

## OID Maps Out Water Resources Plans Through 2030

By M.C. NAYLOR  
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With the majority of Oakdale Irrigation District's infrastructure constructed more than 100 years ago, the district faces a substantial and long-range task of updating that system and bringing it into line with contemporary user needs, a project that will demand at least a \$30 million commitment within a five-year period for improved service projects.

During a 20-year period, the district will also need funding for \$94 million in rehabilitation projects, ranging up to \$124 million depending upon which of four alternative approaches the district chooses for its future.

That is a central fact around which the four alternative approaches were outlined Monday night by CH2M Hill, the water consultant hired by the OID to prepare its Water Resources Plan, at 6 p.m. in the conference room at the Rama Inn. That workshop was the third and concluding of three such presentations that outlined potential directions that the board of directors can take in planning the district's future.

This final workshop focused on the total WRP recommendations and implementation of those recommendations, along with ways to pay for the improvements proposed. The Water Resources Plan, according to OID, will guide the district for the next 20 years in its consideration of how to protect the district water rights, to enhance the district services and to repair and upgrade its infrastructure.

By 2030, through improvement of the infrastructure delivery system, and upgrading the service to the public, as well as through conservation and water reclamation programs -in addition to a declining demand for ag water due to growth encroachment- the district will have 67,000 acre-feet of water available, according to Monday's report.

This can be utilized for maintaining present practices, or any degree above that, involving the production of income, improvement of the system, and water transfers, including potential transfers to the cities of Oakdale and Riverbank.

"At the present time, Oakdale (Irrigation District) has no statement about its uses of water," said OID General Manager Steve Knell in introducing the CH2M Hill presentation. "We have a water system that is 100 years old. It needs to be updated and modernized."

He said the district needs to protect its water rights by planning the use of its water, by planning the long-term affordability of its facilities, and comply with state and federal



Oakdale Irrigation District Board of Directors member Louis Brichetto is shown above on his ranch southeast of Oakdale in an area where he has converted his former clover fields into permanent tree crops. At a well site with him is OID canal tender Leon Van Diepan. They are discussing the new well system, shown in the back, which interfaces between the OID canal and the new well Brichetto has installed there to facilitate different watering patterns. His cropping pattern change and co-well system is typical of some issues being addressed by the Water Resources Plan for which the board received a report Monday night. M.C. Naylor/The Leader

regulations. That, he said, was the premise upon which the plan was being developed.

Following the workshop, CH2M Hill will present their study findings and recommendations to the board in documentation form, which will be followed by several public hearings that are required for the environmental impact report. Once this is done, the entire process will go before the board where they will determine an approach from among the recommendations.

Of the four alternatives outlined by CH2M Hill, the first would continue OID's present practices for service. Alternative No. 2 would maximize service improvements within the district boundaries; No. 3 would moderately expand service within the district's sphere of influence; and No. 4 would expand service to OID's sphere of influence considerably.

The projections in these alternatives prefigure 9,000 acre-feet of water being transferred to willing buyers above the current amount, with alternatives two, three and four ratcheting up the amount transferred within the sphere of influence to a top level number of 16,750 acre-feet.

The two earlier workshops in the series discussed the adoption of customer-based service standards in the face of changing land use patterns within the district, developing operating procedures to implement a set of service standards, and a number of specific project improvements to customers. Among the improvements is a major refurbishing of all the main canals and delivery ditches, and the construction of a new holding reservoir on the north side of the district.

During discussion, an exchange between boardmembers Jack Alpers and Louis Brichetto was typical of the kind of issue upon which the alternatives will be determined. Brichetto, in a presentation from a written statement, discussed the challenges of better fiscal management, and supported annexation of more landowners over transfers. Alpers, in a short response, pointed out that water transfers was a short-term contract of water based upon its availability, while annexation constituted a long-term commitment of the water.

"Annexation is a permanent sale of a water right," he said, "while a transfer is a temporary sale. Once you annex to the district, that water is gone," said Alpers.

In his statement, Brichetto said the district has "...historically resorted to selling its only non-replaceable asset, water, and short changing Oakdale's agricultural future."

He said it is time for the board to make some innovative decisions by promoting more local water use, changing the annexation policy so that it is "user friendly," and sell water on an acre-foot basis.

This split in viewpoint is likely to be the focal point of future discussions as the Water Resources Plan develops further.

Lorens Foard, speaking from the audience, cautioned the board regarding the fiscal aspects of the plan, raising another viewpoint expressed by an outspoken group of the OID constituency. He also questioned the notion of OID as a "non-profit" entity, stating that selling water for profit, as he interpreted the direction of the plan, may be a conflict.

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