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NID WaterWays

A Newsletter to the Customers
of the Nevada Irrigation District

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Water Work Through the Years *Cascade Canal Work is Key to a Better Water System*

Over the past four years, NID has earned wide attention in the community for its efforts to complete two major improvement projects on the Cascade Canal.

Together, the Cascade Flume Replacement Project, completed earlier this year at a cost of \$20 million; and the Lower Cascade Modernization Project, which is still in planning, represent the district's largest construction effort in more than 30 years.

Seen in a historical perspective, the Cascade projects are part of an ongoing NID effort to provide better, more reliable water supplies to customers of the district.

History of Water Development

The Cascade work continues a colorful history of NID water development that dates back



Water Project, Circa 1920s

In 1926, construction of the Dressler Flume helped bring water to Chicago Park in rural Nevada County.

to 1921 when local farmers and ranchers formed the district to bring water to their dry land farms and ranches.

If they were around today, NID's founders would be proud to know that Nevada and Placer counties are

blessed with some of the most abundant water supplies in the region.

Outlined here are some of the most significant water developments NID has completed over the past 80 years.

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Ron Nelson, left, takes over for Jim Chatigny

Changing of the Guard Nelson Succeeds Chatigny as NID General Manager

Ronald S. "Ron" Nelson joined NID Sept. 30 as the district's new general manager. He succeeds Jim Chatigny, who retired Sept. 4 after leading the district through the past 16 years.

Nelson, 55, comes to NID from Bend, Oregon, where he spent 22 years as general manager of the Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID).

Based in Redmond, Oregon, COID is similar to but smaller than NID. It operates 450 miles of canals, supplying irrigation water to 6,000 accounts on 44,000 acres. COID has municipal and industrial water rights, is managing partner of a reservoir and operates a hydroelectric power plant. It employs 35 and operates on an annual budget of about \$5 million.

At NID, Nelson will oversee a 287,000-acre district that supplies irrigation and treated drinking water to 27,000 customers in three counties. NID operates seven hydroelectric power plants, employs 170 and has a combined annual budget of \$35 million.

Nelson brings a varied water background to NID. He was appointed by the governor to the Oregon Water Resources Commission and was a member of the Oregon Water Trust, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Deschutes County Resource Conservancy.

Chatigny, 72, joined NID in 1979 and was promoted to the top management position in 1986. He plans to enjoy retirement in Grass Valley.

High-Tech

Radio Read Water Meters Are Changing the Old-Fashioned Art of Meter Reading

NID is nearly halfway into a program to equip all water meters with radio signal transmitters. By mid-September, about 8,300 of the 17,000 water meters in the district had been equipped.

NID Finance Manager Tess Andrews, whose office oversees meter reading, said the program has been in progress for three years and should be complete in the next year or two.

The technological advance has two components. Existing meters are being retrofitted while all new meters added to the system are already equipped for radio reading.

Meter readers are able to drive or walk through neighborhoods and use hand-held computers to take meter readings without going to the meter box. Back in the office, readings are downloaded into the NID computer system.



Charlie Jerdon takes a reading

Next year, the district expects to take delivery of a specially designed reading device that will be mounted in a vehicle and read multiple meters as it passes along a roadway.

The high-tech approach offers advantages to customers including highly accurate reading and reduced entry to private property.

There are also advantages for meter readers, including increased personal safety along roads, less opportunity to be bitten by dogs and quicker data entry and download.

Andrews said advances in the field have allowed NID to keep its meter reading staff at three over the past three decades while the number of meters in the ground has tripled.

Cascade Studies Continue

The NID Board of Directors on Sept. 25 authorized more extensive studies of potential pipeline and tunnel options for the Cascade Canal Modernization Project, which would provide a more reliable water supply to western Nevada County. For information about the project, see the Web site, www.lowercascadecanal.com.

NID's Biggest Projects

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Mountain Division Development

Beginning in 1921, the district purchased rights to water supplies that had earlier flowed to the gold mines of the San Juan Ridge. In 1926, the district began construction of the Bowman-Spaulding Canal and other facilities to carry water from Bowman Reservoir and the upper reaches of the Middle Yuba River to Lake Spaulding on the South Yuba River watershed.

Water from the Middle Yuba gave NID the water it needed to meet the needs of early 1900s farmers and ranchers. That supply has since proved adequate to meet the needs of a growing 21st Century population.

Foothill Division Development

Beginning in 1928, NID undertook a major construction effort in the foothills, building the old Deer Creek Diversion Dam (Lower

Today
Concrete pipe was used in 2001-02 for the Cascade Flume Replacement Project



Scotts Flat), the D-S Canal system, Combie Reservoir, Chicago Park and Rattlesnake canals and the B Canal to the Wolf-Garden Bar area.

There was little opposition to water development in the early days, says NID Water Operations Manager Terry Mayfield, the district's unofficial historian.

"There weren't many issues back in those days," he says,

"You were dealing with big tracts of land, maybe one or two families, instead of 200, and people wanted water." There were few regulatory agencies and environmental laws in place at the time.

Mayfield said the district's biggest problems in building its early dams and canals were in coming up with the money to pay for the work.

Development of foothill water systems continued into the 1930s and 1940s as NID water flowed to more residents of Nevada and Placer counties.

Yuba-Bear Project

Completed in 1963-66, the Yuba-Bear River Power Project is regarded as the most significant achievement in NID history. The project, funded by a \$65 million bond issue, created a hydroelectric system that generates power and revenue, but most importantly, the project doubled NID water storage to 280,380 acre-feet.

The project included Jackson Meadows and Rollins reservoirs, a new higher dam at Scotts Flat, the Dutch Flat and Chicago Park powerhouses and other facilities. The \$8 million Rollins powerhouse was added in 1980 as a second phase to the project.

Treated Water System

Since the middle 1960s, NID has invested millions of dollars



Yesterday
Redwood pipe was used in the 1920s for construction of the Milton-Bowman Conduit.

into its treated water systems. Following a master plan completed in 1966, the district built the E. George Water Treatment Plant on Banner Mountain in 1969 and the North Auburn plant in 1972.

By the 1980s, the district operated as many as 14 water treatment plants but has since consolidated service at eight modern plants that today provide safe drinking water to more than 17,000 homes and businesses.

Public Law 984

Using an \$8.5 million low-interest federal loan made available through Public Law 984 in 1968, the district was able to enlarge and improve canals and other raw water systems in the foothill division. The loan was repaid through NID tax assessments, with the final payment made in 2002.

The PL 984 funding enabled the district to upgrade the conveyance system serving its water treatment plants as well as to provide more reliable service to irrigation water customers.

Winter Weather: Predictions From NOAA, Old Farmer's Almanac

Will this winter be wet or dry? Cold or warm? Will NID's reservoirs fill during the 2003 spring runoff season?

With a water supply that flows from the Sierra snowpack, NID depends on winter storms to fill reservoirs and supply customers.

Here are some predictions for this year from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and from longtime folk favorite, *The Old Farmer's Almanac*.

The NOAA has been studying an El Nino condition in the Pacific that is predicted to last into spring. This moderate El Nino, says NOAA, will result in above normal winter precipitation in southern and central California. By contrast, drier than normal conditions are expected in the Pacific Northwest.



The Farmer's Almanac, using a secret forecasting method that dates to 1792, is calling for above normal precipitation and normal snowfall in California.

Nevada and Placer counties lie near the juncture of the *Almanac's* Pacific Northwest and California forecast zones. For the Pacific Northwest, it calls for a warmer than normal winter with above normal rainfall. California, it says, will be much wetter than normal, with temperatures 1 to 3 degrees above normal.

Now we know what the experts say, so set out the rain gauge, watch the thermometer and we'll see if they're right.

• NID NEWS BRIEFS •

AGREEMENT WITH PG&E. The NID Board of Directors in August approved an agreement that preserves consumptive water rights from the Yuba and Bear rivers the district has used for more than 30 years. As part of the agreement, NID will support PG&E in its current reorganizational effort.



ED JAMES RETIRES
Edwin C. "Ed" James, left, longtime maintenance crew supervisor with NID's Placer Crew, retired Sept. 9 following a 22-year career with the district. James lives with his family in Ophir.

WRAP THOSE PIPES. NID reminds all customers to insulate exposed water pipes against winter's freezing temperatures. Pipes can freeze and break, causing inconvenience, damage and expense. Inexpensive pipe insulation is available at local building supply outlets

Storage Near Average For This Time of Year

Water storage in NID's Mountain Division stood at 115,712 acre-feet, as of Sept. 18, which is about 4,000 acre-feet short of average for this time of year.

Overall water storage, including the Foothill Division, was measured at 180,086 acre-feet, which is 75 percent of the district's 250,280 acre-foot capacity.

RCD's No-Till Drill Helps Local Farmers Conserve Soil and Water

To help landowners maximize the use of their land, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District has purchased a new No-Till Drill that is available at low-cost rent.

The No-Till Drill, pulled behind a tractor, is designed to plant seed and fertilizer (in one application) in a field with existing cover. It can be used in the fall and spring and is designed for the foothill terrain.

For more information or to set up a free site consultation, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service/ Nevada County Resource Conservation District office at (530) 272-3417.