



2009 – 2010
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
Madera Irrigation District

Prepared By: Water Committee

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Introduction:

On October 27, 2009, the Madera County Grand Jury met with the General Manager and the Chief of Engineering of the Madera Irrigation District (MID). The meeting was held to gather an overview of the MID day-to-day operation and any new projects in which they are involved. The meeting was held at the MID office in Madera.

Findings:

MID has been in operation for 90 years and was created by the California State Legislature as a Special Act District and required approval by the people within the district. The purpose of MID is to provide Class One and Class Two irrigation water to farm land and to stabilize ground water within the district. Class One water is a firm contracted supply of water. The water is currently at a total of 85,000 acre feet and the rates for this water are higher than Class Two water. Class Two water is an “un-firm” contracted supply of water. The supply of Class Two water is estimated 185,000 acre feet and, as mentioned before, the rates for this water are less than Class One water. The reason Class Two water rates are less than Class One is that this water supply can vary greatly due to the year-to-year differences in rainfall and snow pack in the Sierras. Through an exchange agreement, the Bureau of Reclamation provides most of the riparian users (senior most water rights for land owners with property adjacent to a body of water) with water from the Delta, thus providing more water for MID users. If at any time the Bureau of Reclamation cannot provide exchange water, the riparian users have first right to the water from Friant Dam.

MID has three sources of water; the San Joaquin River, the Fresno River, and pre-1914 rights to Big Creek and Soquel Creek. This water is then stored at either Millerton Lake (Friant Dam) or Hensley Lake (Hidden Dam). Bass Lake water, prior to entering Millerton Lake, is used by PG&E at its Crane Valley Powerhouse. For the use of this water MID receives approximately \$400,000 per year from PG&E. MID water is distributed via the Madera Canal and the Fresno River (below Hidden Dam). The distribution system utilizes over 300 miles of open canals and 150 miles of pipeline. There are over 128,000 acres of land within the MID boundaries. This total includes the original MID boundaries and subordinate lands. Subordinate lands within MID are lands that were annexed into the district after the original boundaries were formed.

MID has started to bank water at the Madera Ranch site, located in southwest Madera County. This is a water percolation basin that has been granted all the necessary permits to start operation. The site has the ability to store 250,000 acre feet of water. To avoid overdraft, only three acre feet of every four acre feet stored will be removed. An acre foot of water is equal to 325,850 gallons.

MID is governed by a five member Board of Directors who serve staggered four-year terms. MID is divided into five divisions. Candidates are elected at-large and must live in the division that they represent. This practice may not be in compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act which states that only citizens living within a division may vote for who will represent them. MID management consists of a General Manager, who is appointed by the Board of Directors, a Chief of Finance, a Chief of Operations and Maintenance, and a Chief of Engineering and Planning. Three of the four managers have served less than two years. There are 46 employees and at the time of this interview there were five unfilled positions. MID plans to fill two of the available positions.

MID has a budget in excess of \$11 million of which 55% of this money comes from water sales and stand-by charges. Agricultural land assessments comprise 32% of the budget and the remaining 13% comes from assessments within the City of Madera. MID operates under the California State Water Code and under this code has the right to assess lands within MID. The assessments are used to repay construction loans and for the operation and maintenance of MID's distribution system. If an assessment is not paid or goes into default, MID has the right to attach a lien to the property in question. City of Madera residents also receive benefits from MID in the form of underground water recharge and the conveyance of storm water away from the city.

Conclusions:

MID appears to be running efficiently even though the majority of the management team has been in place for less than two years. The Board of Directors and the MID staff are working on MID goals of providing irrigation and ground water recharge to their customers.

Recommendations:

MID needs to review the process in which Board Members are elected to insure compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 1973 et seq.).

Responses: Written response required pursuant to PC 933 (c)

Madera Irrigation District
Board of Directors
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Madera, California 93637

Madera Irrigation District
Attn: General Manager
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Responses: Written response optional

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