

IRRIGATOR

Donald R. Bransford: A Legacy of Service, Dedication and Leadership

For the past thirty-two years, the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) has benefited from the steadfast leadership, dedication, and service of Director Donald R. Bransford. Throughout his career, Don has been a steady and influential leader at GCID and throughout the Sacramento Valley agricultural community. His talent, experience, and passionate advocacy have shaped key water, farming, and environmental policies that continue to benefit growers, wildlife, and local communities alike.

Don's term at GCID began during one of the most pivotal transitions in the District's history. In 1993, a major recall election resulted in the replacement of three directors and ultimately led to the seating of new representatives across all divisions—including Don, who was seated as the Division 4 Director on December 9, 1993. At the first meeting of the new Board, Don was promptly selected by his fellow Board members to serve as Board President, a role he continued to fill for almost three decades. Throughout his tenure, Don has been a fierce defender of GCID's senior water rights and a passionate advocate for policy and planning efforts necessary to ensure the resiliency and reliability of the District, today and into the future.



GM Van Tenney, Directors Pete Knight, Mike LaGrande, Don Bransford, Sandy Denn, John Sutton - 1994

Recently, Don elected to forego pursuit of an additional four year term on the Board, leaving an opening on the Board, and, more importantly, leaving a heralded and lasting legacy and shining example for future District leaders to come. The Division 4 Director seat will be filled by newly appointed Director Sarah Reynolds, whose candidacy to fill the Division 4 seat was unopposed. Sarah's current four-year term will begin in December of 2025 and runs until December of 2029.

A Decisive Era in GCID History: Infrastructure, Policy, Planning, Environmental Stewardship

Upon his arrival, and in partnership with his fellow Board members, Don's tenure coincided with an extraordinary period of change, bringing with it new challenges, as well as new opportunities. As Board President, Don oversaw GCID efforts focus on significant infrastructure and policy development, establishment of a heightened ethic and investment in environmental stewardship, and a renewed focus on long range planning to assure the continued success of the District.

The highlights, projects, policies, and achievements occurring during Don's time in office are several and storied, and have been critical to successfully stewarding GCID into a new era. His leadership and advocacy have been critical to the development and implementation of innumerable successes, including:

- Formation of the District's first Water Leadership Group
- Adoption of GCID's AB 3030 Groundwater Management Plan
- Launch of major infrastructure construction/rehabilitation projects such as: Baker Creek Siphon, Crow Camp Intertie, Stony Creek Siphon, Replacement of the Abel and Lurline Main Canal check structures, and multiple lateral upgrade projects
- Expansion of GCID's Office Complex
- Adoption of the AB 3616 MOU
- Launch of the Refuge Water Supply Conveyance Project
- Filing of the District's application to appropriate winter water
- 40 Year Renewal of GCID's Sacramento River Settlement Contract (2005-2045)
- Founding Member and architect in the formation of the Sites Reservoir JPA
- Establishment of GCID Winter Maintenance Shutdown policy
- Initiation of the Main Canal Automation/SCADA system
- Leadership on significant fishery restoration/enhancement efforts, including: Gravel augmentation and juvenile rearing habitat projects, temperature and flow management actions to benefit salmonids, fish passage upgrades and hatchery enhancement, net Pen juvenile salmon imprinting program
- Participant in regional initiatives/partnerships to enhance the environment and manage regulatory efforts: Floodplain Forward, Healthy Rivers & Landscapes, Bridge Group
- Initiation/Design/Permitting/Construction of the GCID Fish Passage Improvement Project (recognized as the world's largest flat-plate fish screen) for the protection of ESA listed fish species while simultaneously preserving reliable diversions to serve District lands
- Development and establishment of the Drought Protection Plan
- Creation of the Sacramento River Settlement Contractor Corporation

A Legacy of Leadership

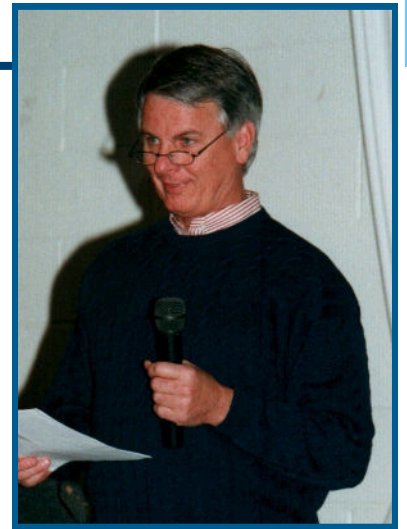
Don Bransford's long-standing commitment to agriculture, water management, and regional collaboration has left a lasting imprint on GCID and the Sacramento Valley. His leadership has helped advance critical infrastructure, strengthen water rights and reliability, and supported environmental and wildlife initiatives to the benefit of the entire region. GCID continues to benefit from the vision, expertise, and dedication he brought to the Board and to the farming community he has served for over three decades.

Don's leadership and commitment to the health and welfare of the Sacramento Valley has not been limited to his substantial contributions at GCID. He has been a partner in Bransford Farms with his wife, Diane, operating a diversified farming enterprise producing rice, prunes, and almonds in the Sacramento Valley. Deeply rooted in the agricultural community, he has long represented the interests of rice growers at the local, regional, and national levels. He has served as Chair of the California Rice Producers' Group, and Chair of both the California Rice Commission and the Northern California Water Association. He also previously served on the board of the California Rice Industry Association, the predecessor to the California Rice Commission. Additionally, Bransford served for over three decades as a Trustee of the Colusa Unified School District Board (many of those years as Board President), while also coaching both boys and girls basketball teams over the years.

Moreover, his leadership extends into statewide policy. In 1995, he was appointed by Governor Pete Wilson to the Bay-Delta Advisory Council of CALFED, positioning him at the center of early discussions about major water system challenges. In 2000, Governor Gray Davis appointed him to the Governor's Advisory Drought Planning Panel, further recognizing his expertise in water management. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed him to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture in 2006, to which he was reappointed in 2010, and Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. reappointed Don in 2018.

In March of this year, the significant contributions of Don Bransford were honored at the Northern California Water Association's Annual Meeting. Before an appreciative audience of family, friends, and water industry professionals, Don was awarded NCWA's most prestigious honor, the Will S. Green Award, presented annually to an individual who has devoted their life to the promotion and advancement of irrigation and regional sustainability in the Sacramento Valley. Upon presentation, it was stated: "Don has provided a sage voice to educate and instill important values throughout the Valley, by committing himself to becoming both a student and teacher to identify and foster partnerships, relationships, and opportunities to benefit the region, while also serving as an ardent spokesman and ambassador to effectuate policies and programs that have served to preserve and protect our rural agricultural communities. He has been instrumental in the development and dedication of resources to design and construct important infrastructure that has been critical to maintaining water management in Northern California."

GCID Board President, Logan Dennis, who has served on the Board with Bransford for the past decade, reflected on Don's contributions to the District: "Don has left an incredible, unparalleled, enduring legacy during his tenure at GCID. Your leadership and service has been critical to the success of the District in the past, the present, and will continue to sustain and guide our efforts into the future. On behalf of the Board and the District landowners, I wish to express our sincere sentiments of appreciation and gratitude for the leadership, commitment, sacrifice, and stewardship you have displayed over the last three plus decades."



Sarah Reynolds, Division 4 Director



Unopposed Candidates Confirmed for GCID Board of Directors Division 4 and 5

In August 2025, two positions on the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District Board of Directors proceeded without contested races, reflecting a stable transition in Board representation. Sarah Reynolds was the sole candidate for the Division 4 Director seat, allowing her to assume the position without opposition. Likewise, Kelly Ornbaun ran unopposed for the Division 5 Director seat. Ornbaun had already been serving in this role since April, when the Board appointed him to fill the interim vacancy created by the resignation of former Division 5 Director Vann.



Kelly Ornbaun, Division 5 Director

District Efforts to Document and Remove Right-of-Way Encroachments

In the coming year, the District will be placing additional focus and making significant effort to identify, document, and address encroachments within the District's canals, laterals, and rights-of-way. Some encroachments may need to be removed, while others can be documented and permitted depending on their type, condition, and effect on District operations.

This effort is not meant to burden landowners—it is essential to protecting the reliability of our water delivery system. Encroachments can create problems that affect both the District and neighboring landowners, hindering the District's ability to efficiently and effectively operate and maintain the canal for the benefit of water users, and in some cases, create significant safety concerns to infrastructure, property, and the public.

Common issues include:

- **Obstructed Water Flow:** Unpermitted structures, debris, pumps, or crossings can restrict water movement, reduce capacity, and increase the risk of flooding or tailwater backing up into fields.
- **Safety Hazards:** Items placed in or near District facilities can create unsafe conditions for equipment operators, field crews, and the public.
- **Damage to Infrastructure:** Encroachments may undermine canal banks, interfere with maintenance activities, or cause long-term structural damage.
- **Operational Delays:** Unplanned obstacles slow down routine maintenance, weed control, and emergency response.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** State and federal regulations require us to maintain facilities in a safe, functioning, and unobstructed condition. Permitted encroachments provide documentation and clarity for both the landowner and the District.

To address these concerns, the District will be making significant effort to communicate and work with landowners to remove unapproved encroachments or transition appropriate ones into formal permits. Permits help ensure structures are safe, properly designed, documented with appropriate responsibilities established, and avoids interference with maintenance efforts and water deliveries. In anticipation of this important effort, the Board of Directors recently updated the District's Encroachment Enforcement Policy, establishing the process and protocol to guide this effort. The GCID Encroachment Enforcement Policy can be found at Section 3.3.7 in the District Water Distributions System Operation and Maintenance Policy and is posted prominently on the District website: www.gcid.net.

The District greatly appreciates the anticipated cooperation of landowners and water users as this important effort moves forward. Working together will assist the District in its effort to safely, efficiently and reliably maintain and operate the District infrastructure to the benefit of all for years to come.

Lurline Check and Siphon Replacement Project Underway

The Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) is undertaking a major modernization project to replace the 80-year-old Lurline Check and Siphon on the Main Canal near Lurline Creek in Colusa County. This facility is vital for delivering irrigation water to local farms and wildlife refuges, and its replacement will improve long-term reliability, reduce water loss, increase capacity, and provide full remote operation through upgraded gates and sensors.

Construction will occur from Fall 2025 through Spring 2026, with irrigation deliveries paused October 1, 2025–March 16, 2026. GCID is maintaining limited, rotational water service during this period and appreciates the cooperation of affected landowners.

The estimated \$6 million project includes new control gates, structure demolition, environmental permitting and mitigation, construction management, and installation of the new facilities. The upgraded structure will feature box culverts, cement headwalls, a new low-water crossing, and improved flow control. It will reduce creek leakage, increase capacity, and enable remote operations for both the check and Lateral 49-2 via enhanced SCADA controls.

Manufactured by Aqua Systems 2000, this is the final check replacement on GCID's 65-mile Main Canal, completing modernization efforts that began in the early 1980s. The new check will handle the full canal flow (approximately 630–680 cfs) through two Langemann-style gates and one slide gate, all equipped with advanced sensors and motorized controls.

Located at the Main Canal crossing of Lurline Creek in Colusa County, the Lurline Check & Siphon Replacement Project is a transformative upgrade that enhances water-delivery efficiency, operational flexibility, and environmental protection. Once completed in 2026, it will strengthen GCID's ability to reliably serve local agriculture and wildlife refuges for decades to come.

Water Diversion Capacity Limited December 15, 2025

Beginning December 15, 2025, the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) Main Pump Station will undergo a planned electric outage as part of commissioning the new Electric Control Building—an important modernization effort designed to improve operational efficiency, energy reliability, and long-term service capabilities. During this transition period, through the shutdown on January 7, 2026, the Main Canal will operate on gravity flow only, reducing overall water availability. GCID Water Operations will implement a rotation schedule to manage limited supplies, and water users are encouraged to fill and board up fields before December 15 to help retain water throughout the outage.

GCID recognizes the importance of reliable water delivery and appreciates the patience and cooperation of water users as this essential upgrade is completed. The new Electric Control Building represents a major investment in long-term system reliability and will support improved pumping operations for decades to come. For additional information or assistance with water planning during the outage, water users may contact their Water Operator, visit www.gcid.net, or call the District office at 530.934.8881.

New on WWW.GCID.NET

Engineering Technician Kevin Berry has developed a live, interactive, public-facing map to support the District and its water users. The map is available on GCID website www.gcid.net under the “Landowners & Water Users” tab, titled “Interactive Irrigation Facilities Map.”

The map displays key District features, including the Main Canal, laterals, Water Operator areas, and all fields within the District along with each field’s associated water source(s).

This resource reflects the most current information available and will continue to be updated as data quality and record accuracy improve.



Daniel Moreno
Willows Maintenance

Welcome to GCID



David Landeros
Williams Maintenance