



Customer, IID coordination credited for conservation

Much of the credit for reducing IID's projected overrun the latter half of 2007 can be attributed to better coordination between agricultural water users and the district's operations staff.

Communications played a big part in it. Not only were zanjeros and hydrographers issued cell phones, but their home telephone numbers were provided to their agricultural water customers as well. This generated an enhanced atmosphere of cooperation,

allowing direct contact for customers to request changes to their water deliveries. It also allowed field operations staff more opportunities to back the water into the system, which helped reduce spill.

The Water Department appreciates this cooperation and would like to remind its agricultural water customers to please continue these solid coordinating efforts as the district begins a new water year where the supply will continue to be tight.

New software focus of staff training effort

Training has been under way for key Water Department employees to learn the new TruePoint software for the equitable distribution pilot program.

Among various features, water coordinators are practicing placing new water orders and zanjeros are learning how to enter charges.

The software will soon replace the SAP system for water accounting and billing functions. As part of the effort, staff has been working with ag water users to develop a detailed water bill that will include useful information pertaining to apportionment and equitable distribution.



"We've gotten a lot of feedback from ag water users," said Mike Pacheco, project



Water Department employees Paul Lopez, assistant division supervisor, Joe Mariscal, zanjero, Water Coordinator Hector Garcia and Zanjero Mike Cortez, (left photo), study the software as Merlon Kidwell, assistant water master, (right), instructs.



coordinator. "What they've seen so far, they like. The system is very user-friendly."

The new water bill, which is in the development stages, will not only provide consumptive use data but will detail all transactions, including activity for an ag user's fields and farm units.

On-line features will let customers see their new water bill as well as offer the added benefit of allowing customers to order water and check the status of their orders.

Equitable Distribution Pilot Program Update

The supply/demand imbalance triggered in June 2007 for the 2008 water year set in motion the development of an equitable distribution program that was due to start Jan. 1, 2008. However, as the year progressed, the strong likelihood developed that IID would not exceed its scheduled use of Colorado River water. So in December, the IID Board of Directors ordered staff to continue developing equitable distribution, but implement it as a pilot program.

The program will use the straight-line method of water apportionment – where every acre would be entitled to an equal water share, initially proposed to be 5.13 acre-feet per acre.

Those working on the pilot program expect to present additional details to the board in March. It's likely that program rules will evolve as the process is developed and reviewed, said Michael L. King, Water Department manager.

"We're glad to have the time to develop equitable distribution as a pilot program so we can get the details worked out and reviewed with members of the Water Conservation Advisory Board and the farming community," said King. "The key is for everyone to understand that this is a pilot program. For the best benefit, we need everyone to work together to learn what does and does not work. This requires participation. And both the IID and our ag water customers will need to act as if the pilot program were the real deal."

For farmers, this includes determining early on their farm water requirements, tracking their use and posting and trading to sell and buy water. The new equitable distribution software, which features a web interface, will help make this task easier for ag customers.

"Those who participate in the pilot program will benefit the most and will be best prepared should a supply/demand imbalance forecast ever trigger full equitable distribution implementation," King said.

For more information on the pilot program, please visit:

www.iid.com/Water/EquitableDistribution

New Water Cards

New water cards, or "water authorization forms" as they will now be referred to, are needed to help implement the equitable distribution pilot program and update IID's new Truepoint Software database.

The current water cards do not provide information necessary for equitable distribution implementation and many are outdated. The new water authorization forms continue to be developed, streamlined for simplicity and reviewed with the help of a Water Conservation Advisory subcommittee. The committee includes Ralph Strahm, Don Emanuelli, Tom Brundy, Larry Gilbert, Kevin Kenagy and Cliff Strahm.

On the new water authorization forms the landowner must identify – for each field – who will be authorized to make decisions about apportionment, water use and transfers through the intra-district exchange during any equitable distribution program.

The department plans to mail the new water authorization forms to landowners and tenants as soon as the forms are finalized. The forms will also be available via download from the IID Web site under the equitable distribution section.

Landowners and tenants are asked to complete and return the new water authorization forms for processing as soon as possible. Your patience and cooperation is appreciated as thousands of forms will be reviewed and processed.

Managed Marsh Update

The IID water conservation and transfer project is being implemented by the district in accordance with biological mitigation measures included in the 2002 draft habitat conservation plan and other permits.

See Ditchbank, back page

Water Watch

Lake Powell and Lake Mead serve as water storage reservoirs for IID and other Colorado River basin water contractors. Due to ongoing drought conditions and increasing demands, the elevations of these lakes have dropped significantly over the last eight years. Together, these reservoirs are now less than 48 percent full, four percent less than a year ago. As of Jan. 31, 2008, the current water year projection for runoff into Lake Powell is 97 percent of average, while the snow pack in the Colorado River basin is estimated at 124 percent of average.

www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/weekly.pdf

Farmer's Corner

Best management practices that use less water and do not reduce yield are practiced daily by Imperial Valley farmers. In some cases, yields are also improved.

The editors of this publication would like to hear from more IID ag water customers who are willing to share their on-farm water irrigation best management practices so others can learn to be better water stewards.

Please contact Dean Currie, key customer coordinator, at (760) 339-9334 or via e-mail at: dcurrie@iid.com

Question of the Month

How does the equitable distribution pilot program change how I order and use water in 2008?

The equitable distribution pilot project passed by the board Dec. 18, 2007, is in the process of being developed. When it is determined what the parameters and related rules will be, including what information is needed on the new water authorization forms (formerly titled "water cards") and the new software is implemented, then a process to convert to the pilot project can be initiated, which will include the amount of water used to date.

"The idea is to have a pilot project with enough teeth to get water users to participate, but at the same time not limit their water use," said Michael L. King, Water Department

manager. "It is too early yet to know what shape the program will take, but it will be developed with the participation of the Water Conservation Advisory Board."

Until further notice, how farmers order and use water has not changed in 2008. Please continue to order and use water as reasonably and beneficially as practically possible.

What is a Farm Water Budget?

Most of us are familiar with the idea of estimating the total amount of irrigation water a particular crop will need for a particular field. In arriving at this estimate, beneficially applied irrigation water will not only satisfy the crop needs, but will also include water applied for such things as: pre-plant irrigation for fertilizer and pesticide activation, leaching for salinity management, soil profile refilling and seedbed firming, to name just a few. The field water budget is the total of all applied water for the field, with that crop and any other crops planted in a particular calendar year.

Determining the farm water budget is simply the summation of all water applied to all fields within your farm enterprise in a calendar year.

When considering the crop water requirements, many growers will use their historical water deliveries from the IID. Frequently, CIMIS (California irrigation management information system) data may be included to fine-tune the farm water budget.

Ditchbank (Continued from front page)

The district is finalizing the HCP and preparing a natural communities conservation plan to secure additional long-term regulatory assurances for the Water Department.

The proposed HCP/NCCP will contain certain modified or new mitigation and conservation measures that were not included in the 2002 draft HCP. In particular, a larger 959-acre managed marsh complex will be constructed and managed as an aquatic habitat to mitigate for drain operations and maintenance activities.

This 307-acre increase is primarily a result of a drain vegetation survey completed by IID in 2004 that documented more drain vegetation than the amount originally estimated. While development of the draft HCP/NCCP is still in process, IID is required to begin creating the managed marsh under existing permit requirements and schedules.

IID is preparing a supplemental environmental report that will provide any additional environmental assessment required to designate, construct and manage a specific site for the expanded managed marsh complex.

Four site alternatives are analyzed in the draft supplemental, which was released for a 45-day comment period in late January 2008. Comments are due no later than March 14, 2008. For more information regarding the managed marsh or to access the draft supplement go to:

www.iid.com/Water/ManagedMarsh

Costs associated with all Quantification Settlement Agreement mitigation measures are funded by the QSA joint powers authority, to which IID's funding commitment is capped, so implementation costs do not impact the Water Department.

Vegetation Management

The IID's vegetation management specialist is working with different agencies to control the invasive weed problems in the canal and drainage system. The schedule of the recently completed Habitat spray program to kill salt cedars in IID drains can be viewed at:

www.iid.com/Water/VegetationManagementSchedule

Habitat herbicide works systemically and takes more than a year to completely kill a salt cedar. Before you request IID maintenance remove these weeds, please check with the district to see if the drainage canal has been treated. Schedules of where drain maintenance is scheduled to be performed in 2008 may be viewed at:

www.iid.com/Water/DrainCleaningSchedule

For additional information or comments please contact David Watson at (760) 339-9705 or (760)562-9645 or via e-mail at:

dwatson@iid.com

WCAB meets Feb. 14, March 13

The Water Conservation Advisory Board meets the second

Thursday of each month (except August) at 1:30 p.m. in IID's Water Control Center conference room in Imperial.

The meetings are open to the public.

"WCAB meetings are one of the best sources of water issue information to help me make informed decisions," said Wayne Olesh, a WCAB member. Olesh farms in the Brawley area.

The agendas for the WCAB meetings are posted prior to each meeting. They are accessible on the IID Web site at:

www.iid.com/Water/WaterConservationAdvisoryBoard

Topics at recent WCAB meetings include: equitable water distribution system software; QSA and equitable distribution program updates; water operations report; Imperial Valley crop report, and drain and vegetative management updates.

Regulation No. 17

Excessive Ponding and Wasting of Water

The prudent use of water will help minimize the likelihood of IID exceeding its entitlement in 2008. The "reasonable and beneficial" use of IID's Colorado River flows are at the heart of the district's senior water right. IID Regulation No. 17 addresses this and is a reminder for everyone:

"Except as provided in Regulation No. 20 (Delivery of Leaching Water), the excessive ponding of water in the lower ends of fields or in low areas, and the practice of discharging excess irrigation water into lateral or deep drains and/or other ditches, whether district or private, will not be permitted. Waste or unreasonable use or method of use of water shall be prevented. Conservation of water shall be exercised with a view to the reasonable and beneficial use thereof.

"The district may refuse or restrict water service to any landowner or water user who does not comply with this regulation."

Information on all of IID's rules and regulations governing the use and ordering of water may be found at:

www.iid.com/Water/WaterRulesandRegulations

Canal Cutout Schedules

To help plan your farming operations, lateral cutout schedules are available up to two months ahead. Schedules may be revised, so please refer to the following site for updated information:

www.iid.com/Water/CutoutSchedule

If your operation cannot survive a scheduled lateral cutout, please let your district maintenance supervisors know as soon as possible so crews may be efficiently rescheduled.

Local Entity

The Local Entity, a group of five volunteers tasked with the duty to administer the funds to help offset the third-party socioeconomic impacts of land fallowing, last met on Jan. 30. For updates, visit:

www.iid.com/Water/LocalEntity