

Farm Water Watch



Published for agricultural irrigation customers of the Coachella Valley Water District

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Irrigation project brings canal water to farms

Four local landowners are now using Colorado River water for the irrigation of their land, thanks to the Irrigation Expansion Project completed in the spring.

Ocean Mist Farms, CalSunGold (owned by Castro Family Trust), Artesian Acres and Sunrise Marsh teamed up with Coachella Valley Water District to execute this project.

It will save 3,480 acre-feet per year of water from being pumped from the aquifer, the main source of drinking water in the Coachella Valley. With the aquifer currently in overdraft, the expansion helps preserve this valuable resource.

This project also provides benefits to the four landowners who together represent 753 acres of land. By building this expansion, they avoid the costs of pumping groundwater. This includes the power required for pumping and the maintenance and depreciation of the wells.

The successful collaboration of skilled engineers, contractors, attorneys, and the CVWD project engineers, led to the completion of the project within four months.



Pictured at the completion ceremony are from left, Steve Robbins, general manager-chief engineer of Coachella Valley Water District; Ed Boutonnet, Ocean Mist Farms; John Powell Jr., vice president of Coachella Valley District Board of Directors; Jeff Percy, Ocean Mist Farms and Ben Olson, Olson Engineering Systems.

In order to fund this \$2.5 million project, an assessment district was formed and bonds were sold to allow the landowners to pay off the costs over time.

To celebrate this accomplishment, a completion ceremony took place in April 2011, featuring representatives from the district, and participating landowners and engineers.

“This project is the result of a strong partnership,” CVWD General Manager-Chief Engineer Steve Robbins said at the completion ceremony. “I want to thank all the property owners for their commitment to this important project.”

Ben Olson of Olson Engineering, which designed the 30-inch pipeline used in the project, and Jeff Percy of Ocean Mist Farms, were also among the speakers.

They both emphasized the importance of this collective effort by the private/public partnership. For everyone involved, this project has proven to be a great success, and the strong partnership has been extremely valuable.

At the completion ceremony, Jeff Percy of Ocean Mist Farms said, “The aquifer is now stronger. This has been good for the district, farmers and for the community. We should all be proud today.”

RAC and canal water rates increase

As of July 1, 2011, the Replenishment Assessment Charge, commonly known as RAC, and the canal water rates increased.

The RAC covers an important portion of the costs of recharging the aquifer, including the cost of importing water for that purpose and partially funds the district's groundwater replenishment programs.

The aquifer is currently in a state of "overdraft," which can have serious consequences, including pumping water costs for all water users, land subsidence and water quality issues.

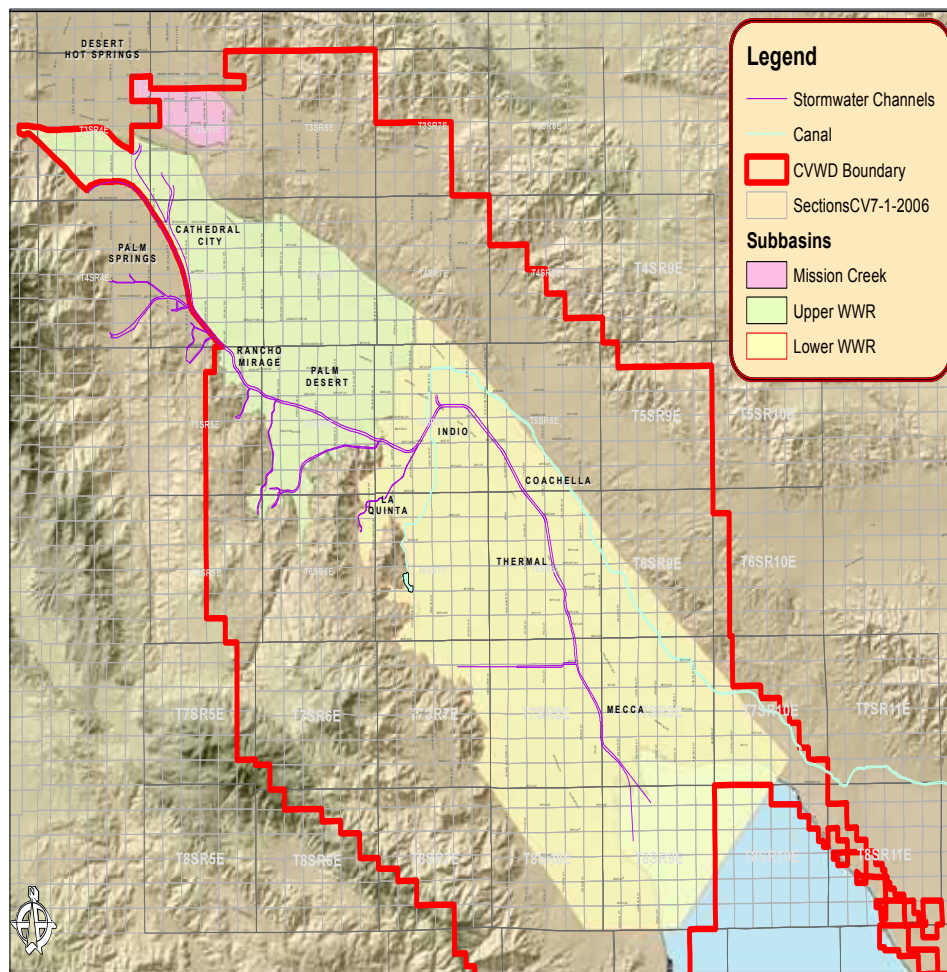
Recharging the aquifer with imported water is one of the means to alleviate overdraft. The cost to the district of recharging the aquifer in the eastern Coachella Valley with supplemental water supplies is largely attributable to the increased costs of Colorado River water. The new RAC rates will offset these increased replenishment costs.

In addition, the increased canal Class 1 rates are based on the increased funding required for capital replacement, and will cover the cost of inflation and operating and maintaining the canal and distribution system.

Canal Class 1 customers include agricultural users who receive water covered under the original 1949 water entitlement.

Canal water rates

Proposition 218 notices were sent May 21, 2010, notifying customers of proposed maximum rate increases for a two-year period.



There are three separate Replenishment Assessment Charge's (RACs) based on geography because the costs and benefits of the replenishment programs also vary by geography. Use this map to determine your subbasin Area of Benefit.

The increase ensures financial stability of the Canal Water fund, and provides funds for required maintenance that has been deferred for several years.

- The Class 1 rate for farmers is now \$27.45 per acre-foot. The quagga mussel mitigation charge remains \$5.75 per acre-foot.

RAC rates

Following a public hearing, the board unanimously approved the new RAC increases for the Upper Valley, Mission Creek, and the Lower Valley.

- The Upper Valley is generally west of Washington Street (*green region of map*), Mission Creek is near the edge of the desert community (*pink region of map*), and the Lower Valley is generally east of Washington Street (*yellow region of map*)

- Upper Valley-rate increased to \$112.95 per acre foot of water.

- Mission Creek-rate increased to \$98.73 per acre foot of water.

- Lower Valley-rate increased to \$31.00 per acre foot of water.

Innovative technology used for pipeline repair

Coachella Valley Water District recently used a new method to replace an 880-foot-long section of leaking irrigation pipe in Indio.

Ty Mull, CVWD assistant engineer, said that the technique involved slip-lining a 12-inch diameter, fused PVC pipe through the existing 21-inch diameter concrete pipe. The technique only requires two openings, one on each end of the section of the original pipe being replaced and the new pipe is protected as the existing pipe will now act as an encasement.

Although the new pipe is smaller, it still works hydraulically to meet the current demands for the irrigation water.

This project took the contractors five days to complete. First, they opened both ends of the existing pipeline and ran a video camera through to see if there were any major obstructions to pulling the pipe. Approximately 75 lineal feet of existing pipe was removed due to previous patch repairs. The actual slip-lining took about four hours to complete the 880 linear feet.

“This method is very simple and efficient,” Ty said.

In urbanized areas this method prevents tearing up the surrounding sidewalks, utilities, and existing structures. It is also cost-effective compared to traditional methods.

This particular project, performed by Downing Construction, cost \$88 per linear foot, which is less than the traditional methods used in the past.

For agricultural irrigation, using the slip-line method for replacing pipeline would be especially beneficial if a road needed to be crossed or if there are major utilities running over the existing line. It also provides an alternative to

traditional “open-cut” methods.

This is the first time CVWD has used this innovative technology for an irrigation project. With its success, it might be used again for future irrigation projects.



This project was done by Downing Construction and took place near the intersection of Avenue 48 and Shields Road in Indio.

Left, workers monitor the 12-inch diameter, PVC pipe as it is lined up and pulled through the existing pipe.

Below, the new 880-foot-long PVC line is prepared for pulling. A pulling device was placed on the end of the PVC line, and a large cable was attached to the device. The cable was then pulled through the existing pipe by a tractor.





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Nelson to remain president of farm water board

Peter Nelson will serve his second consecutive term as president of the board for the California Farm Water Coalition.

The coalition is a statewide organization representing farmers, agricultural water districts and agencies, agribusiness, and other agricultural organizations. It aims to educate the public and promote efficient water use.

Nelson said he is pleased to represent the Coachella Valley as part of an organization that helps to educate the public about agricultural water use in California.

“The strength of the California Farm Water Coalition relies on its statewide member agencies’ commitment to provide sustainable water supplies for agriculture, which is the backbone of the California economy,” Nelson said.

Nelson manages approximately 2,000 acres of dates, grapes and citrus for a number of growers.

He serves as board president of Coachella Valley Water District and as vice-president of the Salton Sea Authority. He is also the director of the California Desert Grape Administrative Committee.



Peter Nelson

CVWD has placed copies of the Coachella Valley Water Management Plan 2010 Update (draft) and Urban Water Management Plan on its website. If you are interested in reviewing these planning documents, visit www.cvwd.org