



IRRIGATION

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2025



Peter Rietkerk
General Manager

LOOKING AHEAD, INVESTING IN TOMORROW

As we wrap up another successful irrigation season, the winter months offer us an important opportunity to maintain, construct, and invest in the future of SSJID. This season is a vital time for strengthening the infrastructure that supports our growers, partners, and communities year-round.

Across SSJID, our teams are constructing projects that enhance system performance, improve efficiency, and support long-term reliability.

We are excited for you to read about some of these projects here in this newsletter, alongside critical District updates. These efforts reflect SSJID's continued commitment to responsible stewardship as we navigate evolving water and energy needs.

This winter, we remain focused on ensuring that the resources entrusted to us today will continue to serve our community well into the future. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and support.

SAVE THE DATE

Listening to our growers is a key part of how SSJID serves the district. To continue that conversation, we will be hosting a **District-wide Growers Meeting** on **Thursday, February 5, 2026**.

We encourage growers to participate and share their perspectives. Stay tuned for more information.



ENERGY SERVICES UPDATE: CONTINUING THE PATH TO LOCAL CONTROL

SSJID's "Powered by Purpose" initiative is making steady progress as the District works to become South San Joaquin County's locally governed retail electric provider.

We are dedicated to local control, accountability, safety, and lower rates for the communities we serve.

On October 30, 2025, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) issued an order dismissing PG&E's application for review under Public Utilities Code Section 851. PG&E's filing had paused SSJID's eminent domain proceedings to acquire the electric assets needed to serve customers within SSJID's service area.

With the CPUC's recent order, SSJID can now resume its eminent domain trial in San Joaquin County Superior Court. The trial includes two phases: one to determine SSJID's right to take the assets and a second to establish valuation. PG&E is expected to refile with the CPUC after the trial concludes. SSJID is preparing to place the case back on the court's calendar as soon as practical.

We are working every day to become your safe and reliable public power solution. To learn more and stay up-to-date with the latest news, please visit poweredbyssjid.com.





Chad Parsons, Senior Civil Engineer

WINTER CONSTRUCTION SEASON: A CRITICAL INVESTMENT WINDOW

Each year, SSJID uses November through March to complete essential maintenance and system upgrades.

With irrigation water out of the system, crews can focus on the priority projects identified in the Water Master Plan. This work supports SSJID's ability to deliver reliable service throughout the year.

This winter, key projects include:

- Replacing aging pipelines, reducing water loss, improving operational efficiency, and limiting future maintenance needs
- Implementing new safety system enhancements through Safety Mojo to support a safer workplace for employees and contractors
- Working on the Joint Supply Canal and lateral systems, including structural repairs, sediment removal, lateral interconnections, and equipment upgrades

Seasonal hiring will provide additional staffing to meet the increased workload. These temporary team members ensure critical projects are completed before spring irrigation begins.

FOCUS ON ENCROACHMENTS

As SSJID advances the capital improvement projects identified in the 30-year Water Master Plan adopted in 2022, we are investing in long-term reliability through the rehabilitation and replacement of more than 300 miles of pipelines and 350 miles of ditches and canals. To complete this work efficiently and responsibly, all encroachments within District easements must be cleared so crews can access and protect critical infrastructure.

Items such as burn piles, planted trees, and other obstructions limit SSJID's ability to operate and maintain the system. Trees and their root structures within 15 feet of a pipeline or ditch have already caused significant damage in several areas. Landowners are responsible for removing these types of encroachments and for the cost of any repairs or replacements required because of that damage.

If your property contains encroachments within an SSJID easement, please contact the Engineering Department at 209-249-4600 for the proper permit application. All work within SSJID's easements requires an approved permit and inspection to help prevent future damage and ensure continued system reliability.

Pictured: A damaged SSJID pipeline at Drain 11 resulting from trees planted within 15 feet of the pipeline.



DIAL 8-1-1 BEFORE YOU DIG

California law requires that you call Underground Service Alert – Northern California (USA-North) at least two working days, but no more than 14 calendar days, prior to commencing excavation. Once you have notified USA-North, all utility owners (including SSJID) are required to locate and mark their facilities within the defined area.



CANYON TUNNEL PROJECT *BREAKING GROUND*

In August, SSJID and Oakdale Irrigation District (OID) marked an important milestone with the groundbreaking of the Canyon Tunnel Project. This \$84 million investment will strengthen the reliability of SSJID's headworks and protect the water supply from future slope failures in the Stanislaus River canyon.

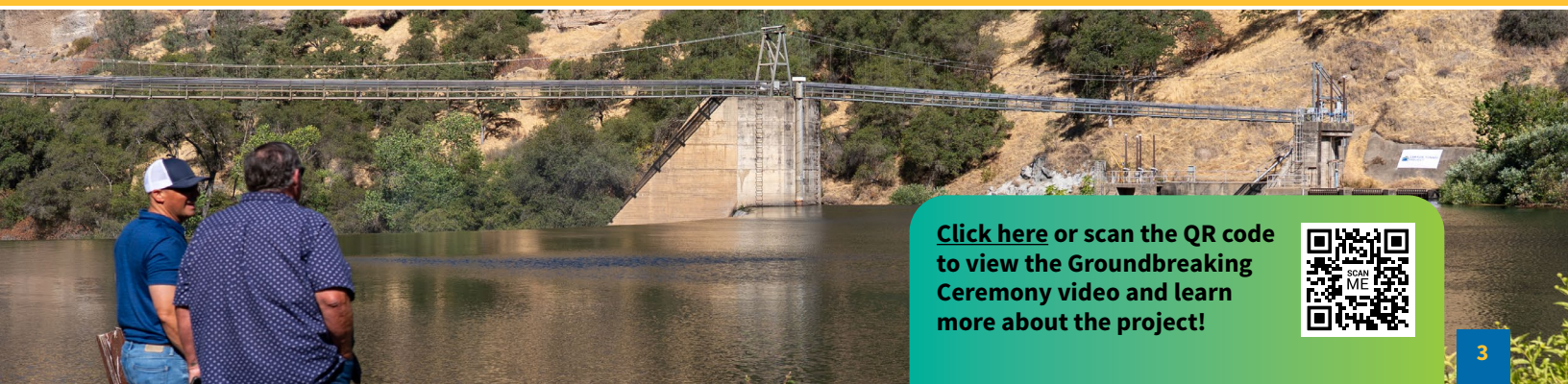
The project includes the construction of a reinforced water intake structure and a new two-mile tunnel that will convey water just upstream of the OID division point. OID will continue to receive its 28 percent share, while the remaining 72 percent will flow to Woodward Reservoir for treatment and delivery to SSJID's 215,000 urban customers and irrigation users.

Since the groundbreaking, the contractor Drill Tech has established the construction yard and begun preparing the west portal site. Additional equipment is expected to arrive at Goodwin Dam in December to support the installation of a floating bridge, which will allow work to begin at the upper tunnel portal.

 For project updates, visit canyontunnelproject.org



Key Project Milestones Include:



[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to view the Groundbreaking Ceremony video and learn more about the project!





Brandon Nakagawa, *Water Resources Coordinator*

COURT DECISION RECOGNIZES STRONG LOCAL GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP UNDER SGMA

A major court decision in October cleared the way for the State Water Resources Control Board to continue its oversight of groundwater in parts of the Central Valley.

A ruling by the Fifth District Court of Appeal lifted a preliminary injunction issued by Kings County Superior Court that had temporarily blocked state intervention in the Tulare Lake Subbasin. The lawsuit, brought by the Kings County Farm Bureau, challenged the State's authority under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As it stands, the appellate court dismissed most of the Farm Bureau's legal claims and reaffirmed the State's ability to step in when a basin is not meeting SGMA requirements. As a result, the SGMA process will immediately continue to move forward, including State fees and stringent groundwater monitoring and reporting.

There is one legal argument that was reaffirmed for local agencies working hard to manage their groundwater responsibly, while their neighbors are maybe falling short. The Appellate court confirmed that SGMA's "Good Actor" provision remains valid, meaning a Groundwater Sustainability Agency can request to be excluded from State intervention if it can demonstrate that its area is meeting adopted sustainability goals.

For SSJID and other agencies committed to responsible groundwater stewardship, the ruling recognizes longstanding investments in local water management and provides reassurance that focused, data-driven efforts can be acknowledged even when broader subbasin challenges exist.



OFF-SEASON STEWARDSHIP: SSJID TERMINATES WOODWARD RESERVOIR RECREATION LEASE WITH STANISLAUS COUNTY

SSJID continues to prioritize water quality at Woodward Reservoir as boating restrictions remain in place and statewide concerns grow about invasive species.

Protecting this critical resource is essential to maintaining a reliable supply for the 215,000 irrigation and urban customers SSJID serves. Even during the recreation off-season, SSJID remains focused on supporting strong invasive species prevention measures that safeguard long-term water reliability.

In October, the SSJID Board of Directors issued a notice of early termination to Stanislaus County for its operation of recreation at the reservoir. Under the agreement, SSJID will compensate the county \$2 million and pay the remaining depreciated cost of the jointly funded upper intake facility, estimated at \$820,000. SSJID will evaluate its options to acquire any necessary parcels owned by the County, for the continuation of recreation management and access.

SSJID's financial analysis has shown that the District can recover these costs within 8 to 12 years and generate an estimated \$500,000 in new annual revenue beginning in year one. SSJID will also establish a dedicated fund to support long-term maintenance and upkeep.



Since 2022, SSJID has engaged the county in efforts to renegotiate the franchise license agreement. After extensive review, we concluded that ending the agreement early is in the best interest of our constituents. This transition will strengthen protections for nearly 50,000 acres of farmland in our service area, support consistent protocols to guard against invasive species such as the Golden Mussel, and allow improvements to public safety and recreational facilities.

SSJID expects to finalize plans by mid-2026 and will assume full responsibility for recreation operations on October 15, 2026. We will continue to share updates as planning progresses.



SSJID IN THE COMMUNITY

#SSJIDCARES

Recognition and Leadership



SSJID Engineering Department Manager Forrest Killingsworth was recently appointed to the Board of the United States Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (USCID), a national organization dedicated to advancing sustainable irrigation, drainage, and flood control practices. As one of nine directors, Killingsworth will help guide discussions on planning, design, operations, and policy affecting irrigated agriculture across the country. "I am honored to represent SSJID and contribute to a group that plays such an important role in the future of irrigation," Killingsworth said. "This is a valuable opportunity to both learn from and share with peers as we continue to strengthen our irrigation community."



Katie Patterson, SSJID's Public and Government Relations Manager, was recently appointed to the Board of the California Farmland Trust (CFT). Founded in 2004, CFT partners with landowners and agricultural advocates across the state to protect California's most productive farmland from development, ensuring it remains in agricultural use for future generations. Patterson's appointment deepens SSJID's connection to regional farmland conservation. "I am pleased to lend my experience to ensure that agriculture is a priority and is protected for future generations," Patterson said.

WELCOMING NEW FACES

#TEAMSSJID

Welcome to our new SSJID team members! Thank you for bringing your talent, energy, and dedication to serving our community.



Samantha Pombo
HR TECHNICIAN



Kyle O'Connor
AUTOMOTIVE/EQUIPMENT
MECHANIC



Donovan DeLeon
DITCHTENDER/
MAINTENANCE WORKER



Ismael Contreras
WATER TREATMENT PLANT
OPERATOR III



Logan Laird
DITCHTENDER/
MAINTENANCE WORKER



Questin Fowler
WATER TREATMENT
OPERATOR II

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

SAFETY DAY

SSJID employees gathered at the Ripon Community Center for this year's Safety Day, starting with a hearty breakfast from the Manteca Rotary, followed by keynote speaker Eric Giguere sharing his powerful story of surviving a trench collapse. Staff participated in hands-on breakout sessions, including: lock out tag out procedures, airbag deployments, and seatbelt safety.

The Red Wing Boot Truck and a Health Fair offered PPE fittings and wellness resources. After a delicious lunch, staff participated in health plan updates from ACWA/JPIA, and harassment prevention training, SSJID ensured every employee was safe and supported.



HOLIDAY FUN

SSJID was proud to support local holiday traditions this season hosted by local community organizations, including Manteca's Christmas in the Park, Escalon's Christmas Parade, and Ripon's Christmas Parade. District employees also leaned into the holiday spirit by sponsoring 50 children's Christmas wishes through Ray of Hope, and coordinated donations to the Toys for Tots drive in Manteca. We extend our sincere thanks to the community for its continued involvement and partnership, which makes these celebrations possible.



STEWARDSHIP IN EVERY SEASON: LOOKING AHEAD TO A SUCCESSFUL 2026

While irrigation deliveries slow during winter, SSJID remains hard at work behind the scenes. Our teams continue planning, maintaining essential infrastructure, and protecting the water and power resources that our community depends on today and for generations to come. Our year-round dedication ensures we are always prepared to meet South San Joaquin County's evolving needs.

Thank you to our growers, neighbors, and community partners for your continued trust and support. Your engagement and collaboration bolster our mission and drive the work we do every day.

Stay connected year-round at ssjid.gov and follow us on the platforms below for updates, project news, and helpful resources. We look forward to the opportunities and progress the new year will bring.