

IWVWD General Manager's Column
June 10, 2019

“Happy New (Fiscal) Year”

By Don Zdeba

July 1st begins a new fiscal year for Indian Wells Valley Water District making this a perfect opportunity to provide an update on happenings within the District. There are a number of projects, both ongoing and new to mention.

First, though, I wish to acknowledge the District has once again received the “District of Distinction” accreditation by the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) and also was renewed for the SDLF’s District Transparency Certificate of Excellence in recognition of outstanding efforts to promote transparency and good governance. Both are the result of a rigorous application process requiring significant documentation and independent review prior to approval. A representative from SDLF was on hand to present the awards at the June 10th Board meeting.

Among active District projects, design for the pumping plant associated with Well 35 is being finalized with the project going out for bids later this month. With funds from our loan for solar installations still available, we will be expanding our solar program to include this site. ENGIE Services US, our solar facility manager, will be constructing the installation. It is expected that Well 35 will be available for service by summer of 2021 and will provide needed system redundancy. Incidentally, actual savings from our solar project has exceeded the guarantee by \$22,328.35 for the period from July 2018 to May 2019.

Implementation of the Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project continues. A total of 2,849 AMI registers completely covering 15 of our 47 meter routes have been installed. In total, approximately 5,000 of the close to 12,500 registers to be installed are in service. The customer portal available through WaterSmart is also progressing. District staff will be trained on its features and use this month and will have the opportunity to use it before it is rolled out system-wide. WaterSmart software offers innovative customer features along with a water usage analytics platform for water utilities. It encourages customer engagement in their personal water profile while providing leak detection with alert and resolution features resulting in increased customer satisfaction while saving money and time for both customers and District staff.

Staff is also working with Advanced Telemetry Systems International (ATSI) on an \$800,000 upgrade of our Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. SCADA is essentially the brains allowing for efficient control and monitoring of the production and distribution systems. Constant monitoring and availability of operational data allows for rapid response to abnormal conditions thereby having the potential to significantly minimize disruptions to our customers as well as provide greater reliability and security of our facilities.

This month a new upgraded bulk water filling station was commissioned at the Ridgecrest Heights Tank to serve the approximate 40 customers that haul water for personal use. Each account holder has a unique identifier to log into the system and enter the exact amount of water needed to fill their tank. The new equipment is designed to improve efficiency, prevent water waste from overflow, and reduce damage to the site from washouts around the pad.

Previously, I have written about the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) requiring the Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin be managed by a Department of Water Resources approved Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by January 31, 2020. As a voting member of the Groundwater Authority and the lead agency this year, IWVWD is fully engaged, both at the Board and staff levels. Stetson Engineers, the Water Resources Manager, will be releasing sections of the GSP for committee and public review in the coming weeks. The sections will be posted to the local groundwater authority website at www.iwvga.org.

I encourage you to keep up with news about water issues at local, regional and statewide levels on our Facebook page (IWV Water District) and news more specific to IWVWD on our website, www.iwvwd.com.