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EID cuts \$1.3 million in jobs

El Dorado Irrigation District general manager Jim Abercrombie recently announced a savings of \$1.3 million in the revised 2010 budget as directed by the district's board of directors in the resolution they adopted Feb. 4.

The savings were achieved largely through a reorganization of the natural resources department and the elimination of 14 positions— changes that were finalized on Thursday, March 18.

"The board's Feb. 4 resolution directed me to cut at least \$1 million from the revised 2010 operating budget," Abercrombie reported during the March 22 regular board meeting. "Previous deep cuts in our materials and services line items left little room for additional reductions there. So I took a hard look at staffing. "

He said it was a difficult decision.

"As we told customers over the past few months, it is never easy to raise rates and particularly not in tough economic times. It's also not easy to lay off hard-working employees who have the best interests of our customers and the district at heart," he said. "We are providing outplacement counseling services to help them transition to new employment, and I wish them the best."

Abercrombie said the reorganization of the natural resources department included the elimination of the department head position and a water resources analyst position, and a water use efficiency technician position; the relocation of recreation services to the operations department, and the shifting of watershed, water efficiency, and environmental review and compliance functions to the engineering department.

Other layoffs include two engineers, an information technology program manager, and a utility worker, senior administrative analyst, construction inspector, and part-time human resources technician. A manager position was re-classed to the supervisor level, and an administrative analyst position was re-classed as part time. These changes account for approximately \$800,000 of the total \$1.3 million in savings.

"We also laid off the four-person staff at our state-certified laboratory, where we test for water quality and perform other functions required by regulations," Abercrombie said. "We are contracting with a private firm that will rent our lab facilities, perform our testing, and seek other business in the area. The district achieves overall savings of \$536,000 the first year and about \$322,000 per year thereafter through the reduced personnel costs at the lab and the rental income."

Abercrombie reminded the board that these savings are separate from the \$1 million in expense reductions called for in the 2010 budget initially adopted last November.

"We are saving that \$1 million through negotiations with our employees' union," he said. "The proposed agreement is being voted on now by employees, and we hope to bring an employee-ratified contract to the board for consideration at the March 29 special board meeting."

The March 29 meeting is open to the public. It will begin at 9 a.m. in the board room of the district's customer service building, 2890 Mosquito Road, Placerville.

~ Staff report