

PEOPLE

Underwood New CEO, GM of Metropolitan

*from the Metropolitan Water District of
Southern California*

In April, Dennis B. Underwood, former commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, was named chief executive officer and general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the region's major water importer and wholesaler. Underwood, who had been Metropolitan's vice president of Colorado River resources, is the 12th general manager in the agency's 77-year history. He fills the vacancy left by Ronald R. Gastelum, who retired at the end of 2004.

As a Metropolitan vice president, Underwood managed the district's Colorado River matters and played a principal role in California's development of a plan to bring the state's water use in compliance with its legal apportionment for Colorado River supplies. He also helped forge a first-of-its-kind long-term program that would pay farmers in the Palo Verde Valley near Blythe to annually set aside a portion of their land, rotate their crops, and

transfer saved water to urban Southern California. Most recently, Underwood helped negotiate one of the nation's largest habitat conservation programs, covering 27 species along more than 450 miles of the lower Colorado River.

As CEO and general manager of Metropolitan, Underwood is responsible for implementing the policies of the 37-member board. He is Metropolitan's chief spokesman and works with federal, state, and local officials, both elected and appointed, to carry out the district's mission.

Visit www.mwdh2o.com.

Phoenix Fires City Water Director

In February, the *Arizona Republic* reported that the City of Phoenix fired its water services director, Mike Gritzuk, who had been in the position for 17 years. This action came approximately a month after a "boil water" advisory was issued to the city's 1.4 million water users.

The boil water advisory was issued due to the detection of high turbidity entering

the water supply at one of the city's water treatment plants. The turbidity was attributed to increased mud, sludge, and other particulates in the runoff from recent heavy storms. At that time, only two of the city's five water treatment plants were in service. The advisory lasted two days, and ultimately it was determined that no standards other than particulates were exceeded and public health was never endangered. However, news releases on the city's Web site indicated the city's leaders were unhappy with the timing and amount of information that was conveyed to them during the scare.

The *Republic* was unable to obtain specific reasons for why Gritzuk was fired; City Manager Frank Fairbanks told the paper simply that "his services were no longer needed."

Gritzuk told the *Republic* that the firing came as a complete surprise to him, and that he planned to sue to recoup the severe damage to his reputation that the city's reaction to his handling of the water scare caused. Gritzuk is involved in water issues on a national level. He holds offices in the national WaterReuse Association, the American Water Works Association, and the Arizona Pollution Control Association, and is a member of EPA's National Drinking Water Advisory Council.

Danny Murphy is currently the acting water services director. In April, the *Business Journal of Phoenix* reported that the water services director is one of seven top positions in the City of Phoenix's 26 departments that remain open. Fairbanks told the *Business Journal* that permanent directors would not be decided upon until this fall at the earliest.

Visit phoenix.gov/waterservices/, www.azcentral.com, and phoenix.bizjournals.com/phoenix/.

Sorooshian Wins NASA Award

Soroosh Sorooshian, a professor in the Civil and Environmental Engineering and Earth System Science Departments at the University of California, Irvine,

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activities introduce contaminants to the lake and to beach areas.

The 40-page report, "Physical and chemical characteristics of Knowles, Forgotten, and Moqui Canyons, and effects of recreational use on water quality, Lake Powell, Arizona and Utah," by R.J. Hart and others, is published as U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2004-5120. It is available at water.usgs.gov/pubs/sir/2004/5120/.

Kennecott to Begin Massive Utah Water Cleanup

What may be the biggest water cleanup project in the nation's history began this spring when Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation handed out the first construction contract. The project is expected to turn an environmental mess into billions of gallons of clean drinking water for four Salt Lake Valley cities, according to a news release from Kennecott.

The contamination came from 100 years of mining activity in Bingham Canyon of the Oquirrh Mountains. Two huge plumes of salt- and sulfate-contaminated groundwater are moving slowly far below 50 square miles of the Salt Lake Valley. Much of the problem predates Kennecott. But at a meeting of the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District (JVWCD), Kennecott acknowledged the root cause of the pollution. Said Louis Cononelos of Kennecott, "Many times, as well-intentioned as past generations of miners were, the controls they put in place simply were not adequate by today's standards."

Kennecott has already spent hundreds of million of dollars controlling the pollution, and will pay most of the cost of the groundwater cleanup. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the company paid \$37 million into a natural resources damage trust fund in 1995, now worth \$62 million. The JVWCD will pay for "normal water development and treatment costs" during the remediation, according to the *Tribune*.

Richard Bay of the water district noted that "Kennecott shoulders the burden of the cleanup, and the district and the public share only the burden of conventional water treatment.

[It's a] very good deal for the public."

A contract was awarded to drill the first four of numerous wells that will tap the deep aquifer. A network of pipelines will carry the contaminated water to two reverse-osmosis treatment plants that will filter out most of the salts and sulfates. Together the plants are expected to convert 80 percent of the contaminated water to drinking-quality water that will be delivered to the cities of Herriman, Riverton, West Jordan, and South Jordan.

The original plan was to dump the waste from the filtration process right into the Jordan River. That idea met with so much criticism that the project was derailed for several years. The latest plan spares the Jordan River and puts the waste in Kennecott's tailings impoundment. Later, it may be dumped directly into the Great Salt Lake, a possibility that could lead to future battles.

Kennecott expects the treatment project to take about four years to get fully underway.

Visit www.kennecott.com.

is a 2005 recipient of the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal for non-governmental employees. According to NASA's Web site, this award is "the highest honor NASA awards to anyone who was not a [federal] government employee when the service was performed. The award is granted only to individuals whose distinguished accomplishments contributed substantially to the NASA mission." Sorooshian was recognized for his work in using satellite data to better understand rainfall around the globe, and for helping government agencies more accurately predict floods and droughts.

Visit www.nasa.gov and www.eng.uci.edu/faculty_research/profile/soroosh.

Hansen Named Arizona's Engineer of the Year

A panel representing Arizona's engineering community, the Engineers Week Committee, selected Lawrence Hansen of AMEC's Earth & Environmental office in Tempe as Arizona's Outstanding Engineer of the Year in February. The committee cited Hansen's 30-year career in geotechnical engineering and his recent work to protect the public in rapidly growing areas of Maricopa County from potentially unsafe earthen flood-control dams.

Hansen's work relative to earthen dams with severe embankment cracks and other problems resulting from subsidence-induced earth fissures has included investigation, analysis, design, and construction management of McMicken Dam, Vineyard Flood Retarding Structure, and Buckeye Flood Retarding Structure No. 1.

Hansen also was the principal engineer during a response to a significant failure of a mine tailings dam in central Arizona that threatened Phoenix's drinking water supply and impacted public lands. He directed the development of designs to stabilize the site, ensuring that no further damage to public land occurred.

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