



The Waterfront



Replacement of aging facilities accounts for much of the district's long-range capital improvement program. From left: (1) New 20-inch diameter wastewater collections pipeline replaces a segment of the Motherlode force main. (2) Replacing a spillway in the high-Sierra canal system that delivers water for all EID customers.

Summary of EID's Rate Proposal

In mid-December 2009, EID mailed a Proposition 218 notice to customers describing a proposed rate increase for water, wastewater, and recycled water services. The increase would amount to 35% for each of these services in 2010, 15% in 2011, and 5% in 2012, in 2013, and in 2014.

Some of you will receive this newsletter after the district's board of directors meets in early February to consider the issue. But we want to emphasize the major reasons for the proposed new rates and also point out how your money is spent.

The rate increase is needed to cover operating expenses and to meet our debt coverage obligations. So what has the district done over the past two years to hold down these costs?

- Reduced the workforce by 20% from early 2008 levels, including downsizing the management ranks, laying off 31 additional employees, and eliminating most vacant positions, many of them due to retirements.
- Deferred capital improvement projects to reduce borrowing and, thus, interest and principal payments.
- Refinanced \$110 million in bonds in early 2008, resulting in substantially lower interest rates and interest payments than would likely have been achieved under the former bond issuance.
- Cut millions of dollars from our materials and services line items.

But even with \$8 million in expense reductions, our projected revenues fall short of what is needed. We not only must cover our operating expenses, but also ensure that our net revenues exceed our debt service costs every year by 25%. Without a rate increase, we will not meet these goals.

The Waterfront's New Look

As reported in the last issue of *The Waterfront*, the overwhelming majority of respondents to our October customer survey said that they prefer to get news about the district through this newsletter.

We listened. And we also investigated whether it would be cost efficient to expand *The Waterfront* and provide more information about subjects such as

- the daily work it takes to deliver reliable and safe services,
- discount and rebate programs to help you meet your water conservation goals, and
- news related to district operations and business functions.

To help keep expenses down, the district has applied for and received grants worth \$27 million since 2003 for water reliability projects (\$17.2 million), improvements at EID's recreation facilities (\$5.7 million), water conservation programs (\$1.1 million), and alternative energy projects (\$3 million) that reduce our energy bills all year long.

And how are your dollars spent? Your money goes to cover the costs of the daily work accomplished by EID employees to deliver the most reliable, highest-quality services possible. This includes the maintenance and replacement of aging pipelines that deliver water and those that collect wastewater for treatment. And because we work in a highly regulated industry, it also includes the millions of dollars required to meet ever-changing governmental requirements.

Some examples of major capital improvement projects we've undertaken (summarized in the Proposition 218 notice) are emergency replacement of more than five miles of the Pleasant Oak Main, ending a pattern of dangerous and costly line breaks; construction of the Oak Ridge water storage tanks, allowing the district to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in electricity bills every year by pumping and treating water during off-peak hours; replacing portions of the Motherlode force main, improving our ability to safely collect and transport wastewater; and repairing and replacing portions of the El Dorado canal system, giving us increased ability to deliver water from the high Sierra for our customers and to generate renewable hydroelectric power.

We found that printing costs for the larger version of the newsletter are the same as the costs for the smaller version. And the mailing costs also remain the same.

So welcome to a new, improved *Waterfront*—at no extra cost.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions. Write to us or send email messages to website@eid.org. Please indicate **ATTN: Communications** in your letters and messages.

Remember—*The Waterfront* is archived online. Go to the district's website and click on the "document library" to find five years' worth of news and information.



Message from the General Manager

Jim Abercrombie

About The Rate Increase

As the Proposition 218 notice you received in December says, and as I have written in responses to letters from customers, I can assure you that nobody wants to raise rates, not in good economic times or bad.

We are well aware of customers who are struggling to make ends meet, and our staff did not propose a rate increase lightly. It was only after making significant, across-the-board cuts—\$8 million in all—to our 2009–2010 operating expense budget that we were forced to consider a rate increase.

Those cuts were painful. As described on the front page of this newsletter, they represent a 20-percent decrease in our workforce—including the layoff of 31 employees—and steep reductions in our services and materials line items. The resulting lean 2010 budget is now less than any district budget since 2006.

Our primary goal is to provide safe, reliable services to all customers, squarely in line with what you have told us you want in surveys over the past five years. We must have sufficient revenue to achieve that goal. And under our legal obligations to our bondholders, our net revenues—including new connection fees—must exceed our debt service obligations by 25 percent.

To provide safe and reliable services and comply with our legal obligations to our bondholders requires a rate increase. Otherwise, our anticipated total revenues over the next several years are simply not enough.

This is a tough message for customers to hear. It's an equally tough message to deliver. But in the interest of transparency in government, the ideal that guides our democratic society, it is my responsibility to deliver it.

And it is my pledge to you that your dollars will be spent efficiently in the coming years as the district strives to continue to deliver the safe, reliable services you have a right to expect.

The News—Briefly

Fraser and Norris Elected as 2010 Board Officers

During their December 14, 2009 meeting, EID's board members elected John Fraser as president and Harry Norris as vice president for 2010. Fraser, who was elected to a third term on the board in November 2009, previously served as board vice president in 2004 and 2009 and as president in 2005. He represents the west Placerville/El Dorado/Diamond Springs portion of the district's service area. Norris, in his second term, was elected board vice president in 2005 and board president in 2006. He represents El Dorado Hills.



George Wheeldon (left) passes the board president's gavel to John Fraser.

Sly Park recognized for excellence

In November 2009, the district's Sly Park Recreation Area was honored with several awards. First came the Mountain Democrat's "Readers' Choice" award for best recreation facility. Next was the "Most Important Business to the Economy of Pollock Pines" award from the Community Economic Development Association of Pollock Pines. That award earned certificates of special recognition for the park and superintendant Cheri Jagers from U.S. Representative Tom McClintock and a certificate of recognition from California Assemblyman Ted Gaines.



District Garners Statewide Conservation Award

In early December 2009, EID received the California Association of Water Agencies 2009 Theodore Roosevelt Environmental Award for Excellence in Conservation and Natural Resources Management. This statewide award recognizes the district for its program to preserve fisheries and habitat during the emergency rehabilitation project at the Caples Lake main dam in the summer of 2008.



EID's fisheries and habitat preservation program at Caples Lake included the rescue of 26,000 fish and fingerlings from Caples Lake and their safe transport to new homes in nearby Silver and Red lakes.



The Deer Creek wastewater treatment plant is one of four in the district. This facility treats 2.6 million gallons of flow per day.

EID at Work—Meeting the Regs for Treating Wastewater

Wastewater treatment is a complex and expensive proposition affected by population, geography, and especially by local, state, and federal regulations. In El Dorado County, EID’s sanitary sewer system serves about 62,000 residents across 77 square miles of erratic terrain. Some 550 miles of pipeline—assisted by 64 sewage lift (or pumping) stations to overcome topographical challenges—carry effluent to 4 plants for treatment.

In a nutshell, here’s what it takes to properly treat and discharge wastewater: an extensive system of collection pipelines and lift stations, as well as sophisticated plant facilities, highly trained operators, and a constant eye on ever-changing regulations.

The treatment process begins with **preliminary treatment**, which consists of using mechanical raked bar screens at wastewater holding at the plants to remove objects like rags, plastic, grit, and even pieces of wood that could damage plant equipment and hinder the treatment process.

“What our customers flush down the toilet ends up at one of our plants,” says EID wastewater treatment plant operator Steven Boren. “The largest volume of material, outside of sand and gravel, that must be screened from the flow includes sanitary products and so-called ‘disposable’ cleaning cloths and the like. It costs us extra time and money to remove and properly transport these objects to a landfill.”

The next step, **primary treatment**, moves wastewater into primary clarifiers, or sedimentation basins, where about 60 percent of suspended and floating materials are removed. Then it’s time for **secondary treatment**, normally a two-step process to get at the dissolved and organic materials not removed in primary treatment. The district relies on a process that activates

the growth of bacteria and other microorganisms, which break down organic materials. In turn, the materials—now sludge—settle out of suspension or are converted to nitrogen gas, a common element in the atmosphere.

“Fats, oils, and grease should never go down your drains or your toilets. These substances clog and damage your plumbing, and they mean even more time and money for us to remove.”
—Steve Boren

Secondary treatment is a sensitive biological process, which can be negatively affected by the introduction of inappropriate products and toxic wastes into the sewer system. “Fats, oils, and grease should never go down your drains or your toilets,” cautions Boren. “These substances clog and damage your plumbing, and they mean even more time and money for us to remove.”

Tertiary treatment comes next. It is a filtration process that removes the majority of the remaining suspended particles. In essence, this process “polishes” the water, improving the quality of the effluent before it is discharged to the receiving stream.

The final treatment step is **disinfection** to destroy pathogenic, or disease-producing, organisms. The district uses ultraviolet disinfection at its plants.

“As many customers know, much of our treated wastewater is returned as recycled water for residential and commercial landscape irrigation,” says Vickie Caulfield, EID wastewater operations manager. “And some of the treated wastewater is discharged to streams under state regulations. In fact, the treatment standards we must meet are nearly as demanding as for drinking water.”

To learn more about wastewater treatment regulations, visit www.eid.org, click on the Recycled Water home page, and then on the Title 22 icon for Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

And remember: Be careful what goes down your drains. If you don’t put it in, we don’t have to take it out!

To read more feature articles about EID at work, visit www.eid.org and click on District News. Or call and ask for copies. Recent titles include “Replacing the Motherlode Force Main,” “Hydro Crews Keep the Water Flowing,” “EID Meter Technicians at Work,” and “Maintaining the Water Lines 24/7 All Year Long.”

EID Crews Overcome Challenges during Early December Snowstorm

On Monday morning, December 7, El Dorado County woke up to a snowstorm still in the making. By the end of the day, most of the county was under a blanket of snow, ranging from an inch or two near the Sacramento County line to several feet in the high Sierra. Homes and businesses were without power, cars remained in garages and driveways, and downed trees and branches littered yards, fields, and roads.

At EID, the priorities were to keep the water flowing, prevent wastewater spills, and respond to customer calls. Not an easy feat with power knocked out and field and office staff numbers limited by the inability of employees to get to work.

Dedication paid off. In the field, water operations crews reported to critical facilities to ensure the generators were fueled and functioning, while maintenance crews responded to customer calls for assistance because of burst water lines and loss of water service—about 125 field visits throughout the service area. Wastewater collection crews struggled 24/7 all week to fuel generators at lift stations and manually pump wet wells to keep effluent moving to the treatment plants. Some office workers trudged through deep snow and icy conditions to headquarters, where they were greeted by a chorus of customer calls on the few phone lines powered by the emergency generator.



Foot-deep snow covered the Placerville landscape on December 7, creating many challenges for residents and EID crews.

Like our customers, district employees were relieved when the weather broke, power was fully restored, and our lives returned to a more normal state. “We were pleased to do our part in making sure that no major waterline breaks or wastewater spills occurred,” said water operations supervisor Radenko Odžaković. “Being without power is bad enough, but no water on top of that would be even harder to live with. We did our best to hold problems to a minimum and not add to the discomfort so many county residents faced during much of the week.”

Protect Your Water Pipes in Cold Weather

The snowstorm early this past December was a harsh reminder of how important it is to protect water pipes from freezing. If you have not already done so, we recommend you take the following steps.

1. Locate your shut off valve and make sure you know how to use it. If a pipe bursts, shut off the water to your

residence or place of business and call a plumber immediately.

- 2. To help prevent burst pipes, insulate all accessible pipes using pipe insulation,** which is available at most hardware stores.
- 3. Close all doors to unheated spaces** and keep them closed as much as possible during the winter months.
- 4. Tightly seal all cracks, holes, and other openings on your exterior walls** with caulk or insulation to

prevent cold air from entering the wall cavity.

- 5. During extremely cold weather, let all faucets drip** to prevent water inside the pipes from freezing. If freezing occurs, the dripping will help to relieve pressure buildup in the pipes between the ice blockage and the faucet. The pressure buildup is what causes pipes to burst. And when you let the faucets drip, use cold water to save on your electric or gas bill.

Water Efficiency—Educational Materials

Do you need school-aged materials for your classroom or group?

EID’s Office of Water Efficiency has a variety of complimentary educational materials on water conservation and good stewardship. From activity books for

younger learners to information geared more to older students, there’s sure to be something for your classroom, after school activity, or extracurricular group. Along with the learning booklets you may also request stickers, pencils, or rulers.

Call us to discuss your needs and request materials at 530-642-4126 or by email at officeofwaterefficiency@eid.org.



2 Regular Board Meetings

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
0	11	8	8	12	—	14	—	9	13	—	8	13
1	25	22	22	26	24	28	26	23	27	25	—	—

Board meetings generally occur on the second and fourth Monday of each month.

The Waterfront is a publication of EID’s Communications Department.