

By News-Sentinel Staff

Here are the top news stories of 2003 as selected by the News-Sentinel's news department.

6. Water

It was a momentous year as the City of Lodi and local water districts took major steps to improve their water supply.

The Woodbridge Irrigation District will break ground this month to construct a new Woodbridge Dam, replacing one that has served the region for 100 years. The construction contract is \$8.5 million, but district manager Andy Christensen said the full cost will be about \$12 million due to engineering, bond issuance, attorney and environmental monitoring costs.

In addition to the dam, three fish ladders, a control building and a bypass pipeline will be constructed.

The new dam, expected to be completed in two years, will result in Lodi Lake being filled 365 days a year. Currently, the man-made lake fronting Turner Road is drained during the winter months.

The project will be paid from bonds financed by Woodbridge's sale of surplus water to the city of Lodi, which will buy 6,000 acre-feet of water annually from Woodbridge for \$1.2 million. Lodi will make \$300,000 quarterly payments.

Woodbridge has surplus water to sell Lodi because area farmers have used drip irrigation the past five years which uses a great deal less water, Christensen said.

Lodi will use the new water either to serve residential and commercial customers or replenish the groundwater basin since the city's water largely comes from wells.

East of Highway 99, the North San Joaquin Water Conservation District began work on two projects to replenish the declining water table in eastern San Joaquin County.

The water district is pumping water from the Mokelumne River into one test site on each side of the river, 25 acres southwest of Locust Tree and Victor roads and 20 acres owned by the Nakagawa family north of the Mokelumne River near Woodbridge and Dustin roads.

The water recharge projects are being financed through a special \$1-per-acre tax approved by property owners in July. The tax was approved with 8,387 votes in favor and 7,919 against. Property owners were entitled to one vote per acre.

Also, the Farmington recharge project was started in 2003 by the Stockton East Water District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is a \$33.5 million effort to restore the region's groundwater supply and repel saltwater intrusion.

Stockton East's goal is to spread an average of 35,000 acre-feet of water annually on 800 to 1,200 acres through short- and long-term agreements with area landowners.

The target area is generally from Highway 99 to Jack Tone Road and the Mokelumne River south to Temple Creek.

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