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TID deliveries reduced by 62 percent amid drought

2015 Irrigation Season also shortened, dry rates charged in response to fourth straight dry year

TURLOCK – At its regular Tuesday meeting, the Turlock Irrigation District Board of Directors set the amount of available water for the 2015 Irrigation Season at 18 inches per acre, which represents a reduction of 62 percent from historical deliveries. The Board also selected to charge customers pursuant the District’s dry-year irrigation rate schedule and set the season to run from April 9 through October 7.

In its irrigation season planning, TID annually considers water that is in Don Pedro, forecasted full natural flow of the Tuolumne River, and operations of reservoirs upstream of Don Pedro, among other factors. After considering the most updated information, staff recommended 18 inches of available water, and the TID Board concurred with staff’s recommendation.

These actions come during an unprecedented drought which ranks as the driest four-year period in the history of TID by a significant margin. The full natural flow of the Tuolumne River thus far during the 2014-15 Water Year is 13 percent of historical average. Snowpack levels within the Tuolumne River Watershed are 3.8 percent of average for this date. And weather forecasts indicate no significant precipitation on the horizon.

Irrigation Season

The 2015 Irrigation Season will run Thursday, April 9 through Wednesday, October 7. As is typical of this annual action, the Board authorized TID’s Water Distribution Department Manager to adjust the start and end of the season as necessary, depending on weather or crop requirements. If the April 9 start date holds, the TID Irrigation Call Center would be activated and begin accepting water orders on Wednesday, April 8.

This shortened season is one of several measures within TID’s drought management toolkit aimed at efficiently optimizing water supplies. Other measures include minimizing operational spills (via operational efficiencies or conservation projects) and reducing the amount of water available to growers.

Irrigation rates will be charged pursuant to the dry-year volumetric pricing rate schedule adopted by the Board earlier this year. Those rates are available for viewing at tid.org/water/water-rates.

Available Water

The amount of available water for irrigation customers this season is limited to 18 inches per acre, which represents a 62 percent reduction from historical deliveries. Included in this amount is the expectation that the District will strategically pump approximately 90,000 acre-feet of water from drainage and rented wells. TID will not be renting pumps in an area of its service territory bounded by Harding Road to the south, the Tuolumne River to the north and from Faith Home Road east to the TID irrigation service boundary.

In the irrigation seasons following a wet 2011, TID has reduced historical irrigation deliveries by 37 percent (in 2012), 30 percent (in 2013), 58 percent (in 2014) and 62 percent (this season). As has been past practice, growers will be allowed to go over the available water to complete their final irrigation and will be billed at whichever rate tier in which that water is used.

A Drought State of Operations resolution (Resolution No. 2014-8) was adopted by the TID Board on Feb. 25, 2014. That resolution remains in effect, and TID staff will endeavor to continue the actions described in that resolution.

Additional drought informational resources are available online at tid.org/drought-information.

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Media Contacts:

Calvin Curtin | clcurtin@tid.org | 209.883.8213

Michelle Reimers | mareimers@tid.org | 209.883.8530

About the Turlock Irrigation District (TID)

The Turlock Irrigation District, located in Turlock CA, is the first publicly owned Irrigation District and is one of only four today that provides irrigation water and power to residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural customers within its service area. TID has been in the retail electric business since 1923. TID provides safe, low-cost, reliable energy to a growing customer base that today exceeds 98,000 home, farm, business, industrial and municipal accounts. TID also serves 5,800 irrigation customers covering approximately 150,000 acres of farmland. For more information about TID visit www.tid.com and follow [@TurlockID](https://twitter.com/TurlockID) on Twitter.