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Chowchilla Water District and Fresno Irrigation District Rejoin Friant Water Authority

Lindsay, Calif. – During their December meetings the Board of Directors of the Chowchilla Water District (CWD) and Fresno Irrigation Districts (FID) voted unanimously to become full General Members of the Friant Water Authority (FWA). It is expected that the FWA Board will approve the requests during its first meeting in 2018.

The actions of the two District Boards mark the end of the process to fully rejoin the Friant Water Authority. FID has been a Trial Member since March 2017 and CWD has been an Associate Member since July 2017. By becoming General Members, both Districts will have a voting seat on the FWA Board of Directors.

Kent Stephens, Chairman of FWA and President of Kern-Tulare Water District commented, “It is exciting to see past members of FWA deciding to return. It has been a priority of the FWA board to build a team that can effectively represent the member agencies and help ensure the Friant Division and surrounding areas has a reliable water supply now and in the future. Both CWD and FID have had the opportunity to see first-hand how the new FWA operates, its commitment to its customers, and its desire to become a leader in water issues in the San Joaquin Valley.”

Kole Upton, current President of the Chowchilla WD, served as FWUA’s Chairman from 1998 to 2008, and has been CWD’s representative on the Board since July added, “Chowchilla Water District voted unanimously at its monthly meeting to rejoin Friant Water Authority as a regular General Member effective 1/1/2018. This action is a direct reflection of the vast improvement in the Friant staff, and Friant's re-establishing itself at THE ORGANIZATION that represents the water interests of the East San Joaquin Valley.”

George Porter, representing the Fresno Irrigation District, had this to say about becoming a General Member, “Fresno Irrigation District’s decision to return to the Friant Water Authority is a direct reflection of the major reorganization and new management changes made in the past two years. FID has been impressed with the new organization and the leadership under their new CEO, in addressing global issues

impacting Friant water supplies and developing new opportunities for future water supplies. In addition, FID will benefit by being represented by a larger organization such as FWA on local, state, and federal issues.”

The Chowchilla Water District serves approximately 85,000 acres situated in southern Merced County and northern Madera County on the eastside of the San Joaquin Valley. The District serves over 400 water users, with an average farm size of about 162 acres. The Fresno Irrigation District serves approximately 247,000 acres, and over 4,000 water users. Crops in both districts include, grapes, citrus, almonds, alfalfa, and wheat.

Jason Phillips, CEO of the FWA, added his insight. “Having both Chowchilla and Fresno back as full General Members is an important step in strengthening and diversifying the voice of the Friant Water Authority. Both Districts have long played a critical role in water issues on the Eastside, and having them back as General Members will provide tremendous value both to the board and the entire Friant Division.”

The membership of FWA is now comprised of 15 members, including: Arvin-Edison Water Storage District, Chowchilla Water District, City of Fresno, Fresno Irrigation District, Hills Valley Irrigation District, Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, Kern-Tulare Water District, Lindmore Irrigation District, Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, Madera Irrigation District, Orange Cove Irrigation District, Porterville Irrigation District, Saucelito Irrigation District, Terra Bella Irrigation District, and Tulare Irrigation District.

FWA is a joint-powers authority formed in 2004 by a majority of the water agencies receiving water from the Friant Division of the Central Valley Project. Its primary purposes are to operate and maintain the Friant-Kern Canal and to serve the information and representation needs of its member agencies.

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