

Sandia to Lead Yucca Mountain Science

In January, the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) announced that Sandia National Laboratories would become its lead laboratory to integrate repository science work for the Yucca Mountain Project, taking over the responsibility from OCRWM's contractor Bechtel SAIC.

DOE said that the decision to designate Sandia as the lead laboratory builds on DOE's successful experience at its Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, where a single national laboratory coordinated post-closure science work while a contractor performed work on the design of pre-closure, or above-ground facilities.

Bechtel will continue to be responsible for above-ground design efforts, while Sandia will concentrate on integrating all post-closure science.

Sandia will provide management and integration services for all Yucca Mountain scientific programs. These services will support OCRWM's license application and its defense in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's

review process, including the allocation of funding and the assignment of technical tasks to selected supporting organizations such as other national laboratories, subcontractors, federal agencies, universities, and expert panels.

Bechtel's budget for the Yucca Mountain project was about \$325 million in 2005, according to the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, but it is uncertain what proportion of work funded under that budget will be transferred to Sandia.

Visit www.ocrwm.doe.gov and www.sandia.gov.

Role of Privatization in Water Management Considered

from the Pacific Institute

Water managers face significant challenges meeting the freshwater, wastewater, and stormwater management needs of the communities they serve. Numerous solutions have been proposed, including privatization—the controversial involvement of the private sector. The debate over privatization overshadows discussion of the determinants of performance.

Pacific Institute's recent report, "Beyond Privatization: Restructuring Water Systems to Improve Performance," finds that public

versus private is not the bright line that separates success from failure. Instead, performance depends on effective staffing, consistent public support for sufficient funding, better asset management systems, performance measurements and rewards, and more stakeholder involvement and transparency. When increased private involvement or changes in public operations create significant cost savings, as they have in some cases, it is because specific improvements were identified and implemented in one or more of these categories.

"Beyond Privatization" provides a framework for urban and rural municipal-level public decision-makers to assess problems, identify possible solutions, and choose among these solutions. It provides practical information and examples about improving the effectiveness of water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, whether public or private.

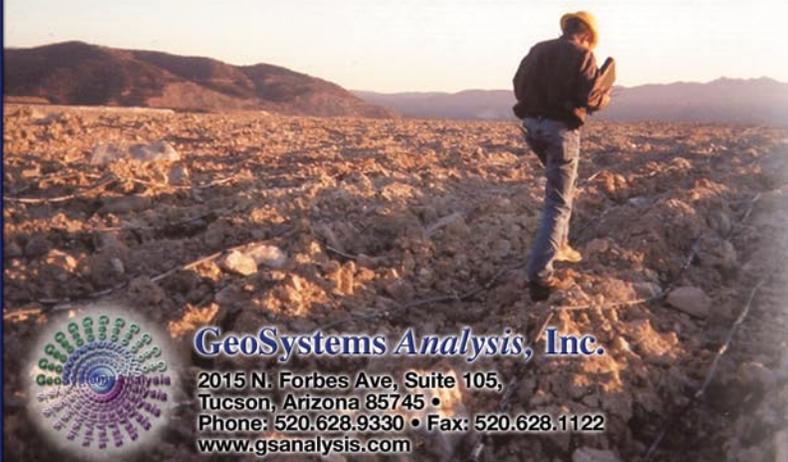
The 123-page report is available at pacinst.org/reports/beyond_privatization.

New Wetlands Projects Funded Across the Southwest

The U.S. EPA has awarded more than \$1.5 million to nine organizations, tribes,

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R & D (continued)

and local governments to protect wetlands in Arizona, California, and Nevada.

In Arizona, the Hualapai Tribe will use its grant plus additional funds to: continue monitoring and protecting 18 wetlands; incorporate water quality and biomonitoring data into long-term databases to track success of protection activities; document wetland expanse where wetlands have been protected from cattle and feral animals through fencing; and fence and monitor additional wetlands.

Santa Cruz County will use the funds to: support vegetation mapping along the Santa Cruz River; prioritize areas for protective action; develop native plant lists; draft ordinances to support repair and development guidance; recommend conservation tools and strategies; and recommend effective methods to ensure that vegetation maps and conservation tools remain in use and are updated as needed.

The Ak-Chin Indian Tribe plans to use its funds, with others, to develop a wetlands inventory and assessment; map existing and potential wetland areas; define parameters for "no net loss" to the tribe's established wetlands; determine best management practices; and develop a long-term monitoring plan.

In California, the Association of Bay Area Governments' (ABAG) Wetland Project Tracker will use its grant to expand a public, web-based information system. ABAG will use a second grant to help protect and restore vulnerable wetlands systems in the northern and coastal areas of the state.

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission will help to update the San Francisco Bay managed wetlands plans for Suisun Bay and San Francisco Bay.

The California Resources Agency will be applying its funds to a new pilot program to determine environmental results from wetland programs and to protect wetland acreage.

The Torres Martinez Tribe in Southern California will use its grant to help monitor and assess the quantity and condition of tribal wetlands at the Salton Sea to provide a baseline for monitoring and subsequent assessments of anticipated gains in acreage.

In Nevada, the Yerington Paiute Tribe will use its grant with additional funds to evaluate the impacts of mining and agriculture on its wetlands. The tribe

will hire a full-time wetland specialist to assess current risks associated with potential contaminants and potential degradation and loss that may have affected the wetland.

Visit www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/.

Conservation Strategies Ranked by Managers

Researchers at Texas A&M University and New Mexico State University conducted a survey of elected city officials and water managers in the Rio Grande Basin of Texas and New Mexico to determine which water conservation strategies they deemed most viable for their communities.

In 2004, surveys were sent to 239 officials and managers in 30 cities in the basin that have populations greater than 5,000. Responses were received from decision-makers in 27 of the cities. Of 15 possible water conservation options listed in the survey, the respondents ranked as the top three:

- encouragement of drought-tolerant landscapes;
- public education campaigns on water conservation; and
- residential water audits to review use, check for leaks, and suggest conservation measures.

While respondents considered all of the conservation projects to be possible, projects judged least feasible and least preferred offered rebates, restricted landscape and planting, and increased prices to reduce use.

The most important barriers to water conservation programs cited were financial concerns, including revenue loss, cost to implement programs, and increased prices to consumers; lack of awareness; and public opposition. Developer opposition and lack of expertise were judged the least important barriers.

See the full report, "Views from the River Front," published by Texas Cooperative Extension, at tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=2108.



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CAP Completes Newest, Biggest Recharge Facility

from the CAP Newsletter, February 2006

The Central Arizona Project has completed construction of the 207-acre Tonopah Desert Recharge Project (TDRP), more than doubling CAP's previous underground storage capacity to more than 400 acres in six recharge projects.

Work on TDRP began in 2000 with the goal of siting a large-scale recharge project in Maricopa County that would increase the amount of underground storage capacity available for the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District, the Arizona Water Banking Authority, and other CAP customers.

After an 18-month hydrologic feasibility study, the next two years were spent on design, permit acquisition, and land purchase. Construction began in August 2004. The facility contains 19 spreading basins separated into four groups. Individual basins or groups of basins can be taken out of service for maintenance or to remove basin-clogging sediment.

TDRP is the first recharge facility with sloped bottoms constructed by CAP, designed to minimize the amount of earthwork and associated costs. Seven-foot-diameter pipes feed the recharge project, allowing more than 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to enter the site, or roughly 10 percent of the canal capacity. This provides sufficient capacity to meet the design recharge rate of two feet per day. The project was designed to store 2 million acre-feet of Colorado River water over a 20-year period.

The project can be monitored and operated remotely. Aquifer water levels will be monitored by two 500-foot-deep monitor wells and four 200-foot piezometers.

Site acceptance testing began Jan. 27, and once completed, CAP will begin operations.

Visit www.cap-az.org.



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