

# eWATERLINE

JUNE 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Jason Phillips**  
Chief Executive Officer

"Never let a crisis go to waste". You've heard that adage before. And it is usually uttered by someone in government looking to advance an agenda, whatever the cost. Unfortunately, that scenario is happening in real time yet again.

It isn't uncommon for water agencies and water users to have to gear up every year to fend off relentless attacks on an already fragile, and in some cases, broken water system. Since the early 1990's, efforts to legislate or regulate water and resources away from cities, communities, and farms have been the rule, not the exception. Most of our collective attention has been focused on attacks from Washington DC, but more and more, we're starting to see efforts at the state level to do the same.

This summer, there are a few bills that the Friant Water Authority is tracking, and in some cases, we have joined a large and formidable coalition of partners to oppose. If enacted, these bills would set into motion draconian ideas intended to upend water rights and further weaken an already fragile water supply system in California, all in the name of social justice.

The bills are:

- AB 460 (Bauer-Kahan), which would grant more power to the State Water Resources Control Board to penalize people who take more than their share of allotted water.
- AB 1337 (Wicks), which would give the State Water Resources Control Board more authority over the most senior water rights, from before 1914.

[Continued on page 2](#)

## RECLAMATION GRANT SUPPORTS UNIFIED WATER PLAN FOR THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Reprinted from the [U.S. Bureau of Reclamation](#), June 23, 2023

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. – The Bureau of Reclamation on Friday, June 23rd, announced an award of about \$1 million to help the California Water Institute and Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley develop and integrate subregional water management efforts and local projects into a unified water plan for the San Joaquin Valley.

"Reclamation is committed to looking towards the future relative to sustainable resource management and we are excited to partner and support efforts spearheaded by CWI and the Water Blueprint," said Adam Nickels, Reclamation's chief of resources management and planning. "Under this effort, information will be gathered by a diverse cross-section of the American public and stakeholders and will be used by resource decision-makers and stakeholders."

"Everybody is excited and encouraged to receive this funding from the Bureau of Reclamation," said Austin Ewell, executive director of the Blueprint. "We'll be able to utilize and capitalize on the expertise of stakeholders representing all sectors of the Valley."

The water plan report will leverage information from counties, cities, and groundwater sustainability agencies. "I'm excited to work with all of the different agencies and evaluate their needs and find a connection between all of them," said Laura Ramos, CWI research and education division interim director. "Being able to take a look at the entire area will give us a really good visual of what the San Joaquin Valley needs."

The two-year project will look at existing and future conditions and consider various aspects of the plans, including water quality, supply, conveyance, reliability, conservation efforts, flood control and population growth.

"This is an excellent partnership and furthers our mission to provide common sense solutions for a prosperous Central Valley," said Laura Ramos and Austin Ewell in a joint statement.



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**JUL 17**

FWA Executive Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

[CLICK FOR INFO](#)

**JUL 24**

FWA Finance Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

[CLICK FOR INFO](#)

**JUL 27**

FWA Board of Directors Meeting  
Visalia, CA

[CLICK FOR INFO](#)

**AUG 14**

FWA Executive Committee Meeting  
Lindsay, CA

[CLICK FOR INFO](#)

**NOT A SUBSCRIBER YET?**

[Click here to subscribe to this newsletter!](#)



@FRIANTWATER  
FRIANTWATER.ORG

- SB 389 (Allen), which would allow the State Water Resources Control Board to investigate water users.

As I write this message, all three of these bills have passed their respective chambers in the Legislature. As referenced earlier, a growing opposition coalition, of which FWA is included, is attempting work with the bill authors to offer amendments, but ideally, our coalition would like to see these bills stall, and not end up on the Governor's desk. Some of that work may be paying off as AB460 was pulled from committee consideration earlier this week. That can change later in the year so to be certain, a lot more work and vigilance is required.

In other news, as I mentioned last month, the FWA Board of Directors recently took action to remove Friant flow measures from the draft Voluntary Agreement but directed staff to continue participating in discussions on funding. This was not a decision that was made in haste or easily for several reasons. On September 13, 2006, a historic settlement was signed that brought the end to an 18-year lawsuit involving many members of the Friant Water Authority, the United States, and a number of environmental organizations. The dispute resolved by the Settlement was over the operation of Friant Dam and longstanding legal claims brought by the coalition of environmental groups related to the river's historic population of salmon. Since Friant Dam became fully operational in the late 1940s, approximately 60 miles of the river have been dried up in most years, eliminating salmon above the river's confluence with the Merced River.

The Friant Division decided a settlement was a better option than going before a judge, who had already telegraphed his intentions, for two main reasons. The "restoration goal", which is to restore and maintain fish populations in the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River, including naturally reproducing and self-sustaining populations of salmon and other fish. And the "water management goal", which is intended to reduce or avoid adverse water supply impacts to all of the Friant Division long-term contractors that may result from the Restoration Flows provided for in the Settlement.

I am raising this issue this month because we view this historic settlement as our "voluntary agreement", and it is a settlement that we are committed to uphold and implement so that the dual objectives outlined in the settlement agreement can be attained. It hasn't been without its challenges, but we still maintain that the successful implementation of the settlement is better than what the alternative would be.

It has been almost 20 years since settling, and we are as committed now as we were then to ensuring that both established goals of the settlement are reached.

Stay cool out there.



## MEET THE FRIANT FAMILY

### JIM ERICKSON

Chairman Jim Erickson represents the Madera Irrigation District (MID) on the FWA Board of Directors, and he is 6 months into his 2023/2024 term as FWA Board Chairman. He was born, raised, and still lives on the original home ranch his great-grandfather bought in 1924. He is a third generation Fresno State graduate with a B.S. in Ag Business. He is married to his high school sweetheart, Lori, and they have two sons and one daughter. Mr. Erickson runs a very successful operation with his sons and has more than 36 years of experience in agriculture. Jim is a second-generation MID Board Member and has been actively involved in many agricultural organizations, including past president of the Madera County Farm Bureau. He was welcomed into the FWA Board family in December of 2016.



JIM ERICKSON

### TOMMY GRECI

Tommy Greci has served as the Madera Irrigation District (MID) General Manager since March 2012. Tommy also serves as the General Manager of the Madera Chowchilla Water and Power Authority, which operates and maintains the Madera Canal and four hydroelectric generation facilities. Tommy is a lifelong resident of Madera County where he grew up working on his family's farm and became heavily involved in the local agricultural community. He is married to his wife Brooke, and they have two children: Siena, age 13 years, and Paul, age 12 years. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from California State University, Fresno. Tommy is a licensed Professional Civil Engineer in California. Tommy has solved complex water issues for small valley towns to large regional water agencies. This experience greatly benefits MID. Tommy's leadership style is to focus on the things that matter most and that are consistent with MID's mission. Tommy is very proud of the MID team and the progress MID has made to improve local water supplies. As a strong advocate for local water supplies, Tommy believes in water management programs that provide benefits for the District as a whole. In Tommy's free time, he enjoys going on backpacking or hiking adventures with his family, as well as hunting, fishing, and traveling.



TOMMY GRECI

### BECKY BRIONES

Becky Briones has worked with Friant since 1995, which was called Friant Water Users Authority at the time. Throughout her career she has worked alongside several General Managers and has held a number of titles. Currently, she serves as our Payroll Specialist and Analyst. She enjoys the family oriented culture and has enjoyed seeing employee's children grow up into respectable and great adults. As the organization has evolved through the years, Becky has been a steady force around the office. She feels this is the best time at Friant and looks forward to eventually retiring from the FWA's proud family of employees.



BECKY BRIONES



**FWA COO  
JOHNNY AMARAL  
INTERVIEWED  
ON DISTRICT OF  
CONSERVATION  
PODCAST**



In Episode 367 of District of Conservation, Gabriella continues the conversation surrounding EP 14 of Conservation Nation with two gentlemen who starred in it: Johnny Amaral and William Bourdeau. Learn how these stakeholders are impacting the conversation surrounding food security, farming, water infrastructure, and more.

**CLICK HERE TO LISTEN  
ON APPLE PODCAST!**



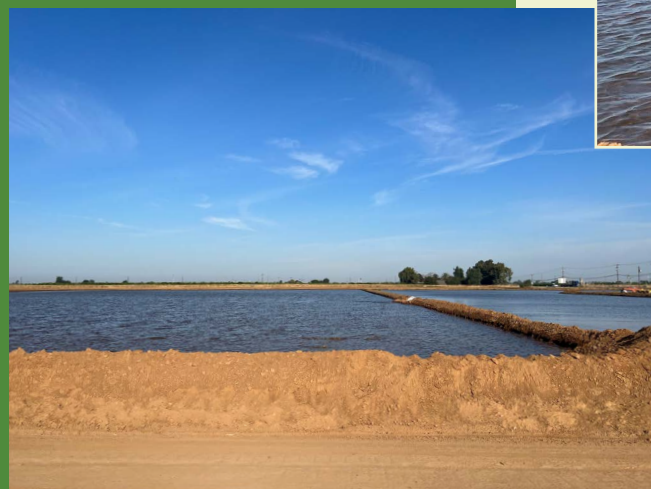
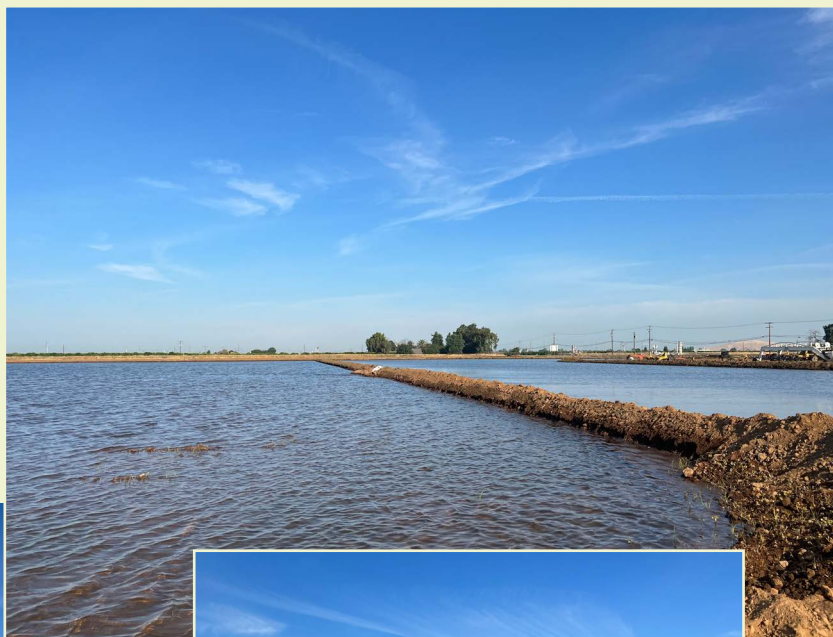
**FWA'S VIVIAN GARCIA FELIPE  
ATTENDS SHRM CONFERENCE**

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest HR association with nearly 325,000 members in 165 countries and impacts the lives of more than 235 million workers and families globally. This year, FWA's head of HR, Vivian Garcia Felipe, attended SHRM's annual conference in Las Vegas. Thank you for attending, Vivian!



**EXETER IRRIGATION  
DISTRICT GROUNDWATER  
RECHARGE IN ACTION**

Up and down the Friant Division, irrigation and water districts are taking full advantage of the historic water supply made available by mother nature in 2023, putting water back into the ground to restore underground aquifers. These photos from the Exeter Irrigation District show groundwater recharge in progress.





# FRIANT-KERN CANAL MIDDLE REACH CAPACITY CORRECTION CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS UPDATE

At the flood impacted areas on the project, construction and cleanup has been improving at a smooth and steady pace. As this was happening, three 60-inch diversion pipes were installed and completed for temporary use. Deer Creek flow will be diverted there until the cleanup is completed and the flows recede.

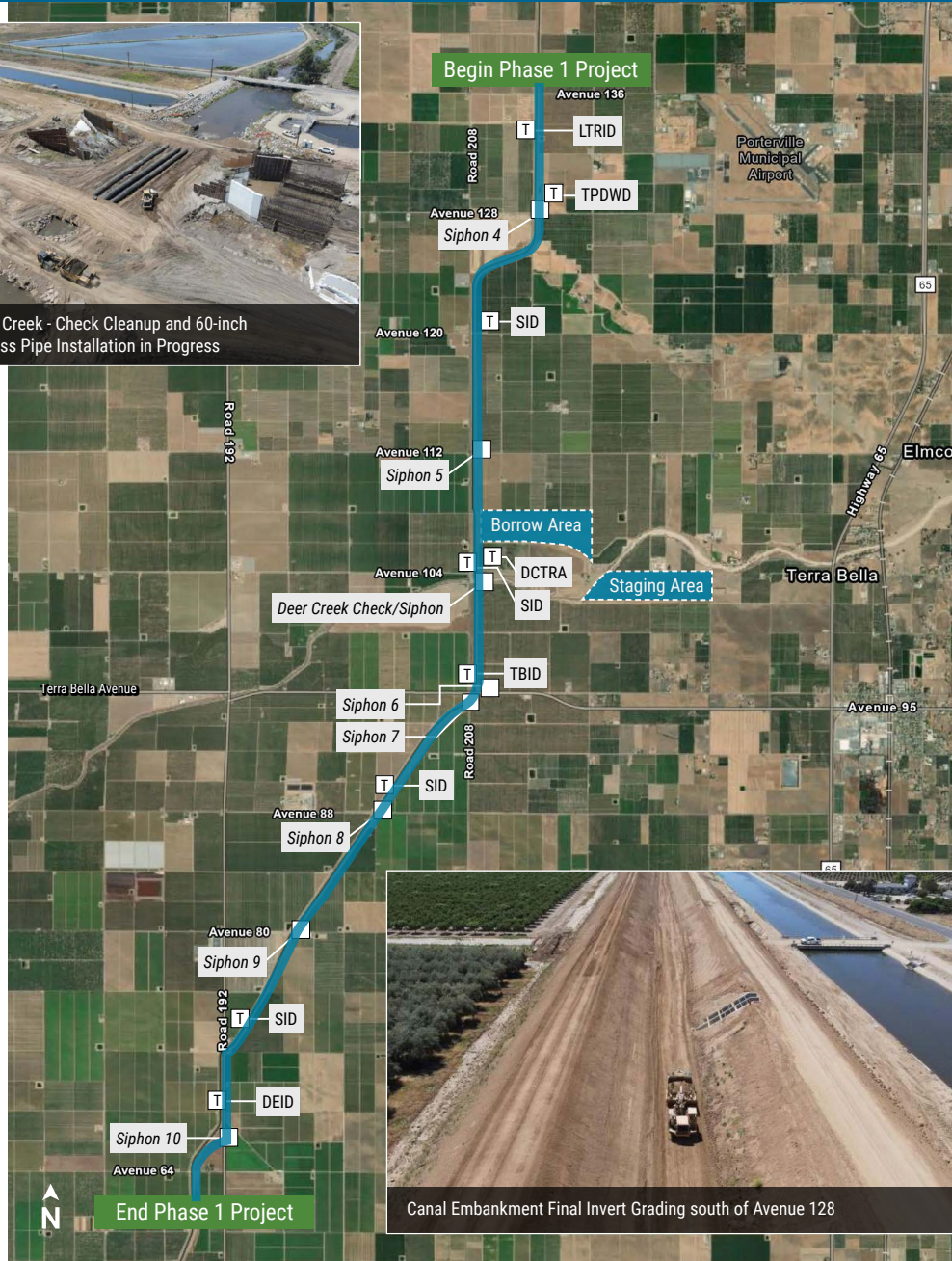
More canal embankment was placed between Avenue 128 toward Avenue 112 with borrowed material from the City of Porterville borrow site, between Avenue 112 south toward Deer Creek using borrowed material from the TBID borrow pit, and between Road 192 and Avenue 64 with materials from a private property source.

At the Avenue 112 Siphon, reinforcing bars were installed for the deck and headwall sections and concrete poured within various deck sections. Falsework was removed from Road 192 siphon to make way for the structural backfill. For the Terra Bella Avenue siphon, a lot of work was completed in terms of formwork, water stops, bulkheads, etc. Other siphons that received similar work include the Avenue 128 Siphon and the Road 208 siphon.

With the use of biological construction monitoring there are several bird buffers in place; no evidence has been found to indicate any presence of other animals such as foxes or owls in the work area.



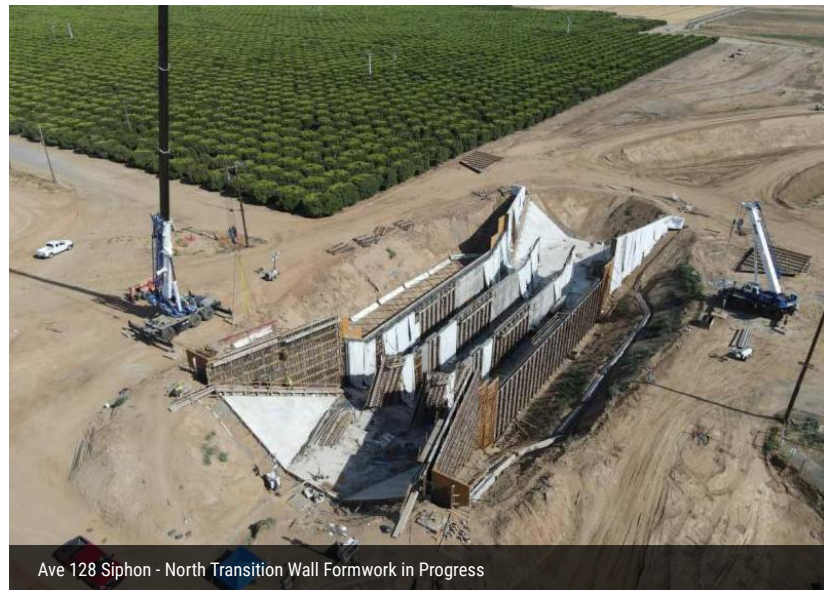
Deer Creek - Check Cleanup and 60-inch Bypass Pipe Installation in Progress



Canal Embankment Final Invert Grading south of Avenue 128



Deer Creek - Siphon Cleanup in Progress



Ave 128 Siphon - North Transition Wall Formwork in Progress



"FKC Middle Reach Capacity Correction Construction Progress Update" Continued



Road 192 Siphon - Falsework Removal in Progress



Canal Embankment Construction North of DCTRA Pits and SID-S2 Turnouts



Avenue 95 Siphon Wall Reinforcement / Formwork in Progress



Road 208 Siphon Invert Slab Construction in Progress

## IN THE NEWS

"Legislation to Curb Water Use for Irrigation Clears California Assembly," Spectrum News, June 2.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

"State Auditor Points Out Inadequacies with California Water Management," Agent West Radio Network, June 2.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

"Improvised, spotty and belated': Will California reform its oversight of water rights?," Los Angeles Times, June 5.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

"Letters: Overregulation Won't Help California Manage Their Water Supply. Here's What Will.," San Francisco Chronicles, June 16.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

