March 31, 2021

Dear Landowners, Members and Managers:

The Grassland Water District (District) received notification from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) that 2021 has been designated a Shasta Critical Water Year and that the District will only receive 75% of its Refuge Level 2 (L2) water supply (93,750 acre-feet). L2 water comprises 69% (125,000 of 180,000 acre-feet) of your full contract water supply. Incremental Level 4 (IL4) water accounts for the remaining 31% (55,000 of 180,000 acre-feet) of the District’s full contract water supply. The Bureau has indicated that they plan to acquire approximately 30,000 acre-feet (AF) of IL4 water for all the south-of-Delta wildlife refuges, of which approximately 19,000 AF will be made available to the Grassland Resource Conservation District.

Unfortunately, this is the fourth consecutive year that the Bureau has not allowed for the carryover of conserved L2 water remaining on the District’s books at the end of the water year into the following water year. After years of protest and demands for more flexibility, the Bureau notified the District on March 26th that it could use approximately 7,000 AF of IL4 carryover water through the end of May which was previously restricted to use before the end of April. The District also intends to pump approximately 8,000 AF of groundwater between April and June but there are limited groundwater resources in the south Grasslands. The extra month for use of carryover water and our groundwater program will enable the District’s landowners to better schedule irrigations when their habitat will benefit from it the most.

Despite the reduced water supply the District feels confident it will be able to provide landowners a single limited irrigation until the end of May for the south Grasslands and through June 15th for the north Grasslands. After June 15th there will little to no water available for irrigations or to maintain brood ponds. The cost of spring water (March 1 – August 14) remains $4/AF. If you are interested in receiving water this spring please contact your water tenders at your earliest convenience.

In addition, due to the extreme drought conditions it is anticipated that the fall flood-up water may not be available until early October and will be allocated to landowners based on assessed acres as was done in the drought of 2014 and 2015. Given the scarcity of water supply this season, water conservation should continue to be everyone’s highest priority. Please replace all leaky screw gates, ensure pond levees are in good condition, and be very mindful of water elevations and unnecessary spill.

The District’s overarching goal is to provide as many landowners with as much habitat water as possible given the limited water supply and delivery timing constraints. We appreciate your coordination and patience.

Sincerely,

Ric Ortega, General Manager

North Grasslands Water Tender – Mike Boffa 209-704-5187
South Grasslands Water Tender – Derrick Iudice 209-704-5184
Water Department Supervisor- Rob Kocher 209-704-5191
District Engineer/Watermaster – Ken Swanson 559-287-0326