inspections and ran a series of hydraulic analysis. These efforts resulted in the Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (CWRMP) which was completed in 2018.

The CWRMP consists of both capital improvement projects and annual maintenance projects. This plan relies on MID's Agricultural Water Management Plan, Joint Urban Water Management Plan and regional planning documents to forecast changes in land use and irrigation system demands.

The next progression of the CWRMP was an environmental analysis. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) was prepared to evaluate environmental impacts resulting from the CWRMP. The PEIR provides a summary of the proposed projects and actions within a program and the associated environmental impacts and mitigation measures. The environmental report and analysis were necessary for achieving required California Environmental Quality Act compliance.

MID's PEIR has been completed and is in the last stages of being presented to the MID Board of Directors for certification. The CWRMP, combined with the PEIR, provides MID's Water Operations with a business plan and roadmap in modernizing the irrigation conveyance system to ensure reliability, efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

## DITCH TENDER RETIREES

A big thank you to Randy Terra (32 years), John Van Oostende (30 years) and Terry Lee (17 years) for their many years of exceptional service to MID and our customers. Randy Terra will be replaced by Blake Lemos, John Van Oostende will be replaced by Matt Dickens and Terry Lee will be replaced by Bailey Terra. We are confident they will continue the quality of service that these retirees have given over the years. Should you run across them in the field, please welcome them to their new area.

**WEST SIDE NIGHT TENDERS** - Scott Payton & Phil Fuentes  
(209) 652-6198

**EAST SIDE NIGHT TENDERS** - Christian Jiminez & Nathan Heimstra (209) 652-7124

## DITCH TENDER CONTACT INFORMATION

**AREA 1** - Mark Pieczarka & Chuck Birdsong  
(209) 652-7326

**AREA 2** - Matt Dickens & Sergio Chavez  
(209) 652-7082

**AREA 3** - Fred Albertoni & Johel Arrequin  
(209) 652-7114

**AREA 4** - Bailey Terra & Jorge Camarena  
(209) 652-7077

**AREA 5** - Thomas Helms & Alex Anderson  
(209) 652-7118

**AREA 6** - Blake Lemos & Tony Esquivel  
(209) 652-1268

**AREA 7** - Kyle Bizzini & Levi Heinrich  
(209) 652-9813

## WATER RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Several “water rights modernization” bills have recently been introduced in the California legislature that would have significant impacts on the California water rights system and could permanently harm water supply reliability and threaten MID’s local control.

These bills – [Assembly Bill 460](#), [Assembly Bill 676](#), [Assembly Bill 1337](#), [Senate Bill 389](#) – seek to dramatically expand the State Water Resources Control Board’s (SWRCB) administrative authority in a manner that conflicts with the established water rights priority system California water users rely and depend on.

MID and TID hold some of the oldest, senior surface water rights in the state – known as pre-1914 water rights – and we’ve held these rights long before the SWRCB was established. These water rights give us the ability to access our water source – the Tuolumne River – and have been the foundation of the Districts’ water infrastructure investments like Don Pedro, decades of smart water stewardship and sound locally-managed operations.

We’ve been working with fellow irrigation districts, water agencies and industry groups including the California Municipal Utilities Association and Association of California Water Agencies to fight these bills and voice concerns to our legislators.

Along with our concerns, we’re offering realistic suggestions to bolster the already-established water rights system and current administration including highlighting the following opportunities – (1) ensure the system addresses those violating the water rights priority system and (2) ask that the state receives the resources and data it needs to administer California’s water rights system as it stands.

Water rights are part of MID’s history and integral to our water planning future. While the proposed bills are in the early stages of the legislative process, we’ll continue to make our voices heard for preserving and protecting our water rights.





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## MID WATER OPERATIONS DIVISION

Monday - Friday | 7 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(209) 526-7562

Name  
Address line 1  
Address line 2  
City, State ZIP

## VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS TAKE A STEP FORWARD

MID, together with our partners Turlock Irrigation District (TID) and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), continue to fight the state's plan to take 40% of the water in the Tuolumne River. As we've mentioned in previous meetings and issues of The Irrigator newsletter, we have been committed to a Voluntary Agreement (also referred to as the VA) that uses the best available science and is a combination of flow and non-flow measures. This was the basis of the proposal we submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) five years ago during the relicensing process for Don Pedro.

Throughout the years of negotiating, MID, TID and SFPUC have stuck to the same proposal and have finally come to agreement on the major deal points with the state. In November 2022, we signed a memorandum of understanding to advance the Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement and a Tuolumne River-specific term sheet was released detailing our proposed river flow and habitat restoration efforts. These details can be found at [mid.org](http://mid.org).

While this was a major milestone in the process, there is still work to do. MID, TID and SFPUC are now part of smaller working groups to finalize the details, but we are hopeful that the VA we presented will be adopted and provide certainty to our community and improvements to the river. Any final voluntary agreement will be presented to and approved by the Districts' Board of Directors.

Parallel to the voluntary agreement process, we continue our lawsuit against the State Water Resources Control Board's Bay-Delta Quality Control Plan.