The history of James Irrigation District stretches back to the pioneer days of the nineteenth century when Jefferson G. James established the 72,000-acre James Ranch lying on both sides of the Fresno Slough. James Irrigation District is located approximately 30 miles southwest of the City of Fresno and is comprised of about 26,000 acres, of which 22,000 acres are currently irrigated.

James Irrigation District is a public Irrigation District duly organized and existing under the Irrigation District Law of the State of California. The District, organized in 1920, provides agricultural water to growers within its boundaries. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors elected at-large by its landowners. Elections are held pursuant to section 20527.12 of the California Water Code. Initially, the District was divided into divisions and Directors were required to live within those divisions. Upon the passing of Senate Bill 1571, effective in 2001 the division residency requirement was eliminated and Board members have since been elected at-large.

A system of 65 well pumps, 26 booster pumps and 100 miles of canals and pipelines distribute irrigation water to growers’ orchards, vineyards and fields. The District has five sources of water supply: 1) a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Central Valley Project water service contract, 2) San Joaquin River Schedule 2 settlement contract, 3) Kings River water rights entitlement, 4) Kings River flood water, and 5) groundwater from District-owned wells. In addition to rights to groundwater within the District service area, the District also has a deeded groundwater right to certain lands east of the Fresno Slough Bypass.

The District’s current annual water demands are approximately 65,000 acre-feet. At this time, the District has enough water sources to meet the needs of its growers. The District utilizes a variety of water management strategies including groundwater recharge, water transfers, and water regulating reservoirs to effectively manage its water resources.

There are about 100 landowners and 30 growers within the District’s area. The District owns all of the wells that provide water for agricultural irrigation within the service area, and bill for water on a volumetric basis.

The FY 2019-20 total budget is $8.7 million, including a CIP of $830,000, with 16 staff.

THE AREA

Fresno County, with a current population just over 1 million, is located in the San Joaquin Valley, the southern half of California’s Central Valley. It has a total land area of 6,011 square miles, and is bordered on the west by the Coast Range and on the east by the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. It is known as the Agricultural Capital of the World, producing crops worth over $7 billion. The primary crops grown in the District’s service area include almonds, pistachios, grapes, cotton, alfalfa seed, tomatoes and onions.

The County includes the exact center of the State of California. There are 15 cities within the County, the largest of which is Fresno and the smallest is San Joaquin, with a population of about 4,100. Approximately 17% of the County’s population is in the unincorporated areas.

The region is marked by a semi-arid climate with mild, moist winters and hot and dry summers, thus displaying Mediterranean characteristics.

Fresno is home to outdoor recreation, world-class arts and culture, incredible farm-to-fork dining, wineries, casinos and much more. It is easy to enjoy a multitude of outdoor activities such as golfing, hiking, snowboarding, skiing, white water rafting, boating and rock climbing. Residents and visitors can take in the natural beauty of the Sierra Nevada Forest and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, where you can go from the Giant Sequoias to the deepest Canyon (2,200 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon). It is one of the only places in the U.S. with such close proximity to three national parks, all within a 90-minute drive.

The arts scene in the Fresno region includes historical and cultural museums, Fresno Grand Opera, Fresno Philharmonic, local dinner theater, and much more. For example, there is a monthly ArtHop, which is hosted at interesting venues, and there are three annual film festivals.

With two major railroads, extensive freeways, an international airport and several smaller airports, the greater Fresno area (centrally located between Los Angeles and Sacramento) is a transportation hub for central California.

The Fresno area has diverse housing options in a wide range of prices, including California-style ranch homes, traditional bungalows, homes with mature landscaping and lake views, as well as new developments in downtown Fresno.
Community Regional Medical Center provides central California residents with the highest level of care available in the region, and is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco Medical School. There are also many other quality health providers in the area.

Educational opportunities in Fresno are abundant. The area offers quality schools including public, private and charter schools; vocational and technical training programs; and access to some of the finest colleges and universities in the nation.

**KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Key challenges and opportunities facing James Irrigation District include:

- Complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and implementing the groundwater sustainability plan currently under development.
- Working cooperatively with landowners and other agencies on issues related to groundwater extractions outside of the District boundaries.
- Resolving contractual issues related to Kings River channel losses.
- Improving the utilization of Kings River water and other water supplies within the District.
- The need for improved water quality due to the types of crops grown in the area.
- Long-term planning.

**THE POSITION**

Essential duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Interpreting for District employees all relevant policies, procedures and practices directed by the District Board of Directors.
- Maintaining an effective, highly motivated, and dedicated work force to carry out the work of the District. In that respect, maintaining effective personal contact with and knowledge of District employees. Striving to establish and maintain a working atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between employees, supervisors, managers and the Board.
- Establishing, reviewing, maintaining and interpreting the District organization that makes the best use of all employees’ skills and talents, all other resources, provides effective and proper information flow, and establishes an effective procedure for complaint resolution. Ensuring that each employee understands and complies with the District organization structure, information flow, employment policies, and complaint resolution procedure.
- Establishing District policies relating to matters such as regulation, distribution and use of water, operation and maintenance standards, and standards concerned with construction of water storage and delivery systems.
- Recommending changes in policy, basing recommendations on present and anticipated facilities, agricultural requirements, crop trends, and probable future water needs.
- Preparing directives to carry out policies approved by the Board.
- Conferring with growers, state and local government officials, and other water systems to discuss matters such as water delivery, construction problems at road and highway intersections, and diversion of water from all sources for District use.
- Inspecting field operations and reviewing periodic reports from subordinates to determine the process of District operations and maintenance projects, distribution and optimum delivery of water, collection of charges to users, and the status of other phases of District operation.
- Identifying potential capital improvement projects; overseeing engineering design consultants; developing a long-term Capital Improvement Program; pursuing opportunities for grant funding; and identifying potential sources of funding.
- Creating and reviewing budget estimates and compiling, approving and presenting estimates and budgets for and to the Board for their approval and adoption.
- Directly administering District employee wages, salaries and benefits.
At the direction of the District Board of Directors, representing the District at various governmental, agency, and litigation meetings and proceedings.

Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with co-workers and those contacted during the course of work.

Managing subordinate supervisors; responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of staff; carrying out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization’s policies and applicable laws; oversight of interviewing, hiring and training employees; planning, assigning and directing work; appraising performance; rewarding and disciplining employees; and addressing complaints and resolving problems.

Ensuring Reclamation Reform Act compliance for the District’s federal water contracts including collecting and reviewing RRA forms from landowners and growers, preparing District summary forms, and supporting compliance audit activities.

Managing the operations, maintenance, testing, repair, and replacement of the District’s groundwater wells.

Serving as Executive Director for the James Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) and implementing the James GSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan (which is currently under development).

Managing Reclamation District #1606; responsible for supervising operations, maintenance, and improvements of the flood protection levees and other flood protection structures; and administering property leases and agreements.

Overseeing the James Resource Conservation District.

The position is coming open due to the incumbent’s desire to take on new challenges by June 2020.

THE CANDIDATE

Education and Experience

Desire a bachelor’s degree in engineering, geology, hydrology, public administration, business administration, or other related field; and substantial relevant work experience. An advanced degree (e.g., engineering, public administration, business, law, etc.) would be a plus.

Experience working with and/or knowledge about agricultural water users is important. California experience preferred.

The Ideal Candidate

James Irrigation District is a seeking a General Manager who will work well with the Board of Directors, keeping them informed in a timely and complete manner. This person should be intelligent and able to learn quickly, and know what is needed to complement his/her abilities, whether through other staff or outside consultants. He/She should stay up-to-date on federal, state and local regulations relevant to District operations (e.g., SGMA), and maintain good working relationships with outside agencies. It is important to have excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and be approachable.

Moreover, the General Manager should have a good understanding of and the ability to manage engineers and technical staff, ensuring that operations run smoothly. He/She should also be able to stay abreast of any legal matters the District may be addressing. And, this person should have good budgeting and financial management skills, and be able to help identify grants and other possible sources of revenue.

COMPENSATION

The salary for this position is open, with hiring dependent upon the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate. In addition, benefits are provided which currently include: vacation, holidays, sick leave, and business leave; District-paid medical insurance for employee and 50 percent for dependents; District-paid dental and vision insurance for employee and dependents; retirement through the District Pension Plan (the District contributes 8 percent of an employee’s eligible earnings into the plan, which can be invested at the employee’s discretion); a voluntary Section 457 Deferred Compensation Plan (employee contribution only); and use of a District automobile.

HOW TO APPLY

Send resumes (email preferred) by September 16, 2019 to:

Roberts Consulting Group Inc
PO Box 1127
Rancho Mirage, CA 92270
Telephone: 424.522.2251
Email: robertsrcg@msn.com
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