Friant WATER AUTHORITY

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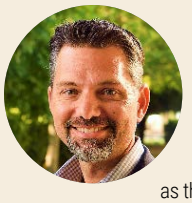
DECEMBER 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Jason Phillips
Chief Executive Officer

California water challenges continue to get more difficult and contentious as the weather continues to stay dry and groundwater regulations are phasing in. In what has become the norm with California water, especially for the Central Valley, having to deal with challenges is not unique to the Friant Division. Last month, the Friant Contractors took a deep dive into some of the critical issues facing the Friant Division during our Board of Directors' annual multi-day retreat, which we've held since 2017. The retreats are intensive working sessions that Friant Directors, district managers, and FWA staff use to discuss the most critical challenges facing us and to set priorities and direction for the coming year. I'd like to share a few takeaways from this year's retreat:

The Friant Division family makes decisions best when we're all at the table. Friant Contractors are a diverse group: small ag districts, large ag districts, cities, and towns, each with its own unique needs and challenges. We all need to be represented to ensure we're addressing issues in a way that considers the whole family. Great progress has been made in recent years to invite and welcome all Friant Division contractors to the table, and that was evident this year with a tremendous level of participation across the entire division.

We need to protect our water supply stability wherever we can. Even after several years of progress on operational improvements within the federal Central Valley Project, 2022 became the fifth year since 2014 that the Bureau of Reclamation released water from Millerton Lake for the Exchange Contractors that was being stored for, and would have otherwise been used by, the Friant Division contractors. This continues to have a disastrous effect on

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DEER CREEK SIPHON COMPLETED, WITH HOPES FOR A WET WINTER

In November, crews on the Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project completed construction of a critical feature that will ensure the canal can handle high flows running in Deer Creek during potential winter storms or flood events. Deer Creek runs through Terra Bella, **crossing the Friant-Kern at Milepost 102.65**, near the intersection of Avenue 104 and Road 208 and northernmost section of the badly-subsided Middle Reach. At the Deer Creek crossing the canal's structures include two turnouts, a concrete-block recorder house, a wasteway, a check structure, and a siphon inlet/outlet structure that carries the water in the canal under the creek.

Looking eastward at the new Deer Creek siphon nearing completion, with the old canal's siphon, check structures, and other features in the background.

While Deer Creek is dry for most of the year it can quickly begin to run with water during a winter storm, and the channel and its flows are uncontrolled. Without dams or other flood management features to attenuate flows, a large winter storm could have overwhelmed the creek and caused widespread flooding at the construction site and nearby farms. During a large storm in December 1966, peak flows at the Deer Creek crossing were recorded at 10,100 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is nearly double the capacity of the Friant-Kern Canal at its outlet at Millerton Lake. During that flood, the headwaters of the Deer Creek basin received more than 30 inches of rain in less than one week. The Friant-Kern Canal was heavily damaged when the creek's ponded floodwater broke into the canal, damaged its concrete lining, and allowed about 100,000 cubic yards of mud and debris to fill the canal for more than 10 miles downstream. Approximately 3,000 nearby acres of productive land were also flooded.

Major flooding on Deer Creek in the 1960s repeatedly damaged the Friant-Kern Canal and nearby lands.

While construction schedules can occasionally slip for various reasons, the contractor and the entire project team worked hard to complete

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Message from CEO Continued

the eastside of the San Joaquin Valley and its groundwater levels, as well as Restoration Flows in the San Joaquin River and the spring-run salmon waiting to spawn below Friant Dam. When Friant Contractors signed the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement in 2006, it came with a tradeoff: relinquish some water supplies, but gain water supply stability. This year demonstrated that it's possible to lose both, and more than only the Friant Contractors suffer as a result. The manner in which Millerton water has been used for the Exchange Contractors is not appropriate nor is it sustainable for the Friant Division and the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement. There are several actions to remedy the situation and solving this problem is our highest priority.

Friant Contractors want to continue fixing other parts of the Friant-Kern Canal. As highlighted in this newsletter, the FKC Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project has made impressive progress since breaking ground 11 months ago. The earthwork – excavating the new canal and building new embankments, for example – is about 80% complete, and the project is halfway done and on track for its scheduled completion in January 2024. It's been inspiring to watch and has demonstrated that we can achieve even more. At the direction of the Board, earlier this month FWA staff submitted an application for federal "aging infrastructure" funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act to help repair other capacity-limited sections of the canal impacted by subsidence or other challenges.

As we look forward to the 2023 water year, our current estimate for the probability of another call on Friant is still about 10-20%. This estimate is only slightly better than what it was at this time last year. We still have historically low CVP storage, but recent pumping has been able to increase due to storms. However, at the time this letter is being written, the short-term outlook is dry. Snowpack is very high at about 40% of our April 1 goal, but we will need a near-average winter and spring to have more confidence heading into the summer about the security of our water supplies. Millerton Lake is in a very good position to have an average or better year and we will be pushing for early season allocation in order for districts to manage another year of canal constraints while the Middle Reach project is underway.

"BREAKING BREAD" AND OTHER STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING HYDROLOGIC WHIPLASH

On November 18, the Public Policy Institute of California hosted a half-day conference titled "Surplus and Shortage—California's Water Balancing Act" that featured Tulare Irrigation District General Manager Aaron Fukuda on a panel discussing how to manage water during wet periods for the future. Aaron emphasized that building trust and relationships was a key part of the infrastructure needed to implement multibenefit groundwater recharge projects, saying that "When you ask a farmer for help, they will help."

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the Deer Creek upgrades by December so that in the fortunate event of a wet winter, high flows will neither endanger construction or surrounding areas. The team continues to make swift progress on the rest of the Middle Reach and as of this month, they estimate that the project is approximately 50% complete and still on track to wrap up in January 2024.

FRIANT WELCOMES NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP FOR 2023/2024

At its December 9 meeting, the FWA Board of Directors elected new Board officers for the 2023/2024 term. Jim Erickson of Madera Irrigation District, who just finished a term as Board Secretary/Treasurer, was elected Chairman, and Josh Pitigliano of Lower Tule River Irrigation District and Rick Borges of Tulare Irrigation District will serve as Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively. In addition to the change in Director Erickson's change in office, two other 2022/2023 Board officers – Chairman Cliff Loeffler of Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, and Vice Chair Edwin Camp of Arvin-Edison Water Storage District – will remain in an advisory role on the Board and as members of its Executive Committee. The official "passing of the baton" will occur at the January 2023 FWA Board of Directors meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW BEGINS FOR GUIDELINES PROPOSED TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN THE FRIANT-KERN CANAL

FWA recently released draft guidelines for ensuring that water introduced into the Friant-Kern Canal, such as from the Cross-Valley Canal or groundwater pumping, does not affect the canal's overall water quality for other users. Typically, water in the canal is released directly from Millerton Lake; usually this water is highly pure snowmelt runoff from the southern Sierra Nevada mountains. However, at various locations along the canal there are opportunities for exchanges and transfers of water that provide added water management flexibility but could result in potentially lower quality water being brought into the canal. The Guidelines are intended to ensure that under those circumstances, water quality in the canal remains at a high standard for human use.

The draft ***Guidelines for Accepting Water into the Friant-Kern Canal*** describe the application review process, implementation procedures, and the responsibilities of water contractors and other parties authorized to introduce or receive "non-Millerton" water into or from the Friant-Kern Canal. The Guidelines define the water quality thresholds and the required mitigation associated with introduced non-Millerton water and corresponding water quality, as well as the methodologies and tools for monitoring and forecasting water quality in the canal. FWA is seeking comment through January 9, 2023, on what effects or conditions related to introducing non-Millerton water should be considered for evaluation during the environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Act. For information on how to comment, please see the **Water Quality Guidelines Notice of Preparation**.

FRIANT-KERN CANAL MIDDLE REACH CAPACITY CORRECTION CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS UPDATE

The Middle Reach Project reached a major milestone in the past month with the completion of the Deer Creek siphon (see page 1), but progress continued throughout the rest of the project's alignment. As of now, the contractor has worked about 340 calendar days, and we're coming up on the one-year anniversary of the project's groundbreaking in January. The new canal embankment is between 61% and 92% complete in the area from Avenue 136 to Avenue 96 in Terra Bella, and the remaining embankment in the segments southward from Terra Bella are between 18% and 71% complete. The daily earthwork production rate continued to range from approximately 12,000 cubic yards to 17,000 cubic yards per shift, which is equivalent to as much as 5,667 dumpsters every day. When the project is complete, the construction team will have moved about 4 million cubic yards of dirt, which would fill more than 1,200 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Canal embankment south of Avenue 80 (Dec. 9, 2022).

Construction of the Casa Blanca turnout (Dec. 9, 2022).

Avenue 88 sloped wall placement in progress (Dec. 5, 2022).

IN THE NEWS

"Some of America's biggest vegetable growers fought for water. Then the water ran out," National Public Radio, Dec. 15

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"Commentary: These projects can solve water crisis, protect farms," California Globe, Dec. 14

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"Stanford study explores how dams, reservoirs could benefit global food supply," ABC 7, Dec. 7

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"A simmering revolt against groundwater cutbacks in California," Stanford University Water in the West, Dec. 14

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"Household water wells are drying up in record numbers as California drought worsens," Los Angeles Times, Dec. 8

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"He was called the 'Darth Vader' of California water. Farmers now want a friendlier face," Sacramento Bee, Dec. 7

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"As California droughts intensify, ecosystems and rural communities will bear the brunt," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 25

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