IID, county reach QSA settlement

In February, the IID Board of Directors and the Imperial County Board of Supervisors announced a settlement that ends 12 years of litigation over the Quantification Settlement Agreement. The county and its Air Pollution Control District will dismiss their pending appeals and join IID in its current petition before the State Water Resources Control Board regarding the state’s unmet restoration obligation at the Salton Sea.

IID agreed to waive its court costs and seek the same waiver of costs from the remaining QSA parties. It also agreed to pay the county and air district $750,000 to dismiss their appeal.

IID directors and county supervisors echoed that the settlement is important not only for the two agencies but to the entire region. For the first time since the QSA was signed, the two governmental bodies that represent the same constituents are in a position to speak with a single voice on what is considered a looming environmental crisis at the Salton Sea and to demand not just accountability, but action.

Comments due for state workshop

The State Water Resources Control Board will conduct a public workshop March 18 in Sacramento to receive information and solicit public input regarding the state’s obligation to restore the Salton Sea. The public workshop is in response to an IID petition seeking modification of the state water board’s Revised Order WRO 2002-0013, which approved long-term water transfers to Southern California.

The state water board encourages interested persons to submit written comments by noon, Wednesday, March 11. Submittals less than 15 megabytes should be emailed to: Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board, at: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov.

Persons submitting comments more than 15 megabytes in size should (1) email a summary of their written information to the contact listed above and (2) mail or hand deliver any additional information on a CD/DVD. For all correspondence, please indicate in the subject line: “Comment Letter: Salton Sea.” Mail should be postmarked by the comment deadline and addressed to: Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board, State Water Resources Control Board, 1001 I Street, 24th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814.

For more information, visit the state water board’s website: www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/salton_sea/.

Fallowing Program Solicitation update

The 2015-2016 Farm Unit Fallowing Program solicitation letters were mailed in early March. IID is contracting with farm unit managers to fallow ag land for one year starting July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

The IID Board of Directors has set the 2015-2016 Farm Unit Fallowing Program price at $175 per acre-foot; 80 percent of the payment is to be divided among the landowners who are participating within the farm unit; 20 percent is to go to the farm unit manager.

IID anticipates a much smaller fallowing program, with a fallowed water requirement as low as 43,000 AF for the 2015-2016 fallowing program. This equates to approximately 8,000 acres based on past programs. For more information, visit: www.iid.com/FPsolicitation.
2014 Equitable Distribution Summary Q&A

Q: How well did the farming community do under the 2014 Equitable Distribution Plan?
A: As a whole, water users did a good job of using the Ag Water Clearinghouse and managing their water. Over 71 percent of water users ended the year with a zero balance and had no water left in their farm unit accounts; 22 percent were slightly positive and 3 percent of farm units had a slightly negative balance. IID is still finalizing the accounting for the remaining 4 percent.

Q: As a group, were agricultural water users over or under?
A: IID water use was close to spot on – the ag water users ended the year less than 2,900 acre-feet over, and that includes the conservation volumes attributable to IID’s various on-farm efficiency conservation and fallowing programs.

Q: How many farm units were individually over or under?
A: Preliminary accounting indicates only 16 farm units ended the year with a negative account balance, although this may change slightly pending final water conservation and accounting true-ups.

Q: How well did the Ag Water Clearinghouse work?
A: A total of 439 farm units submitted offers and/or requests (including relief period offers) representing 350,000 acres. Additionally, IID administratively transferred water to 35 farm units ending the year negative, representing 45,500 acres, to balance those accounts. The clearinghouse filled 211,000 AF of requests during 2014, processing about 750 transfers.

The year included two board-declared payment relief periods, one ending on Dec. 1 and the other ending Dec. 31. In those periods, offers of up to 7 percent of the farm unit’s initial apportionment (plus any it had obtained from the clearinghouse) was automatically accepted by IID and held in the clearinghouse to be available for transfer even if there were no offsetting requests for water.

2014 Agricultural Water Clearinghouse Activity

[Chart showing AWC Distributions from 1/28/14 to 12/31/14 with various bars for Beginning Available, Available for Next Month, Unfilled Requests, New Requests Filled, Pending Requests Filled, Unaccepted Offers, New Offers Accepted, and Pending Offers Accepted. Note: 12/31/14 beginning balance includes water from unused apportionment in non-ag classes and from invalid ag accounts.]