



Public updated on MID long-term water plan

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Merced Irrigation District met with dozens of interested growers and local residents today to discuss development of its long-range Water Resources Management Plan.

The plan has been in the development stages for more than a year. Technical analysis and field work over the past year has examined farming practices, future land-use projections and potential improvements to be made within the MID water delivery system. In addition to technical analysis and policy research, the early stages of the plan included receiving input from more than one hundred growers, business interests, local elected officials and many other community leaders.

Today's workshop built upon previous public discussions and meetings. It presented critical findings from the work that has been conducted thus far. At the workshop, sophisticated water resources and financial modeling tools – specifically tailored for MID – were reviewed and discussed. These tools will be used by MID to inform future decisions related to water management and District finances.

Among the key findings of the effort:

- The urban population in eastern Merced County is projected to grow by approximately 100,000 residents by 2040. This is expected to reduce approximately 11,000 acres from agricultural production within MID. At the same time, agricultural production outside of MID is expected to increase by 10,000 acres. This combination has the potential to further strain local groundwater resources.
- Expected changes in crop distribution and irrigation technology within MID were also discussed today. Orchards are projected to represent a higher portion of the District's future customer demand. According to projections, orchards will shift from 34 percent of the District's acreage to

48 percent by 2040. The combination of crop changes and shift towards more advanced irrigation technology will influence future infrastructure needs.

- Key modernization projects suggested for the MID water delivery system include construction of several new, small regulating reservoirs. These would enhance control of water delivery and reduce operational spills. The modernization projects are intended to ensure MID's distribution system is able to meet growers' current and future needs. Among other benefits, enabling growers to continue relying on MID surface water decreases demand on local groundwater: promoting sustainable groundwater management is a key goal of the plan.
- A robust set of water resource models illustrate MID's current and future reliability under various scenarios. MID's operations currently result in up to approximately 140,000 acre feet of annual groundwater recharge through unlined canals, waterways and District recharge basins. Under proposed regulatory requirements for flows down the Merced River, MID's average annual recharge could potentially drop to 55,000 acre feet. These same requirements would significantly reduce MID's water supply reliability and hinder its ability to serve its growers.

In addition to the water resources modeling, a financial model was demonstrated at Tuesday's meeting. These combined tools will enable the District to make informed decisions and set a strategic path into the future.

Following today's meeting, additional workshops will be conducted on specific policy issues requiring MID Board and public input. The results of these future meetings will help shape the ultimate recommendations of the Water Resources Management Plan.

The complete presentation can be viewed [here](#) or for more information about the plan click [here](#).

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