



# BVID News

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## BVID, Water Transfers and You...

### An in-depth look at water transfers and your water district.

We have dedicated this entire issue to explaining the water transfers from Browns Valley Irrigation District to other locations. The purpose for doing this is so that you are comfortable with what takes place within the District and have a full understanding of why and how water transfers are useful.

The District is divided into two main areas: residential customers in the foothills which are served entirely from Collins Lake; and mainly agricultural customers (predominantly rice) in the lower third of the District served by the Yuba River.

BVID has the oldest water rights on the Yuba River which date back to the 1880's. It is from the Yuba River water right that water transfers occur.

Collins Lake water is not used for water transfers, thus water transfers from the Yuba River do not affect water used or the supplies of water in Collins Lake.

The Yuba River Conserved Water



Photo Courtesy of Yuba County Water Agency

Transfer was created to take advantage of the District's water right on the Yuba River, while not harming water availability for the rest of the District. This Conserved Water Transfer has been approved by a 15 year Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and transfers are done on yearly agreements only. These water transfers are also approved by the California Department of Fish and Game, Yuba County Water Agency, and the River Management Team (made up of fisheries, local agencies, and non-governmental organizations).

**TRANSFERS**, continued on page 2



## **TRANSFERS**, *from cover*

This year we have completed an agreement with Santa Clara Valley Water District to sell up to 3,100 acre-feet of Yuba River Conserved Water for \$190 an acre foot. The price of the water and the agency which it is sold to could change overtime as the District is re-examining all opportunities to insure that BVID gets the most benefit out of each sale. BVID staff works diligently to make sure that they are entering into the best possible contract.

### **Can BVID use this water instead?**

No, currently excess water that BVID has rights to within the Yuba River system can not be used for District purposes. In drought years some of this water is pumped to higher elevations to relieve demand from Collins Lake. However, to lift the water any higher into the Collins Lake Service Area would be

prohibitively expensive. If we are not able to divert the water and put it to beneficial use within the District it is lost to downstream flows.

### **Use it or lose it**

It is important for BVID to utilize their water rights on the Yuba River. If the District does not transfer this surplus water it is simply lost. If it is lost for a period of a few years the state can take the water right away from BVID and if that was to occur the water right would never be restored. It is important that we protect the vested water rights of your District.

In this regard in 2001 the State Water Resources Board (Decision 1644) reduced the Yuba River winter water right held by BVID due to under utilization. We are mindful of the fact that we do not want this to occur once again and by utilizing a water transfer are able to protect this right effectively

for the long term. BVID was one of the first water districts in the state to have a transferable conserved water supply, we are now just one of a very few with that ability.

### **Where is the water going?**

In 2010 the water was transferred to Santa Clara Valley Water District where it was used for both residential and agricultural purposes. The District has participated in water transfers over the years that help meet the needs of other districts. The revenue from these transfers has been a financial benefit to the District.

### **Do you want more info?**

Call us today at the District and we would be happy to discuss it with you. This newsletter is just one of the many ways we work hard to insure that all our customers understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.



Photo Courtesy of Yuba County Water Agency



# ASK FLO...

## ***How did we get the conserved water supply?***

The District entered into an ambitious program to construct a pipeline replacing open ditches and flumes. Through this project we were able to conserve 3,100 acre feet of transferable Yuba River water right supply.

## ***Flo, why would we transfer water if the District sometimes has a drought year?***

I am so glad that you asked this question! The answer is simple. The water to be transferred is from the Yuba River (where we have a very old water right), not from Collins Lake that serves most of the Upper District. Unfortunately there is no cost effective way to get Yuba River water supplies up to the Collins Lake Service Area and if we don't transfer it we lose the water downstream.

## ***Why can't we transfer the water to Collins Lake to serve our own District?***

This is kind of the same question as above, but it is a good time for

me to make an important point. Gravity is the real answer. The water in the Yuba River is at a low elevation in the District and most of the water users are at a higher elevation in the District. In drought years we do additional pumping of some of the water from the Yuba River into the lower portions of the Collins Lake Service Area. However, we are only able to do this on an occasional basis as it would be cost prohibitive to do it on a permanent basis.

## ***Why do we need to transfer the water, can't we store it or pump it up into Collins Lake?***

Unfortunately we can't store it. Once our water flows downstream then we might as well kiss it goodbye as it is no longer ours. While we have the oldest rights on the river (dating back to the 1880's), we also have a non-storable right, which means once it has gone downstream, if it isn't used within the District or transferred, we lose our control of the water.

To answer the second part of your question pumping water is very

expensive. The energy (and associated cost) it would take to move any significant amount of water to Collins Lake make it simply cost prohibitive.

## ***Why all this talk about transferring water?***

We want to make sure everyone understands the usefulness of transferring water and what it can do for the District. We also want to make sure that no one is confused and is thinking that the reason they don't have water in a drought year is because we sold it. The thing that complicates this is that we have two sources of water for the District; Collins Lake which is where most of our water users get their water; and the Yuba River which serves water users in the lower elevation of the District.

## ***It sounds like the only choice we have with this water in the Yuba River is to sell it?***

That's right! Either that or make millions of glasses of lemonade!



Photo Courtesy of Yuba County Water Agency

# What are the benefits of a Yuba River Conserved Water transfer for the District?

We know that the waters transferred in a Yuba River Conserved Water transfer by the District does not take away from the customers in the District and that it does not utilize any of the water in Collins Lake, which serves the majority of the District. However, the benefit from the transfer for water users and BVID are enormous for several reasons.

The income from the transfers allows the District to make capital improvements outside of our operating budget. These projects include the construction of pipelines that improve the efficiency of the District's delivery system. For example, this year 8,000 feet of 18" pipeline was installed to replace an open ditch to conserve water. Pipelines are better for multiple reasons namely that they control loss of water into the ground, are easier to manage and allow for the ability to serve new water users. All of this benefits the District.

These types of pipeline projects have allowed us to serve as many as four times the number of water users without increasing demand on Collins Lake supplies.



Find all the latest information on your water district online at **[www.BVID.org](http://www.BVID.org)**

You can see the **Collins Lake Rain Gauge and Status updates.**

**Also find District history, publications, forms and valuable information.**

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