

SPECIAL REPORT

to our customers

As the 2005 irrigation season draws near there are so many things going on in your district that a Special Report seemed like a good way to draw it all together and put it in one place—and here it is. 2005 assessments are coming out within a very few days and they will reflect increases across the board. That story begins on this first page. A drought—not unusual in this area anymore—is on the horizon, and our story on that begins on page two, along with suggestions for keeping your lawn as green as possible.

2005 Assessments Increase

The Kennewick Irrigation District's Board of Directors has voted to raise assessment rates for 2005. Invoices are scheduled to go out the first week of March, and will reflect a cost increase for all KID customers.

Mike Macon, KID Interim Secretary/Manager and Realty Asset Manager, says that there are several reasons for the higher assessments.

First, a larger than expected number of customer service calls in 2004 left nearly all of the district's 183 Local Improvement Districts with a deficit at year's end. By Washington state law, irrigation districts are required to have that amount made up within the next budget year. Thus, almost two-thirds of last year's system repair and customer call-out costs are being billed this year.

Next, the repair and maintenance cost estimates for 2005 have been raised. Macon refers to newer numbers as "more realistic" in the wake of the growth in the number of homes in the KID's service area. He adds that acknowledging and planning for the higher costs should help prevent budget shortfalls.

The Kennewick Irrigation District is unusual in that the overwhelming majority of its customers live in residential areas rather than on farms. Material and labor costs have gone up in recent years and the steep growth rate in the Tri-Cities area has multiplied that expense. That has been even further magnified by the fact that until this budget, even nominal growth wasn't factored into the KID's budget.

Over the next few years, Macon believes that assessment amounts—and, thus, customer costs—will continue to slowly increase. Both business and technology have changed in recent years and the KID has begun a self-review process that will examine both its policies and its resources to see where change or investment might allow it to run smoother and more cost effectively.

The precise amount of the increase in the 2005 invoices will vary from one Local Improvement District to another. The KID website (www.kid.org) has more information about how to read the district's assessments. For specific questions, you can call the KID business office at 586-9111. Customer service staff is on hand weekdays from 8AM to 5PM.

Go to www.kid.org for information on how to read your assessment.

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TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Drought anticipated due to Lack of Snow

The questions sound like this: “If the rivers and reservoirs are mostly full, are we going to have a drought this year? And if we do, will it be as bad as 2001? And if it is, why?”

The answers sound like this: “Yep, Yep, and that’s a long story, but here goes...”

As this is written—mid-February—the Bureau of Reclamation shows that all five reservoirs in the Yakima system are over 50% full, and some are around 80% full. But stream flows in the rivers that carry water into and out of those reservoirs are closer to 40% or 50% of normal. The snow pack is down around 1/5 of what it should be in a good year. And that last number is the most critical.

Ask most people where irrigation water comes from, and you’ll find that it’s generally assumed to come out of a river. And that’s true, to an extent. The Yakima River (not the Columbia) provides the path that the water uses to get to the Kennewick Irrigation District. But the water has to come from somewhere.

Many people know that snow and rain fall in the mountains, fill up the reservoirs, and that water is released later in the year to

keep the irrigation canals full right to the end of the growing season, usually some time in October. But that’s not the whole story either.

The fact is that for the Kennewick Irrigation District to have a normal watering year, there needs to be enough snow on the slopes of the upper watershed area (mountains and foothills, largely) to fill all five of the reservoirs not once, but five times every year. Usually the reserve in the reservoirs isn’t drawn on till late May or June, and then they are continually replenished by the melting snow. But this year, there isn’t enough snow to melt to fill them more than once—if even that.

Count on a drought.

Though it’s too early to tell if it will be as severe as 2001, it appears likely that it will. Formal plans haven’t been made to ration water yet, but it’s reasonable to expect no better than “every other day” watering by mid-summer of this year, if not earlier. The Kennewick Irrigation District’s website has more—and more updated—information linked to its front page.

For more information on the impending drought, look on the internet:

Kennewick Irrigation District:	www.kid.org
Washington State University Drought Information:	www.drought.wsu.edu
US Bureau of Reclamation:	www.usbr.gov
National Weather Service:	www.nws.noaa.gov
National Weather Service’s Drought Monitor:	www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov
USDA NRCS Water & Climate Center:	www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov

SPECIAL REPORT

to our customers

Tips to keep your yard green with minimal water

A few ideas on keeping green things as green as possible with the water available this year, courtesy of the WSU/Benton County Cooperative Extension Agency Horticulturist Marianne Ophardt and the Kennewick Irrigation District.

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It's important to get the water that's available to the plants—not to let it sit and evaporate, so de-thatch and aerate lawns and gardens in early spring (before mid-April) to let the water get down into the soil.

Water deeply, less frequently. For lawns, roots effectively go 8 inches deep. For larger plants, the roots can go down as far as 12 to 18 inches. The soil needs to be moist—not soaking wet—throughout this zone.

The highest water demand times are before 10AM and after 2PM—so try to water between those times. Spreading out the demand not only is better for the system, it also provides you with stronger water pressure.

Use less fertilizer. Particularly once irrigation water rationing starts. Don't assume an unlimited supply of water available on demand. Overdoing the fertilizer without sufficient water can quickly burn up a lawn.

Keep the area free of weeds. The more unwanted plants there are to suck up available water, the less there is for the ones you want—such as grass or flowers.

Leave the grass longer this year. Raise the bar on your mowing equipment. Think of it as a “comb-over” for your lawn. Not optimal—but one way to keep things a little greener a little longer.

For more ideas on ways to stay green during a drought, contact the Washington State University/Benton County Cooperative Extension Service at 735-2551, or stop by their offices at 5600 West Canal Place in Kennewick.

Xeriscape™

The name sounds like something from a futuristic novel or a sci-fi film, but it isn't. The Kennewick Irrigation District's Xeriscape™ Garden is all about water.



Mike DiFani,
Field Operations
Manager

The idea behind KID Field Operations Manager Mike DiFani's baby is that landscaping with drought-resistant plants and watering with efficient irrigation methods (notably drip systems) can save water at the same time it makes an otherwise desert-like area more beautiful.

Late this summer the KID will open its low water use demonstration garden at the shop facility, 2015 South Ely, in Kennewick. The project will be open to the public as an ongoing experiment and an educational exhibit. Watch www.kid.org for updates on the project and to find out when it will open, then come on out and say hello to the proud daddy.

KID

Board of Directors



Loren Watts, Pres.



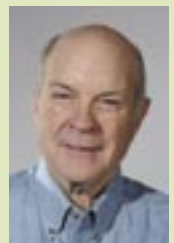
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**SPECIAL
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to our customers

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Frequently Asked Questions

When do I have to make my first half assessment payment to KID?

Assessment notices are going out within just a few days. The notice contains two parts. The first half payment is due by April 30. The second half payment is due October 31.

What if I don't pay?

All unpaid assessments accrue interest at 1% per month, 12% annually, with foreclosure proceedings beginning after the third year.

How are the assessment rates determined?

The assessment rates are set yearly by the Board of Directors. KID is a quasi-municipality or not-for-profit entity. Your assessment is determined by the amount of money required to fund projected annual district operation and maintenance expenses and future improvements on the system. Assessments are set based on the budget, an estimate of the money it will take to operate the district from January 1 through December 31 each year.

For more answers to frequently asked questions, look on the Kennewick Irrigation District's website at www.kid.org/faqs.htm