

THE WATERFRONT

Winter 2001

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 120 South 11th Street ♦ P.O. Box 239 ♦ Sunnyside, WA 98944

Water Supply Outlook: Storage At 50% Of Average November Precipitation 105%, Snowpack Average

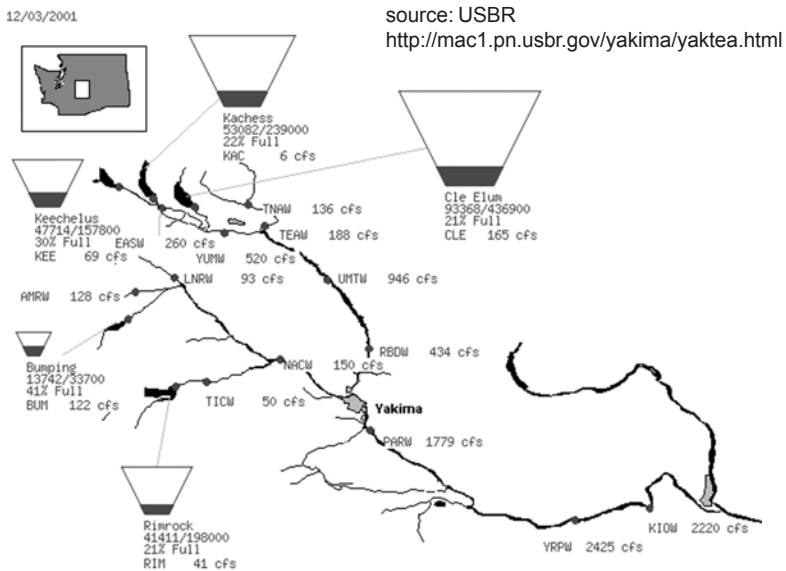
As this year's short water season ends, everyone is turning expectantly to the coming winter months, hoping that the mountains receive enough precipitation to make up for the drought and recharge a stressed reservoir system. Hoping that next year will be different.

"It's too early to make any predictions," said Don Schramm, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) Assistant Manager/Operations. "We're receiving decent precipitation so far this year, and I've seen it turn around many times." Pointing out that snowpack is about average for this time of year, Schramm added, "I'm not going to push any panic buttons."

What makes this year especially difficult is the lack of "carry-over" storage prior to the winter months. Carry-over storage refers to the amount of water left in the reservoir system, collectively, once irrigation is shut down. Usually there is over 350,000 acre-feet left over in the reservoir system, serving as a failsafe should the region suffer a drought. This year that failsafe doesn't exist.

By the end of October the Yakima Basin had less than 100,000 acre-feet in carry-over. The storage level by the close of November was roughly 235,000 acre-feet — well below the typical 450,000 acre-feet normally in storage by this time of year.

The watershed has received approximately 130% of average mountain precipitation since October (this new figure includes November precipitation to date). November precipitation totalled 105% of average.



This graphic illustrates current reservoir levels for the primary storage sites in the Yakima Basin.

"The picture will become clearer as the season progresses," said Schramm, "things overall are looking positive, but we're not out of the woods yet." The months to watch, according to Schramm, are December through February. "Those months are the most productive precipitation and snow months for higher elevations," he said. Experts agree the Yakima Basin must continue to receive average to above average precipitation for the remainder of the winter in order to recover from the 2001 drought.

Snowpack and storage can change rapidly

from month to month. Although October precipitation was above average and November precipitation slightly above, many irrigators remain concerned. Given a deflated agricultural economy and stressed water supplies, many farmers subject to proration can't afford another drought. "At this point it's anybody's guess," said Schramm, "but since we're still ahead of the game there's no need to get alarmed." ☺

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Water Quality Maintains Positive Trend

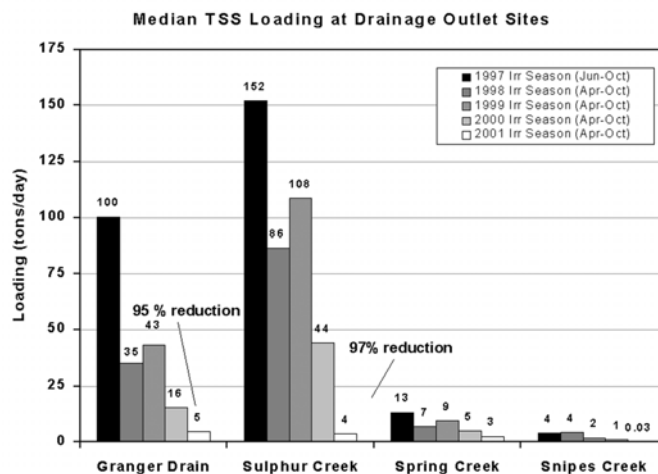
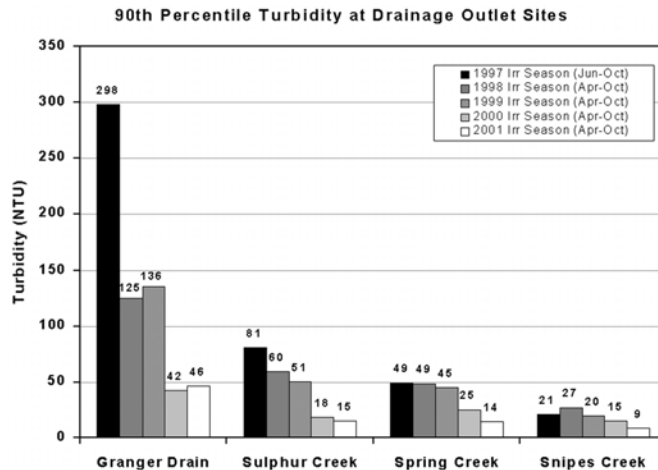
Water quality in three of the four primary joint drains (Sulphur Creek Wasteway, Spring Creek, and Snipes Creek) has continued to improve over last year. Suspended sediment and turbidity continue to better the 2002 TMDL objective (25 NTU). Granger Drain is the only joint return drain that finished the season above the 90th percentile NTU goal, but should be compliant with water quality targets in the near future.

Bill Rice, Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control (RSBOJC) Water Quality Specialist, noted there's a misconception that water quality improvements are merely a result of lower return flows due to this year's drought. "But that's not accurate," he said. "When compared with another short water year, such as 1994, the water quality improvements remain." Take Granger Drain, for example. Although average flows were practically identical in 1994 and 2001 (within 2 cfs), total suspended solids (TSS) and turbidity have been reduced over 80% from 1994 levels.

There's no doubt the positive trend in water quality is a direct result of farmers and growers implementing improved distribution systems and best management practices to meet water quality standards and improve efficiencies. "Since the program was implemented in 1997, it's the farmer who has paid for it, worked at it, and engendered fundamental changes in irrigation practices. These new technologies, management techniques, and perspectives are why our water quality is improving," said Jim Trull, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) District Manager. "I am confident that together we can accomplish our goal. We've come a long way and we're closing in on it every day, every month, every irrigation season."

Doug Simpson, SVID Chairman and farmer echoed Trull's sentiments. "We like to pride ourselves as being the true environmentalists. If we're going to talk the talk, we'd better walk it."

After spending millions of dollars and putting in countless hours to upgrade delivery systems, many farmers are doing just that. ☺



District News

Assessments Mailed

2002 irrigation assessments will increase an average of \$2/acre.

The majority of this increase is due to lower interest rates on investments. Smaller factors include increased reservoir maintenance and higher energy and aquatic weed control costs.

Assessments will be mailed in December for those who wish to pay before the end of 2001.

Please note if your mailing address is incorrect and notify the District of your correct address by calling (509) 837-6980. ☺

Vining Reelected

Doug Vining, the current Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) Division 4 Director, ran unopposed and will remain in office.

SVID is pleased to announce he was sworn in for another 3-year term. No other

interested candidates filed.

Doug Vining has been a Director with SVID since 1981.

He represents the landowners of Director Division 4, which includes all lands east of Euclid and north of the Yakima River. ☺

Eugene Floyd

Eugene Floyd, age 75, passed away October 14, 2001 at Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital. He was born April 23, 1926 to Hubert and Mary (Dennis) Floyd at Bradleyville, MO. Eugene received his education in Missouri and later enlisted into the U.S. Navy serving during World War II. On May 23, 1947 he married Evelyn Garrison in Harrison, Arkansas. They together made their home and farmed in the Missouri area where he attended a vocational school in Branson, MO.

In 1953 they moved to Grandview, WA where Eugene worked for SVID until his

retirement in 1990.

Eugene began work as a Ditchrider and worked his way up to Watermaster in 1978. He was promoted to Chief Watermaster in 1980 and Assistant Manager later that same year. He retired April 30, 1990 after 37 years of service.

Eugene enjoyed working in his orchards, hunting, fishing, traveling, and spending time with his family.

Eugene is survived by his wife Evelyn Floyd of Grandview, WA; 2 sons, Randy Floyd and wife Nancy, of Kennewick, WA and Larry Floyd and wife Shirley, of Grandview, WA; 3 grandchildren, Callie and Chad Gillespie, Kevin Floyd and Michael Floyd; daughter-in-law Sharon Floyd of Yakima, WA one sister, Willa Jean Clark of Forsyth, MO and several nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents and one son, Gregory Floyd.

(Source: compiled in part from the Yakima Herald-Republic) ☺

Wetland Pilot Project Showing Promise, Improving Water Quality

The wetland has gone dormant for the winter, and the water has been turned off. As the first season for the wetland pilot project comes to a close, a preliminary data set has been released that supports the premise that the wetland will help reduce sediment, bacteria, and nutrient levels in return flows.

“The current numbers, although favorable indicators, are somewhat premature,” said Bill Rice, Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control (RSBOJC) Water Quality Specialist. “The wetland was planted just a few months ago and hasn’t had time to develop into a fully functional system.”

As a wetland grows, the amounts of vegetation and biological material increase.

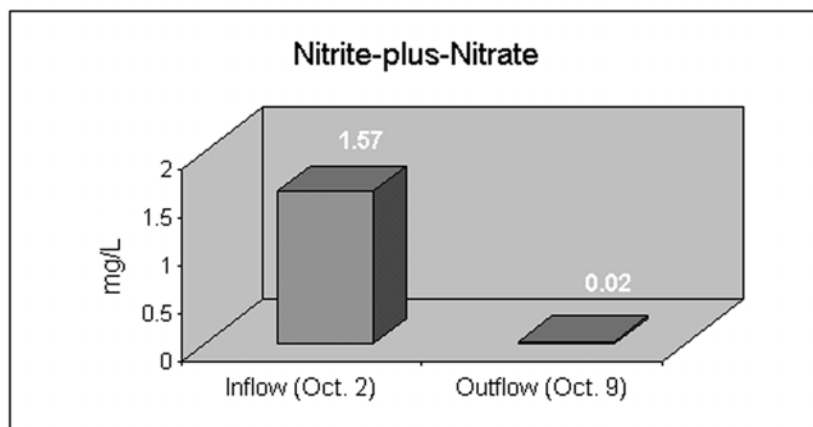


RSBOJC Wetland Water Quality Results (for select parameters, first year data set)

| | Nitrate-plus-Nitrite NO ₂₊₃ (mg/L) | Total Phosphorus TP (mg/L) | Fecal Coliform Colonies/100 mL | Turbidity NTU |
|----------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Intake (Oct. 2) | 1.57 | 0.144 | 3300 | 6.4 |
| Return Flow (Oct. 9) | 0.02 | 0.021 | 14 | 1.2 |



Pictured above is the wetland as it looked this September. This is after only one summer of growth. The graph below illustrates the reduction in Nitrite-plus-Nitrate (NO₂₊₃).



With more growth comes a greater surface area.


This surface area, according to Ariel Szogi, Ph.D., WSU Soils & Water Quality Extension Agent, is what removes nutrients from the water by means of natural, microbial action. “The wetland operates on several levels,” said Szogi in a videotaped interview this past August. “As it develops into a natural, functional ecosystem it will utilize nutrients and chemicals present in the water. As the surface area increases it becomes capable of utilizing a greater quantity of nutrients and chemicals.” This results in cleaner water returning to the drain.

The main constituents the wetland will address are nutrients like NO₂₊₃ (nitrite-plus-nitrate: dissolved inorganic nitrogen) and phosphorus (both inorganic and organic). Fecal coliform and sediment data will also be collected during the study.

In the graph (bottom left), the dramatic reduction of NO₂₊₃ indicates the potential of a wetland as a treatment option—even after just a few months of growth the system is clearly having an impact.

Other constituents were also significantly reduced by the wetland, and it is believed that the wetland will become more effective as it matures.

The wetland was made possible through a \$250,000 grant from the Washington State Legislature, through Engrossed House Bill 2487, to assist in meeting total maximum daily load (TMDL) goals. As stated in the Bill, the money will support “pilot projects to evaluate the ability of existing voluntary and regulatory programs to improve water quality...”

The RSBOJC Workgroup determined about a year ago that a wetland would be a worthy project to investigate as an alternative strategy to improve water quality. 

SVID Website Online

After much anticipation, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) has secured its internet presence. The SVID website, <http://www.svid.org>, went live this past fall.

create a valuable and comprehensive resource for water users while maintaining simple, intuitive navigation."

Visitors can place water orders, review RSBOJC water quality policy, learn about wetlands and soil moisture probes – even read the latest edition of *The Waterfront* or *RSBOJC Update*.

The site also includes links to a wide variety of irrigation and agricultural resources. "The site will evolve to fit what our water users, employees, and the general public find most helpful," said Schmitt. "It's a work in


progress and will likely remain in flux as we continue to add functionality and information."

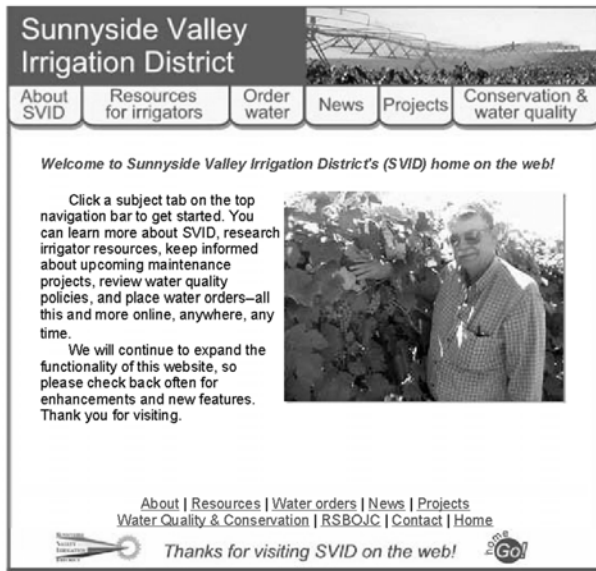
A good example of making useful information available, there are currently several links to water storage, precipitation, and re-

The Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District publishes **THE WATERFRONT** biannually for landowners. All articles, letters and other items submitted to Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) for use in SVID's landowner newsletter become the property of SVID which is authorized to use any item submitted, without payment or compensation to the person submitting the item, in any newsletter or other publication of SVID. SVID reserves the right to edit all items submitted. Douglas Simpson, Chairman. Robert Golob, Dave Michels, John Newhouse, Douglas Vining, Directors. Officers: James W. Trull, Secretary-Manager-Treasurer; Donald Schramm, Assistant Manager; Patricia Bailey, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer. Address comments to: Joe Schmitt, Editor, P.O. Box 239, Sunnyside, WA 98944.

lated governmental sites. "This information is timely and valuable to our water users," he said.

A few features don't work yet but will be online in time for next irrigation season. "In the interim we'll be working out a few bugs and bringing more functionality online" said Schmitt. Anything not working yet is posted on the site.

All SVID waterusers with internet access are encouraged to check out the site at www.svid.org and utilize it as an irrigation resource. In the meantime watch for ongoing changes – and don't forget to tell farmers and friends about www.svid.org. Report problems, comments or suggestions to Joe Schmitt at schmittj@svid.org. 



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The primary goal of the site is information dispersal – making district news and events easy to access and track. Joe Schmitt, Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control Communications, designed and built SVID's site. "My goal was to

Deadline For Environmental Quality Incentives Program Looming

By Alan Fulk

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The final day for you to apply for cost-share assistance to install conservation projects to be started in calendar year 2002 is Friday, January 4th 2002. The cost-share assistance is under USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A Geographic Priority Area (GPA) composed of Benton and Yakima Counties has been approved for approximately \$1,028,000 in EQIP funding for this application period.

EQIP was established under the 1996 Farm Bill to provide a single, voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers to address significant natural resource needs and objectives.

This area is expected to receive a substantial increase over what we have been allocated in the past. This is due to the past performance of the area. During 1998-2000 we have received an average of \$500,000 per year. This year we are scheduled to receive \$1,030,000. This is good news for local irrigators. However, this may

be the last year of funding for this program in our area.

To sign up please visit the USDA, Farm Service Agency, located at 1606 Perry st. suite A in Yakima.

They can be reached by phone at 454-5746. 

Bid dates were set for:

January 4

Last sign up day for FY 2002

March 1

Bid deadline

March 4

Bid opening Zillah FO 9:30 AM