In The Know
Mid Pacific Region Public Affairs 916 978-5100
RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West
Weekly notes on MP Regional status, events, and other related information
Thursday, January 26, 2012

Regional Director Don Glaser Presents Awards at the Water Users Conference

Firebaugh Canal Water District Award

Firebaugh Canal Water District (District) lies within the Grassland Drainage Area and is a participating agency in the Grassland Bypass Project. Most of the Grassland Drainage Area is underlain with a perched water table high in salts, boron and selenium, making the water unsuitable for irrigation. The District manages the perched water and subsurface drainage through a tile system and regional drains to reduce the volume discharged to the San Joaquin River.

The District is investing significant resources into cement lining their 40 miles of earthen canals to reduce seepage into saline sinks. To date, the District has lined approximately 17 miles of canals, which has produced an estimated savings of some 1,300 acre-feet of water per year. In addition to lining the canals, the District has invested in a state-of-the-art SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system to better manage their operations.

The District implemented a successful on-farm irrigation program for farmers to convert to more efficient irrigation, with approximately 80 percent of the district now using micro-drip and micro-sprinklers. The District recognizes the huge potential for water savings from on-farm conservation and encourages all of their farmers to participate. The District provides low-interest loans for irrigation conversion and can forgive up to 25 percent of the loan.

The District's long-standing relationship with its neighboring districts is leading to regional solutions for both the water supply and drainage management issues. The District established a positive working relationship with Reclamation through the implementation of best management practices (exchange contractor), past water conservation grants, participation in Cal Poly's Rapid Appraisal Program and participation in the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) temporary pumps and pipes project.

Mr. Jeff Bryant, the District's General Manager, is a teacher and leader. He has a passion to teach others about his District and the role water conservation plays in the District's current and future operations. Mr. Bryant routinely encourages Reclamation staff to observe project implementation and spends a significant amount of time teaching about the soils and movement of water through the District. He is thorough about his work, with grants completed ahead of schedule, and Reclamation appreciates his graciousness and diligence.

Language for Certificate

Under the guidance and direction of General Manager Jeff Bryant, the District is leading the way in the Grassland Drainage Area in developing regional solutions for water supply and drainage management, to include lining canals, installing a SCADA system, successfully implementing an innovative on-farm irrigation program utilizing the latest technology and applying best management practices. The Bureau of Reclamation recognizes the District for its extraordinary efforts in water supply management and conservation.

F. Gordon Johnston Award

Don Glaser is shown presenting the F. Gordon Johnston Award to Mike Battles for his work overseeing a major construction project in the Lower Tule River Irrigation District. The project was done in conjunction with Reclamation and funded in part by a grant awarded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Mike's work exemplifies the outstanding commitment to Operations and Maintenance (O&M) that is embodied in this award. Mike is the O&M manager for the Lower Tule River Irrigation District.

The F. Gordon Johnston Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions towards excellence in O&M or who have developed innovative methods that have widespread applicability. Gordon Johnston, for whom the award is named, devoted 45 years of his life to the construction, maintenance, and operation of irrigation and water resources facilities located in the western United States.