

GOVERNMENT

'Our Home Planet' is Lost

From 2002 until recently, NASA's mission statement began, "To understand and protect our home planet, to explore the universe and search for life; to inspire the next generation of explorers as only NASA can." The *New York Times* reported on July 22 that the statement had been quietly altered in February without the knowledge of the agency's employees, its first phrase deleted and consequently now devoid of any mention of the Earth: "To pioneer the future in space exploration, scientific discovery and aeronautics research."

The *Times* reported that numerous NASA scientists, many of whom specialize in earth surface and atmospheric studies, including climate change and impacts of greenhouse gases on the environment, were troubled by the move. The change is considered by many as bringing NASA's stated mission in line with the Bush administration's interest in manned space exploration to the Moon and beyond, and echoes a corresponding shift in NASA's budgets away from earth missions, according to the *Times*.

Visit www.nytimes.com and www.nasa.gov.

Arizona Adds Nitrates to Monitoring Program

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has begun monitoring nitrate levels as part of its Monitoring Assistance Program (MAP) to ensure safe drinking water in public water systems

serving less than 10,000 people. Each water system participating in MAP is charged a base fee and a small service connection fee. The funds are used to hire a private contractor to collect, transport, analyze, and report the sampling results to the water systems and ADEQ.

MAP monitors drinking water for volatile organic compounds, radionuclides, and other pollutants. Monitoring for nitrates will be included in MAP's sampling program under a bill proposed by ADEQ and signed into law last spring by Gov. Janet Napolitano. A major source of nitrates in Arizona is inadequately treated wastewater from septic tanks and aging sewage systems.

Visit www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/dw/map.html.

Feds, State Agree on CA Levee Repair Plan

In May, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Bush Administration agreed to an expedited permitting process to allow California to fix 29 critical levee sites by the end of this year.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), the federal agencies agreed to complete all federal permitting by June 21, 2006, to ensure repairs

are done before the next flood season. Without this agreement, levee repairs were expected to take several years to complete. On June 27, DWR reported that all necessary permits had been secured.

The federal government expedited consultation under the Endangered Species Act, permitting under the Clean Water Act, and the Environmental Review process, and agreed to develop a plan to share costs between the state and federal governments. The critical sites are expected to cost \$150 million to repair. California planned to issue about \$30 million to the federal government so the Corps of Engineers could begin to repair 10 of the erosion sites. DWR plans to fix the remaining 19 sites.

Last February, Schwarzenegger declared a State of Emergency for California's levee system and ordered DWR to develop a plan to begin immediate repairs to prevent catastrophic flooding and loss of life. The emergency declaration allowed state agencies to begin the work immediately by fast-tracking state environmental permits and using emergency contracting procedures, but the federal permits presented a bottleneck prior to this agreement.

Visit www.governor.ca.gov.

Pact Settles Water Rights Among Tribe, SoCal Water Districts

In June, an agreement signed by the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan), Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), Lake Hemet Municipal Water District, and the U.S. Department of Interior settled nearly 60 years of litigation over water rights in the San Jacinto Basin, reported the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*.

The tribe farms on a 6,000-acre reservation along the San Jacinto River, where by the mid-19th century it had established a self-sustaining agricultural economy. However, the San Jacinto tunnel, constructed in

HydroFacts

Most western states define domestic wells, which are exempt from most regulations, often require no quantified water right, and are unmetered. The water use of these wells is considered *de minimus* or insignificant. However, growing numbers of domestic wells in certain rural basins is raising concerns and leading to calls for limits or increased regulation.

Estimated number of domestic wells in:

AZ: 95,000
CO: 200,000
NV: unknown
NM: 140,000 (as of 2000)

Percent of population served by domestic wells in:

AZ: 4-5
CO: 7-8
NV: 6
NM: 9

Limit on pumpage from domestic wells:

AZ: 35 gal/min (55 ac-ft/yr)
CO: 15 gal/min (24 ac-ft/yr)
NV: 1,800 gal/day (2 ac-ft/yr)
NM: usually 3 ac-ft/yr

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