

LOCAL GROUNDWATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PAST PERFORMANCE

Water conservation was an integral part of the design of Westlands' distribution system in the early 1960's. A closed pipeline distribution system and metered deliveries, prerequisites for optimum water management, enabled the District to equitably and efficiently deliver the District's water supply with virtually no losses to seepage, evaporation, and spills. Conjunctive use of surface and groundwater improves overall water supply reliability by making more efficient use of water that is available. In wet periods, use of surface water is encouraged to preserve groundwater supplies. In droughts, greater flexibility in the use of groundwater is facilitated to extract the maximum benefit from this resource. Water conservation remains an integral part of the District's operations in order to maintain the resources available to Westland's water users.

Westlands Water District has participated in a number of grants throughout its 50 years of operation. In 2001, Westlands Water District was awarded a Local Groundwater Assistance Grant (AB303 Grant Agreement No. 4600001790); this agreement was completed on time and on budget. Appendix B contains the final report letter summarizing the findings, schedule and budget which was provided to the Department of Water Resources. Recently, Westlands has been awarded \$3.7 million as a part of the Challenge Grant Program under the Recovery Act of 2009 Water Marketing and Efficiency Grants.

This program titled "Water Conservation through Irrigation System Purchase Program" (ISP Program) is a funding match program that purchases irrigation systems for qualified farmers that grow on drainage impaired lands. The ISP Program began 4-1-2010 and accepted applications until 4-1-2012. Appendix B also contains the ISP Program final funding report which shows the amount of \$3,667,443 which was provided by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and the total Non-Federal contribution, which was provided by Westlands Water District to the farmer as a low cost loan to be paid in the course of 5 years, that amounted to \$3,740,144. The loan amount was for 50% of the cost of the equipment (design and installation not included) of water conserving irrigation systems by an approved vendor; where the other 50% from the Bureau of Reclamation was provided as an incentive. These systems were required to be efficient so that it would ultimately reduce the shallow groundwater table from the root zones of drainage impacted lands.



The ISP Program allowed funding for a total of 60 water conservative irrigation systems to be installed in the life of the project. Once these systems were installed the Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, conducted studies and continue to monitor and evaluate the systems. Studies were done in 2011 on 30 of the irrigation systems which measured distribution uniformity (DU) and found values higher than expected. DU values of 0.90 were found, whereas in the past, 0.80 were considered excellent values. Dr. Charles Burt, Ph.D., P.E., and Chairman of the ITRC stated “In summary, the large sample size provides clear evidence of the implementation of an excellent program”. The “Executive Summary” of this report is provided also in Appendix B. The “Executive Summary” of this report is provided in Appendix B. In addition to the ISP program, Westlands also offers water users the Irrigation Systems Improvement Program (ISIP) and the Expanded Irrigation Systems Improvement Program (EISIP).

The ISIP/EISIP provides low interest rates to farmers for the lease/purchase of irrigation system equipment financed by the State Water Resources Control Board Revolving Fund and DWR Proposition 13 funds. The program offers farmers and land owners the opportunity to lease portable aluminum irrigation equipment and other improved irrigation systems, including but not limited to micro irrigation, linear move and center pivots systems. Under EISIP the District funds up to \$130,000 towards irrigation system equipment purchase. Each lease requires a 20% deposit and repayment of the remaining balance over a maximum, four-year term, to include interest charges of 3.1% annually. Westlands pays the vendor directly and lease payments are put directly back into the revolving fund. The lease may be used to pay for system design and equipment, but installation costs are excluded. The Applicant must designate 160 acres of non-annexed land as security for each lease; insurance is required for all equipment. The November 2011 EISIP/ISIP Funding Summary is provided in Appendix B, as well as a list of EISIP Recorded Leases from October 2001 through February 2012. Over 400 recorded leases have been provided to water users since the program’s inception in the late 90’s. This program provides farmers the funding to implement the most innovative methods in water conservation available today.

The programs executed by Westlands Water District are well thought out and managed by a very capable staff. Westlands has 50 years of experience in managing funds, meeting deadlines and completing projects that are beneficial to its customers and the community as a whole. Westlands encompasses more than 600,000 acres of farmland in western Fresno and Kings Counties. The District serves approximately 600 family-owned farms that average 900 acres in size. Despite the chronic water shortages facing the Central Valley, the family





owned farms within the Westlands Water District are among the most productive and water-efficient in the world, largely because they have employed cutting edge technological innovations. The District is dedicated to provide farmers with crop water use information and up-to-date information on irrigation techniques and systems; this is accomplished through the District's *Irrigation Guide* and the ISIP/EISIP. The District's 20-year average efficiency rating is 83%, which is one of the highest in the nation. Ultimately, consumers are the ones who benefit from a farmer's use of water, since it generates food and fiber products, jobs and economic activity for our region, state and nation.

