



UNDERGROUND

Winter 2002

WRD GENERAL MANAGER ELECTED 2002 AGWA CHAIR

Dr. Bruce A. Mowry, general manager of AGWA member agency Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD), was recently elected chairman of the Association of Groundwater Agencies (AGWA).

Mowry, who was elected to a one-year term as chairman of the Board of Directors, replaces William R. Mills Jr., general manager of Orange County Water District (OCWD) and co-founder of AGWA in 1994.

“I feel honored to be elected to such a prestigious position,” said Mowry, who began assuming his duties on Jan. 1.

Mowry, who has been WRD’s general manager since June 2001, is an internationally recognized engineering expert with extensive experience in the private and public sectors. Prior to joining WRD, Mowry was a manager for 13 years at CH2M HILL, an international engineering firm in Orange County. He has also taught in the Engineering Department at the University of New Orleans and presently teaches at the University of Southern California. Mowry has a bachelor’s degree in biological engineering and master’s and doctor’s degrees in civil engineering from Mississippi State University.

WRD, created by voters in 1959, is responsible for managing and safeguarding two of the most utilized groundwater basins in Southern California, the Central and West Coast basins. These basins provide 40 percent of the total water demand used by almost four million people living in WRD’s region, which covers 420 square miles and includes 43 cities in Los Angeles County.

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Comments, story suggestions and articles are encouraged. Please call: (714) 964-1668, fax (714) 964-4614 or e-mail: greenlifecomm@socal.rr.com
Visit the AGWA website at: www.agwa.org

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WILLIAM R. MILLS HONORED WITH RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FROM AGWA

After seven years of involvement with AGWA, William R. Mills Jr. has retired as AGWA chair effective Jan. 1.

At the Jan. 14 AGWA meeting, members honored Mills with a resolution of appreciation. The resolution commended Mills for his dedicated service, outstanding leadership and direction.

“We’ve accomplished a great deal,” said Mills of AGWA during the meeting. “As a result of our efforts, many good relationships will continue into the future.”

Mills has served on AGWA’s board of directors since the organization’s formation in 1994. He served as chair from 1998 through 2002.

AGWA’s board of directors elected Dr. Bruce A. Mowry, general manager of Water Replenishment District of Southern California, to take over the duties as chair. Mowry began his post in January.

Though he has retired as chair, Mills will continue to be involved in AGWA activities. He will serve on several committees for AGWA, including a working group to develop ideas for AGWA’s future direction, goals and objectives.

AGWA sincerely appreciates the efforts of Mills during the past several years and wishes him a successful retirement.

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Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) has announced a fundamental change in the way that it will charge for water. Culminating more than three years of debate and public input, MWD’s board of directors recently adopted the new forward-looking rate structure.

“The degree of fairness inherent in this new rate structure won the approval of Metropolitan’s board,” said MWD Chairman Phillip J. Pace. “In all aspects, from the uniform charge for system access to the way in which member agencies can submit purchase orders for water according to their project water needs, this new rate structure addresses many of the challenges we face in the changing water industry.”

The new rate structure, which becomes effective Jan. 1, 2003, includes two tiers that use price signals to encourage water agencies to invest in cost-effective conservation, water recycling, transfers, desalination and groundwater programs. In addition, the two-tiered structure allocates a greater share of costs to MWD’s member agencies that use more water in the future.

MWD Chief Financial Officer Brian Thomas said the key element of the new structure is the unbundling of rates. “Unlike the status quo, where a single water rate includes cost for supply, conveyance, distribution, power and treatment, the new rates are broken down into separate commodity charges,” Thomas said. “There are separate costs to treat, move and develop water supplies.”

Unbundled rates facilitate the development of cost-effective water transfers by providing clear price signals, he said.

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since the cost to use Metropolitan's system is the same for a member agency or third party."

Ronald R. Gastelum, MWD's president and chief executive officer, said unbundled rates also give member agencies more flexibility.

"Member agencies can purchase their imported water from Metropolitan, or use our system to transport non-MWD water," he said. "Metropolitan maintains its role as a regional water provider, but at the same time operates within a system that facilitates water transfers."

Another important new element of the rate structure is the introduction of voluntary purchase orders that allow member agencies to commit to a 10-year order. Under the purchase order, member agencies can pay for up to 90 percent of their needs at the lower tiered price, while paying for water supplies above that amount at the higher, second tier price.

The difference between upper and lower tier rates reflects Metropolitan's cost for acquiring new water supplies.

"Metropolitan will be able to address growing demands on the system by providing a way to pass appropriate costs of new supply development to those member agencies that consume more water," Gastelum said. "This will bring more financial security to Metropolitan and 'incentivize' conservation and recycling with minimal cost impacts on member agencies for the near term.

For more information on the rate structure changes, visit MWD's website at www.mwdh2o.com.

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OCWD PROJECT RECEIVES \$2.5 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING—LARGEST FEDERAL ALLOTMENT TO DATE

The Groundwater Replenishment (GWR) System in Orange County will receive an additional \$2.5 million in federal funding for fiscal 2002, accord-

ing to an appropriations bill signed into law in November by President George W. Bush. The \$2.5 million grant is part of a federal authorization of \$20 million and thus represents a partial payment of promised federal support for the project.

"By continuing to support this project with federal funds, Congress is telling the people of Orange County to move forward on this very important project," said Irv Pickler, chairman of the Groundwater Replenishment System Joint Cooperative Committee.

The GWR System is a joint project of AGWA member agency Orange County Water District (OCWD) and Orange County Sanitation District. It will provide Orange County with a source of safe, pure water to serve up to 200,000 families each year. The system will take highly treated sewer water from the Orange County Sanitation District, currently sent to the ocean, and purify it to near-distilled water quality through 100% microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet technologies. The water will be used to increase an existing underground water barrier, which helps prevent seawater from intruding into the groundwater basin, and will also be naturally filtered into the groundwater basin by OCWD.

The GWR System will be located on the property of the Orange County Water District and the Orange County Sanitation District in Fountain Valley, Calif. The system will provide up to 100,000 acre-feet of water for the north and central part of the county.

Already, the GWR System has received \$37 million from the 2000 State Water Bond, \$700,000 from the California Energy Commission and has been appropriated \$500,000 from the EPA and \$1.5 million from the Bureau of Reclamation. Phase 1, which includes full design and construction of the treatment facilities, is proposed to go on line early in 2006 and cost approximately \$350 million. The effect of this project on residents' water bills in north and central Orange County will be only about the cost of two postage stamps per month.

For more information on the Groundwater Replenishment System, visit www.gwrssystem.com.

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AGWA member agency Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD) recently dedicated the Robert W. Goldsworthy Desalter, a treatment facility that removes salt from groundwater.

The \$8 million desalter is WRD's first major capital construction project and is located in Torrance on city land. The project will clean up the area in the groundwater basin that is contaminated by seawater, provide an additional source of water for the South Bay, and improve the reliability of the region's water supply by decreasing dependence on imported water.

"I'm pleased that the project is completed," said WRD Director Robert W. Goldsworthy, who represents the South Bay communities. The WRD Board named the facility after Goldsworthy to honor his commitment to improving the quality of life for all Southern Californians.

Attending the dedication ceremony were directors of the WRD Board, members of the Torrance City Council and other elected officials.

The WRD completed the high-tech project in conjunction with the City of Torrance.

"We were very pleased to work with Torrance on this important water treatment project," said Goldsworthy, who has been on the WRD Board since 1988.

This is the first phase of the WRD's clean-up program to help provide Torrance and other South Bay cities with a new source of clean, usable drinking water. The desalter will clean up approximately 250,000 acre-feet, or nearly 81.5 trillion gallons, of salty water trapped in the West Coast groundwater basin. Once treated, the water will be of very high quality and exceed all federal and state drinking water standards.

WRD, established in 1959 by a vote of the people, protects groundwater supply and groundwater quality for nearly four million residents in 43 cities in southern Los Angeles County.

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EMWD ADDS NEARLY 1 BILLION GALLONS OF IMPORTED WATER TO UNDERGROUND SUPPLY

A new project sponsored by AGWA member agency Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) will help replenish the San Jacinto Valley's diminishing groundwater supply. EMWD has bought 3,000 acre-feet—almost 1 billion gallons—of Northern California water from Metropolitan Water District, which will flow from an MWD aqueduct through Eastern Municipal's pipes to the San Jacinto River.

The water will then percolate into an underground basin, where the district will keep it for higher demand periods. The demonstration project is one the district hopes will gain support from other local water agencies.

The water cost the district \$700,000. The same amount of water during peak summer months, treated and ready for customers, would cost \$1.3 million, according to EMWD.

Water levels in Hemet and San Jacinto basins have declined steadily since the early 1940s, and users overdraft more than 10,000 acre-feet per year, according to district staff reports.

EMWD, the cities of Hemet and San Jacinto and Lake Hemet Municipal Water District have been working together on a groundwater management plan. EMWD hopes the project will grow to include other agencies and about 18,000 to 20,000 acre-feet annually.

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In the ongoing battle over Glendale's illegal dumping of water, AGWA board member and San Fernando Valley Watermaster Mel Blevins is set to

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participate in a hearing before the Superior Court of California on Feb. 1 that will result in Glendale shutting down its waste of groundwater. Glendale has wasted approximately 7,000 acre-feet of groundwater in the past 15 months, valued at more than \$3,000,000.

As discussed in previous editions of *Notes from the Underground*, officials from the City of Glendale are concerned over the amount of chromium 6 in the city's groundwater drinking water supply. Although the water meets the state standard of 50 parts per billion (ppb), officials are concerned since it does not meet the previous public health goal of 2.5 ppb, which was rescinded. Blevins filed an Order to Show Cause on Nov. 9 that requires the city to show cause why it should not stop wasting water, related to its water rights.

In a letter dated Jan. 17 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Loren E. Henning, Chief of Superfund Cleanup Section 4, states that Glendale "...can be confident that the treated water from the Glendale Treatment Plant meets all state and federal drinking water standards and is fully protective of public health."

At the Dec. 18 Glendale City Council meeting, EPA, Blevins, the city's consulting expert on the issue and members of the public all recommended that the city begin accepting the full flow from the Glendale Treatment Plant (5,000 gallons per minute). However, the council voted to recommend that EPA approve the implementation of the city's proposed alternative, which calls for the complete shut down of certain extraction wells that contain higher levels of chromium than other wells in the system. EPA, however, says in its letter that Glendale has given "no justification for further reducing operations...and therefore [EPA] does not approve the city's request to shut down these wells."

According to EPA, the city is not in compliance with the Federal Consent Decree and therefore EPA is evaluating enforcement actions provided by the Consent Decree in the event the city elects to reduce the operation of the treatment plant. These options include stipulated penalties of up to

\$10,000 per day, per violation.

Stay tuned to *Notes from the Underground* for continuing developments on this story, including results of the Feb. 1 hearing before the Superior Court of California.

[PRINT VERSION](#)

ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR SANTA ANA RIVER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

AGWA member agency Orange County Water District (OCWD) was recently awarded the 2001 Theodore Roosevelt Environmental Award from the Association of California Water Agencies. OCWD earned the award for its Excellence in Natural Resources Management, which involved development of a long-term plan to remove a non-native, invasive plant—*Arundo donax*—from the Santa Ana River watershed. *Arundo* is a destructive plant that annually uses two to three times more water than native habitat. *Arundo* also has no value to the river's habitat, and it takes up space where other valuable, native vegetation could flourish.

In 1997, OCWD formed a team of seven other organizations to develop an aggressive, five-year plan to restore resources along the River for the benefit of wildlife and citizens, which included the removal of *Arundo donax* from the Santa Ana River. Funding for this plan is provided through multiple agencies and is secured in the Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund.

The organizations involved in the *Arundo* removal project include OCWD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), The Nature Conservancy, East Valley Resource Conservation District (RCD), Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD, Inland Empire West RCD, Riverside-Corona RCD and San Jacinto Basin RCD. During the creation of the Trust Fund, these eight organizations met to develop the restoration plan. Once the Trust Fund was estab-

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lished, plan implementation began, with yearly progress reports continuing since inception.

The Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund—originally created in 1997 by OCWD to bring back the endangered least Bell’s vireo songbird—was funded with an initial amount of \$2.35 million: \$1 million from OCWD and \$1.35 million from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Since 1997, the fund has received an additional \$5.7 million in funds from OCWD, County of Orange, City of Corona, EPA grants and a variety of other sources. An additional \$350,000 has been contributed by two housing developers, for a total of \$6.3 million contributed to date.

OCWD and USFWS have a history of maintaining species and increasing habitat along the Santa Ana River. Relationships with federal and local organizations have been built not only through OCWD’s water quality and least Bell’s vireo recovery success at its Prado Wetlands, but also through its efforts with *Arundo* destruction and years of investigation to find a more effective solution for *Arundo* removal. OCWD, USFWS and the other participating agencies agreed that an organized effort by multiple groups to destroy *Arundo* and recreate habitat was necessary.

Having the necessary experience and knowledge, and facing the need to remove *Arundo* in order to take advantage of a water conservation opportunity, OCWD created the Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund and manages it for all agencies involved. OCWD’s seed money paved the way for work to be accomplished throughout the Santa Ana River watershed, expanding beyond OCWD’s boundaries immediately behind Prado Dam. The long-term result will be much more effective and worthwhile, not only for OCWD, but also for other agencies in the state.

Water Drops....

- Metropolitan Water District’s (MWD) board of directors has endorsed a campaign to place a \$3.4 billion water bond on the November ballot to provide funds for the

CALFED Bay-Delta Program and other water-related projects throughout California. If it qualifies for the ballot and is approved by voters, the Water Quality, Supply and Safe Drinking Water Projects, Coastal Wetlands Purchase and Protection Act of 2002 will finance a range of projects statewide to improve water supply security, quality and reliability and to protect coastal and wetlands resources, district officials said.

- Local public agencies and non-profit groups can tap into a new stream of more than \$82 million in grant money from the State Water Resources Control Board and the CALFED program. The grants can be used to restore watersheds, curb polluted runoff and protect coastal waters. The state water board will be offering the money through the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act of 2000 (Proposition 13), a \$1.97 billion bond program passed by voters to fund projects to protect the state’s waterways. Overall, the state water board is responsible for allocating \$763.9 million to various entities over the next three years. For more information, call (916) 341-5499, or visit the web site at www.swrcb.ca.gov.
- EPA has completed its revised draft on the health risk assessment regarding perchlorate and it is now available. “Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment of Perchlorate” is available in the *Federal Register* and is open to a public comment period that ends Feb. 11, the EPA said. In the meantime, there is no news on the status of the California risk assessment that is underway to support a public health goal for perchlorate in drinking water.
- Clarence Watters, a former general manager at Helix Water District, died Jan. 11 at his home after suffering a heart attack. He was 77. Watters worked for Helix from 1950 to 1980. The last five years of his career, he served Helix as general manager. He also represented Helix on the San Diego County Water Authority board.

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- Federal security agencies have warned city, county and state officials about possible terrorist attacks on American utilities, as well as other possible targets. Officials fear that terrorists may be using government websites to help them develop future attacks, according to Knight Ridder news service. The advisories urged the utility industry and governments to scour websites and remove information that could help terrorists.
- As of Jan. 2002, Contra Costa Water District Director Bette Boatman is serving a two-year term as president of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA).
- The latest issue of the CALFED newsletter, now online at http://calfed.water.ca.gov/events_news.html, features these articles: Scientists review first year of Environmental Water Account; Public outreach for CALFED Los Vaqueros Reservoir studies; Governor Davis announces \$35-million CALFED acquisition in the North Delta; New Bay-Delta advisory group conducts first meeting; Big increase in ecosystem grant requests; New water use efficiency grant applications now available.

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR SANTA ANA RIVER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

AGWA member agency Orange County Water District (OCWD) was recently awarded the 2001 Theodore Roosevelt Environmental Award from the Association of California Water Agencies. OCWD earned the award for its Excellence in Natural Resources Management, which involved development of a long-term plan to remove a non-native, invasive plant—*Arundo donax*—from the Santa Ana River watershed. *Arundo* is a destructive plant that annually uses two to three times more water than native habitat. *Arundo* also has no value to the river's habitat, and it takes up space where other valuable, native vegetation could flourish.

In 1997, OCWD formed a team of seven other organizations to develop an aggressive, five-year plan to restore resources along the River for the benefit of wildlife and citizens, which included the removal of *Arundo donax* from the Santa Ana River. Funding for this plan is provided through multiple agencies and is secured in the Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund.

The organizations involved in the *Arundo* removal project include OCWD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), The Nature Conservancy, East Valley Resource Conservation District (RCD), Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta RCD, Inland Empire West RCD, Riverside-Corona RCD and San Jacinto Basin RCD. During the creation of the Trust Fund, these eight organizations met to develop the restoration plan. Once the Trust Fund was established, plan implementation began, with yearly progress reports continuing since inception.

The Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund—originally created in 1997 by OCWD to bring back the endangered least Bell's vireo songbird—was funded with an initial amount of \$2.35 million: \$1 million from OCWD and \$1.35 million from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Since 1997, the fund has received an additional \$5.7 million in funds from OCWD, County of Orange, City of Corona, EPA grants and a variety of other sources. An additional \$350,000 has been contributed by two housing developers, for a total of \$6.3 million contributed to date.

OCWD and USFWS have a history of maintaining species and increasing habitat along the Santa Ana River. Relationships with federal and local organizations have been built not only through OCWD's water quality and least Bell's vireo recovery success at its Prado Wetlands, but also through its efforts with *Arundo* destruction and years of investigation to find a more effective solution for *Arundo* removal. OCWD, USFWS and the other participating agencies agreed that an organized effort by multiple groups to destroy *Arundo* and recreate habitat was necessary.

Having the necessary experience and knowledge, and facing the need to remove *Arundo* in order to take advantage of a water conservation opportunity, OCWD created the Santa Ana River Conservation Trust Fund and manages it for all agencies involved. OCWD's seed money paved the way for work to be accomplished throughout the Santa Ana River watershed, expanding beyond OCWD's boundaries immediately behind Prado Dam. The long-term result will be much more effective and worthwhile, not only for OCWD, but also for other agencies in the state.

Water Drops....

- Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) board of directors has endorsed a campaign to place a \$3.4 billion water bond on the November ballot to provide funds for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and other water-related projects throughout California. If it qualifies for the ballot and is approved by voters, the Water Quality, Supply and Safe Drinking Water Projects, Coastal Wetlands Purchase

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and Protection Act of 2002 will finance a range of projects statewide to improve water supply security, quality and reliability and to protect coastal and wetlands resources, district officials said.

- Local public agencies and non-profit groups can tap into a new stream of more than \$82 million in grant money from the State Water Resources Control Board and the CALFED program. The grants can be used to restore watersheds, curb polluted runoff and protect coastal waters. The state water board will be offering the money through the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act of 2000 (Proposition 13), a \$1.97 billion bond program passed by voters to fund projects to protect the state's waterways. Overall, the state water board is responsible for allocating \$763.9 million to various entities over the next three years. For more information, call (916) 341-5499, or visit the web site at www.swrcb.ca.gov.
- EPA has completed its revised draft on the health risk assessment regarding perchlorate and it is now available. "Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment of Perchlorate" is available in the *Federal Register* and is open to a public comment period that ends Feb. 11, the EPA said. In the meantime, there is no news on the status of the California risk assessment that is underway to support a public health goal for perchlorate in drinking water.
- Clarence Watters, a former general manager at Helix Water District, died Jan. 11 at his home after suffering a heart attack. He was 77. Watters worked for Helix from 1950 to 1980. The last five years of his career, he served Helix as general manager. He also represented Helix on the San Diego County Water Authority board.
- Federal security agencies have warned city, county and state officials about possible terrorist attacks on American utilities, as well as other possible targets. Officials fear that terrorists may be using government websites to help them develop future attacks, according to Knight Ridder news service. The advisories urged the utility industry and governments to scour websites and remove information that could help terrorists.
- As of Jan. 2002, Contra Costa Water District Director Bette Boatman is serving a two-year term as president of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA).
- The latest issue of the CALFED newsletter, now online at http://calfed.water.ca.gov/events_news.html, features these articles: Scientists review first year of Environmental Water Account; Public outreach for CALFED Los Vaqueros Reservoir studies; Governor Davis announces \$35-million CALFED acquisition in the North Delta; New Bay-Delta advisory group conducts first meeting; Big increase in ecosystem grant requests; New water use efficiency grant applications now available.

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