



DITCH DIRT

December 2016 Volume 2016, Issue 4

WHAT'S GOING ON AT GID?????

- Pasture bid results are in and summarized. See page 2 for a complete write-up regarding the specifics.
- This is the 2nd year GID will be awarding two Ag scholarships — 1 in the amount of \$1500 and 1 in the amount of \$1000. We are proud to announce that this year's recipients are: Cantor Coverdell, receiving the \$1500 scholarship and Amelia Konen receiving the \$1000 scholarship.
- Reminder that Certification is coming up soon. Please be working on your irrigation plans and be prepared for it.
- All Property Taxes due in November MUST be paid in full before you will be eligible to receive water this Spring.
- Election News: Dave Gulick ran unopposed and was therefore re-elected as the Commissioner of Precinct 1.
- Mark your calendars for GID's Annual Wateruser's Appreciation Dinner and Meeting. It is tentatively set for February 22nd. Please join us to find out what's expected this year.

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Look What Our Guys Have Been Busy Doing this Fall.



Main Canal Turn Out

BEFORE



AFTER

Shotcrete work done at Mary Taylor's (TEST RUN)



Washed out concrete at tunnel (BEFORE)



Shot crete work done at tunnel (AFTER)

WE HOPE EVERYONE HAD A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR! FROM ALL OF US HERE AT GRINCHFIELDS IRRIGATION DISTRICT!



Look who's in the news. WAY TO GO RUSS BARRETT!

Photo courtesy of Fairfield Sun Times

Fairfield "Weather Man" Recognized For 20 Years Of Service

Russ Barrett was presented with a 20 year Length of Service Award from the National Weather Service (NWS) in Great Falls, MT. Russ has been taking and reporting daily maximum and minimum temperatures, precipitation, snowfall and snow depth for the NWS Climate COOP program of about 8,500 volunteers across the US since 1996. His station located at the Greenfields Irrigation District office in Fairfield, MT has had continuous records dating back to 1927. Presenting the award was Matt Moorman, Program Observation Leader at NWS Great Falls.



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2016 GID Pasture Bid Results

After many years, the GID Board elected to put the GID pastures out for public auction. This was done to facilitate a market value correction and to allow other water users an opportunity to participate with the grazing lease program. GID administers over 23,200 acres of Federal ground on behalf of the Bureau of Reclamation. In the past, GID has retained the pasture lease revenue to offset costs and help with overall District O&M. The grazing revenue is approximately 5% of our total revenue. We are working with the Bureau to retain this money.

The bid results included 91 individual bid forms, representing 253 separate parcel bids on 76 different pastures. For the most part, everyone treated the process respectfully and submitted competitive bids on select pastures. Bid results ranged from \$15 to \$75/AUM.

Going forward, the leases were revised in that the GID Board has elected to tighten oversight of the pastures in order to protect this source of GID revenue and to continue to control the pastures for the benefit of local water users. For example,

- Lease transfers will be limited to immediate family members directly involved with the livestock operations;
- Sub-leasing and adding of names to the leases are gone;
- The leased pasture must be used for grazing and any pasture resting requires Board approval;
- Non-grazing activity on the pastures are subject to Board approval and require a Special Use Permit from the Bureau.
- Leases will be for a period of 10 years.

What's the 2017 Water Forecast????

Good question, but I'll take a stab at it. First of all, my initial 2 years as your District Manager, 2015 and 2016, coincided with reduced water allotments warranted due to water-shortages in our watershed. On the positive side, historical records indicate that there has never been three consecutive water-short years. Let's hope that record holds.

Our friends at the Climate Prediction Center of NOAA are predicting above-normal precipitation from December through April. That's good. On the temperature front, they are also predicting below-normal temps through April. That's good as well. Those two predictions are the perfect combination for an ample water supply for our 2017 water season.

For example, we have had good precipitation in the mountains this fall, in fact ahead of normal. Unfortunately, we also experienced above-normal temperatures. Those above-normal temperatures resulted in melting and run off. Meaning, even though we had above-normal precipitation, our snow-water equivalent on the ground is below normal. The operation of GID is directly related to water shortage. When we run out of stored water, we are done irrigating. In the late summer, our portion of the Sun River flow is not enough to meet our demands, let alone wet our main canal. So when Gibson Reservoir draws down to 5,000 ac-feet, we shut-off the Pishkun Supply Canal and run-off of Pishkun Reservoir as long as we can. When Pishkun is empty, our water season is finished.

So as you can see, because of our size, storage is critical to our operation. And our largest storage unit is, . . . no not Gibson, but the watershed above Gibson; i.e. the actual ground surface. This storage is a function of temperature. If the precip. (snow) stays frozen, it stays put. If it melts, it runs off and fills up Gibson. If it occurs too early and too suddenly, all of our reservoirs fill up and the excess water (our water) continues down the river without our ability to use it. Therefore, our biggest storage reservoir relies not only on precipitation, but cold temps as well.

The last couple of years, warmer than normal winters and springs caused premature melting and run-off and our storage was depleted before we could use it. Proper management of our forest canopy is critical to maintaining a healthy watershed. Uncontrolled forest fires damage our largest storage unit and detrimentally impact GID's Water Season.

Prediction: At this time, I predict a normal to above-normal water season— 2-ft allotment with excess water. Let's pray!



4th Edition of "Ditch Dirt"



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