



Federal regulators to hold local public hearing on impacts to new MID operations and water storage

Growers and community urged to attend

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MERCED, CA – After years of studies and reviews, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has released the draft environmental document related to the relicensing of New Exchequer Dam and its hydroelectric operations.

Spanning 674 pages, the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) summarizes environmental impacts and the expected offset measures that would be part of MID’s application for a new license.

“As proposed, the new environmental mitigations have extensive negative impacts to local water storage, agricultural production, our local economy and our ability to recharge groundwater,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

“Worse, there is no substantial benefit to the environment to offset the enormous cost that the measures will have on our community. The dire conditions we are experiencing in this fourth year of natural drought will become conditions faced every few years as a regulatory drought.”

The negative impacts to the community and economy stem from proposals to increase the flow of water down the Merced River and away from Lake McClure and eastern Merced County.

FERC officials will conduct a public meeting at 6 p.m. April 30 in the San Joaquin Hall at the Merced Fairgrounds, 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. During the meeting, MID growers and others in the community will have the opportunity to directly address FERC regulators, providing both oral and written comments.

Among the negative impacts that would result from the proposed requirements:

- Less water storage at Lake McClure
- Decreased irrigation deliveries
- Decreased groundwater recharge for eastern Merced County
- Decreased hydroelectric production
- Economic loss
- Decreases in agriculture production
- Lost jobs

MID has created a webpage titled "FERC Flow Local Impacts." It can be found at the District's webpage: www.mercedid.org. Additional resources can be found there, including letter templates and proposed talking points. As always, the District also welcomes phone calls to its office. For assistance, please contact Public and Government Affairs Manager Mike Jensen at 209-722-5761.

Following the April 30 meeting, the District as well as state and federal agencies will have until May 29, 2015 to provide FERC with written comments on the draft EIS. A final EIS is expected from FERC before the end of the year.

"The final decisions made by FERC will have implications on MID's water supplies for the next 50 years," said Sweigard. "FERC officials regularly receive letters and comments from non-governmental organizations, as well as federal and state wildlife agencies. It is my hope we have a strong community presence from those bringing written comments and providing oral comments to FERC before final decisions about our future operations are made."

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