

South Sutter Water District

The South Sutter Water District (SSWD) is located in southern Sutter and western Placer counties, with the Bear River as the northern boundary and stretching southwest between Highway 65 and Highway 70 to Pleasant Grove and Curry creeks. The District was formed in 1954 to develop, store and distribute surface water supplies and to augment and replenish over-drafted groundwater supplies. Today SSWD encompasses a total gross area of nearly 64,000 acres, including 57,012 acres that are authorized to receive surface water. According to the District, fewer than 36,000 acres have actually been irrigated in recent years using a combination of surface and groundwater supplies. By far the majority of those acres grow rice (roughly 29,000 acres, or 82%), while the balance is apportioned between orchards (800 acres, or 11%), irrigated pasture (2,200 acres, or 6%), and row and field crops (500 acres, or 1-2%).

SSWD's seven-member board is elected by the district landowners. Major urban development is occurring all around the district with Plumas Lakes on the north, Natomas on the South and Wheatland and Lincoln on the east. Land fallowing, out-of-basin water sales, and suburban encroachment are among the major issues facing the District today.

The enlarged New Camp Far West Reservoir was completed in 1964 with a storage capacity of 104,400 AF. SSWD and Camp Far West Irrigation District, formed in 1924, hold water rights for operating the reservoir. Surface supplies are managed conjunctively with groundwater supplies. The 7 MWs of power generated by the NCFW powerhouse is wholesaled to SMUD. The FERC license for NCFW was issued on July 2, 1981.

One and a quarter miles downstream of NCFW Dam (and about 15 miles above the confluence with the Feather River), water is diverted by a diversion dam designed to move 30 cfs north into the CFWID and 380 cfs south into the SSWD. In 1994, SSWD, CFWID, and the Department of Water Resources entered into a settlement agreement to meet the District's obligations under the SWRCB's Water Quality Control Plan for the Bay-Delta. Under the agreement, SSWD agreed to release up to 4,400 AF of water from NCFW, when requested by DWR, in all dry and critical year types. The present water rights require minimum instream flows below the diversion works of 25 cfs from April 1 through June 30 and 10 cfs from July 1 through March 30. Under the new agreement, SSWD would increase the flow releases to the lower Bear up to 37 cfs in dry and critical years for up to sixty days in July through September.

In August of 2002, SSWD issued a Proposed Negative Declaration for Canal Expansion for a proposed project, now under construction, to increase its diversion capacity by 100 cfs in order to divert a total of 480 cfs from the Bear. (MBK Engineers, 2002) SSWD asserted that the Canal Expansion project would help to "offset the losses occurring as a result of the Settlement Agreement" (page 2-1).

In addition to groundwater, the Bear River and the creeks and sloughs within the District, SSWD receives anywhere from 5,000-20,000 AF of surplus water from NID annually. That water is currently conveyed to SSWD from Rollins Reservoir via the Bear

River/Wise Canal system. When completed, SSWD's Canal Expansion project, including related conveyance system improvements, could well provide previously-unforeseen opportunities for delivering a portion of surplus NID supplies to SSWD directly via the Bear River and NCFW Reservoir. The resulting higher flows and cooler temperatures could help to address mercury methylation problems in the Bear River below Rollins and/or Combie Reservoirs and in NCFW Reservoir, and could also help to facilitate improved conditions for salmon and steelhead below NCFW Reservoir.