

# KMPH

---

## Irrigation season begins later and ends sooner, basin construction underway to help

May 19, 2021

By: Kimberly Kolliner

FRESNO, Calif. — Water is now flowing through the Fresno headgates and soon our farmers will be able to use it, but this year only very briefly.

“So on a normal irrigation season we run about 6 months so we’d already have water in our canal,” said Fresno Irrigation District General Manager, Bill Stretch.

Water is on its way to the basins right now but it won’t be there for the 5 or 6 months that’s normal, not even close.

“We’re only going to run for for sure one month we’re going to run for through month of June. We haven’t made the decision yet whether we have enough supply to run July,” said Stretch.

That means very little water for farmers, for cities, or to help re-charge groundwater.

“We know when there’s no water coming in that the groundwater level decline is going to be one a steeper curve,” said Executive Officer Kassy Chauhan with the North Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

The groundwater water level usually drop about a foot per season, last year it dropped about five feet, and this year will likely be worse.

However, with this challenge does come opportunity.

“You have a lot of potential to get those projects done when it’s very dry,” said Chauhan.

The projects Chauhan is talking about are basins that can hold and save water so we can use it on years like this one.

“We know that the dry periods are going to come so we’ve got to make as many deposits as we can into that storage bank, the underground aquifer during those wet periods. Make maximum usage of all that available water. You can’t do that if you don’t have a place to park the water,” said Chauhan.

The Fresno irrigation district has 720 acres of basins, with 150 more acres under construction that Stretch says will take care of us in the future.

“In the dry years we did the work already we have the water that we’ve banked so our farmers our cities our communities can turn on their groundwater wells and rely on that groundwater aquifer,” said Stretch.

For now, the little water we can rely on will come trickling in.

It takes about 10 days for this water to fill the canals and basins, that means it'll be ready just in time for the irrigation season that starts June 1st.

There are drought relief resources out there like Self-Help Enterprises that has a dry well program, a bottled water program, and a temporary tank program.