

DISTRICT FACTS

Location

Headquartered in Grass Valley, serving parts of Nevada, Placer and Yuba counties

Territory

450 square miles

Founded

1921

Founded

NID serves 25,000 homes, businesses and farms, delivering 3 billion gallons per year of high quality drinking water and enough irrigation water for 30,000 acres of agricultural land.

Founded

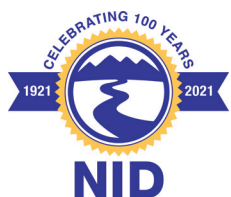
Snowmelt across 70,000 acres of high-elevation watershed feeds 29 reservoirs.

Facilities

- Seven hydroelectric plants generating 82 megawatts delivered by nine miles of overhead power lines
- Eight reservoirs providing multibeneficial uses, including recreation
- Six water treatment plants
- More than 500 miles of ditches and canals, and 400 miles of pressurized pipe

Website

www.nidwater.com



Nevada Irrigation District Celebrates a Century of Progress

By Will Holbert



The Nevada Irrigation District (NID) offers a prime example of how vision and resolve by a community can secure a dependable water source over a century and beyond. What started with NID's official formation in 1921 has since evolved into an agency with a 450-square-mile service area that encompasses more than 287,000 acres over parts of three counties, a geographic area that makes the district one of the largest in California.

The district's roots extend back to 1917, when Munson B. "Bert" Church and his wife, Kate, drove their cattle from parched dry pasture in western Nevada County eastward and up to the green mountain meadows of the Sierra Nevada. It was during this cattle drive that the couple first envisioned a water system where the tumbling and abundant waters of the high mountains could be carried to the fertile but dry farms and ranches of the Sierra Foothills.

Soon, the Churches joined with other Nevada County residents to pursue this dream. The Nevada County Farm Bureau together with visionary community leaders set out to convince Nevada County residents and voters they should form their own irrigation district. It would build upon many of the old

reservoir and canal systems built during the California Gold Rush, which were then falling into disrepair. Community leaders were determined to acquire these invaluable assets, make improvements, and upcycle them into the backbone of a new public water system.

From 1917-1921, engineering studies were completed, new water rights were negotiated and a local campaign was mounted to build support for this dream of a new irrigation district. In early 1921, local organizers presented petitions carrying 800 signatures of irrigation district supporters to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. A public election was held within months, with voters favoring the new district by a margin of 536-163. At its formation, NID included 202,000 acres in Nevada County. Five years later, in 1926, residents of Placer County chose to join the district, and another 66,500 acres were added.

What started as a simple effort to secure irrigation water has evolved into multi-faceted operations. Today the district delivers water to people and farms in Nevada, Placer and Yuba counties, along with generating clean hydroelectric power and maintaining abundant recreational facilities in mountain reservoirs.



Opposite page: Men work on a flume in a photograph dated 1926. Up until a decade ago, NID depended on canals and flumes dating back to the Gold Rush, built initially to serve early-day mining companies and later added to the public water system.

Above left: Six NID treatment facilities treat more than 3 billion gallons annually for use by 25,000 homes and businesses.

Above right: Rollins Dam and Reservoir is one of eight NID-managed reservoirs that provide multiple benefits including storage, hydropower and recreation.

Water and Power

NID water starts as snowmelt found in 70,000 acres of high-elevation watershed at the headwaters of the Middle Yuba River, Bear River and Deer Creek watersheds. In the first years of development, NID acquired about 400 miles of ditches and canals constructed by hand during the Gold Rush to support mining efforts. These conduits were the lifelines that would bring water to farmers and ranchers in the foothills.

Today, more than 500 miles of canals and 400 miles of pressurized pipe deliver water to 30,000 acres of irrigated land. Fifty-four percent of the water flows to Placer County. Annually, NID treats more than 3 billion gallons at six treatment plants for use by 25,000 homes and businesses.

NID began producing electricity in 1965 with the completion of the \$65 million Yuba-Bear Power Project. The original project included the Chicago Park and Dutch Flat powerhouses and, in 1980, the Rollins and Bowman powerhouses were added.

Scotts Flat Dam, completed from 1963-66, brought not only power generation

capability, but new reservoirs and canal systems and, most importantly, created an additional 145,000 acre-feet of water storage for district residents.

NID currently operates seven hydroelectric plants and nine miles of overhead power lines that deliver 82 megawatts of energy to the power-grid – enough electricity to power 60,000 homes.

Recreation Resources

Each year, about 200,000 people visit NID recreation areas in the foothills and at higher elevations in the Sierra Nevada. At Rollins (elevation 2,100 feet) and Scotts Flat (3,100 feet) reservoirs, visitors can enjoy boating and kayaking, hiking, swimming, and camping. In the mountains, the district offers recreational opportunities in the Jackson Meadows (6,100 feet) and Bowman Lake (5,650 feet) areas.

Headwaters Health

As stewards of thousands of acres of watershed, NID has ongoing projects to promote forest health and address the impacts of a warming climate. For example, the district's forest thinning projects reduce fire threats and increase

the amount of water available within a watershed. Other projects include mountain meadow restoration and fish habitat improvements.

New Century, Many Missions

What started out as a dream to secure irrigation water from an upper Sierra Nevada has transformed into a multi-faceted district. Through it all, the dedication has been to keep high quality water flowing to farms and fields, households and businesses. With that mission in mind, NID is looking forward to another 100 years of service to the community.

“NID now has an elaborate, highly complex water system for the community benefit. All of us take great pride in our accomplishments during the past century,” said NID Board President Chris Bierwagen. “As part of that, we vow to continue to manage the resources in our care that enhance quality of life locally, strengthen our economy through agricultural production, contribute to the state power grid through production of clean renewable energy, and foster the recreational spirit through regional tourism.” ♦