

ACWA Recognizes Environmental Efforts

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) held its annual fall conference in San Diego in December 2003. At the conference, four water agencies were honored for their environmental stewardship. The Alameda County Water District (ACWD), Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC), Irvine Ranch Water District and Kern County Water Agency were named recipients of the 2003 Theodore Roosevelt Environmental Award for Excellence in Natural Resources Management. Since 1993, ACWA has annually presented the Theodore Roosevelt Award to recognize water agencies for programs that protect natural resources while meeting public needs.

Winners were selected in three budget categories. In the category of \$100,000 or less, ACWD won top honors for its efforts to reduce the use of lead fishing tackle in Quarry Lake. Concerned about lead toxicity in the environment, the district launched a program to educate local anglers about the issue and allow them to exchange their gear for lead-free weights and sinkers at no cost. Since the start of the program in September 2002, more than 223 pounds of lead has been collected and recycled.

MWDOC and Irvine Ranch Water District captured the award in the \$100,000 to \$1 million budget category. The districts were recognized for their successful residential runoff reduction study. The 18-month study demonstrated the benefits of using "smart" irrigation controllers to help reduce urban runoff. It also helped attract over \$1 million in grants to install 5,000 controllers in Orange County, which in turn will save water and reduce urban runoff and beach pollution.

In the budget category of \$1 million or more, Kern County Water District won the award for its Kern River Recharge and Recreation Program. Using \$23 million in Proposition 13 grant money, the agency obtained water rights on the Kern River, constructed new wells and groundwater recharge areas and made

other improvements to keep water flowing in the Kern. The effort revitalized the river in metropolitan Bakersfield and provided environmental, recreational, and water supply reliability benefits.

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USIBWC Reports Impaired Rio Grande Water Quality

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has released a report, *2003 Regional Assessment of Water Quality in the Rio Grande Basin*, which includes an overview of five years of data from the Texas portion of the basin. According to the report, the main water quality concerns in the basin are salinity, bacteria, and nutrients. Salinity is often associated with agricultural return drains, natural sources, and low flow conditions. Bacteria and nutrients, common concerns downstream of urban areas, are often the result of

wastewater discharges. The report also noted excessive growth of aquatic weeds and low flow in the Lower Rio Grande.

The data were analyzed to determine if the river meets water quality standards for each segment's designated uses, including suitability for aquatic life, contact recreation, public water supply, and fish consumption. The study found that standards for contact recreation were exceeded in various segments of the Rio Grande due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria.

The USIBWC, which operates the Clean Rivers Program under contract with Texas, has ten partners that collect samples at 68 stations on the Rio Grande and 12 stations on the Pecos River. Partners include academic institutions, municipalities, and USIBWC field offices, among others.

The report is available at www.ibwc.state.gov/CRP/2003_Rio_Grande_Assessment.pdf.

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