

**External Affairs' December 2004 Activity Report****Summary**

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This report discusses significant activities in which External Affairs was involved during December 2004

**Attachments**

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None

**Detailed Report**

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**Highlights**

- More than 250 business, government and industry leaders attended a luncheon at Metropolitan to celebrate a stronger California water future through passage of continued appropriations for CALFED. The event featured a speech by U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein about water challenges and opportunities in California. In addition to Metropolitan, the event was co-sponsored by the Building Industry Association of Southern California, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and QueensCare. Staff provided media relations assistance to the Senator's staff, with three local television stations, three radio stations, the Associated Press and two newspapers in attendance. A story about Feinstein's announcement at this event regarding perchlorate legislation she plans to introduce appeared in the Riverside Press Enterprise.
- Metropolitan announced the launch of a native and California Friendly plant hotline with experts at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden to help homeowners and others learn more about care and maintenance of native plants.
- "A California Friendly Garden Makeover," the latest 50-minute episode of Straight from the Tap, began airing on statewide cable stations. In addition to free airtime on public access channels, Metropolitan also purchased a limited amount of leased airtime on cable outlets with the Metropolitan service area. Each DVD and VHS copy distributed to MWD's member agencies included a response card to obtain some basic viewer information. The video program coincides with the planting season for native and drought-tolerant foliage.
- After publishing the 2005 "Water Is Life" calendar featuring student art, Metropolitan put on a comprehensive art exhibit at Union Station headquarters featuring the work of 44 students, in a ceremony that included the young artists and their families, teachers, and principals, along with member and retail agency representatives. Geri Keams, author and storyteller provided a guest performance of "Snail Girl Brings Water."
- Staff began field-testing "Water Times," the new school newsletter and curriculum program, among sixth-grade classes within the service area.
- Several activities and programs began in preparation for the 2005 Solar Cup competition. Staff wrote, designed and produced the first newsletter for the 2005 Solar Cup program. The newsletter is sent to member agencies and participating high school teams. Staff coordinated several Solar Cup boat-building workshops and pre-building workshops at local schools or member agency locations.
- Staff, in collaboration with Water Resources Management, coordinated testimony for the annual public hearing on SB60, a state law that requires Metropolitan to produce an annual report on achievements in conservation, recycling and groundwater recharge. Among the speakers was Andrew Henderson, director of government and public affairs for the KBHome Corp., who testified about the positive benefits his company received from going "California Friendly" with its latest development in Temecula. The "Velderrosa" project will be the KBHome's first residential development that promotes water conservation – as well as other environmental conservation programs.

**Media, Outdoor Conservation Outreach, Publications, Web, Video**

- Staff provided media relations assistance at the annual Colorado River Water Users Association meeting in Las Vegas, where federal authorities issued a press release regarding deadlines for basin states to agree to shortage allocations. Interviews conducted with the vice president for Colorado River matters were arranged and stories appeared in the San Diego Union Tribune, Las Vegas Review Journal, Arizona Republic, Las Vegas Sun, the Rocky Mountain News and a local television station.

- Staff wrote and distributed press releases about Metropolitan protecting the integrity of its rate structure, which was picked up by the North County Times; the passing of former Metropolitan chairman and director E. Thornton Ibbetson, which was picked up by the Long Beach Press Telegram; the airing of the latest Straight from the Tap video on a garden makeover project; as well as an advisory regarding hundreds of high school students building competition boats for Metropolitan's upcoming Solar Cup event.
- Staff assisted in an interview with Mike Lee of the Sacramento Bee regarding pending negotiations to purchase water from northern California farmers under approved option contract programs. The vice president for External Affairs was quoted in the article.
- Staff assisted with interview requests regarding an environmental organization's report on federal subsidies of farm water.
- Staff initiated efforts with the Audubon Society for a partnership program to educate "mow-blow-and-go" gardeners through a customized Protector del Agua course.
- Staff helped script, edit and produce an end-of-year video for the Engineering and Operations Committee highlighting 2004 Metropolitan accomplishments in this area.
- Staff wrote and produced the December issue of *Metrospectives*, featuring the retirement of CEO Ron Gastelum and the change in chairs on the board of directors.
- Staff assisted Records Management in receiving a donation of a historic MWD publication from a Las Vegas-area collector.
- Staff oversaw the republishing of a limited number of Metropolitan's 75th Anniversary commemorative photo album, which will be sent to people who call Metropolitan at the end of an upcoming Huell Howser PBS television interview with CRA construction veteran Walter Preston.
- Staff wrote an article about Metropolitan's conservation program aimed at improving water use in industrial processes. The article, for an industry trade publication, will appear in advance of an industrial convention in Southern California.
- Staff wrote several speeches and talking points for executive management and the board chair for a variety of events.
- Staff provided updates to all district Web sites.
- Staff began redesigning sponsorship and grant applications on the Web site to facilitate the modifications made to those programs.
- Staff initiated work with Tracorp to redesign Protector Del Agua training classes online.
- There were 21,000 visitors to Metropolitan's Internet Web site, 8,500 visitors to Bewaterwise.com, 19,700 visitors to DVLake.com, 610 visitors to the *People.Interactive* magazine, 875 visitors to Aqueduct magazine, 16 visitors to the Member Agency site, 20 visitors to the BOD site, 380 visitors to the Ethics area, 120 visitors to the Water Quality Reports site and 400 visitors to the Straight from the Tap site.

#### ***Community Outreach, Education and Customer Service***

- Under the Community Partnering Program, staff participated in community events or professional associations with the following: California Emergency Food link, California Municipal Utilities Association, the Pacific Institute, and the TODEC Legal Center annual community event in Perris.
- Staff updated the procedures and practices manual for Metropolitan's Community Partnering Program sponsorships.
- Staff met with Compton Water Department General Manager Kambiz Shoghi and education liaison Massoud Makhavi to craft an outreach strategy for a water education program in Compton Unified School District.
- Staff provided training to 33 K-12 teachers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego and Ventura counties, and to 14 science and history-social science teachers at Dominguez High School (Compton).
- Staff conducted inspection trips for Director Murray (State Water Project), for Director Morris and the chief executive officer with the American Society of Civil Engineers (Colorado River Aqueduct) and for Director Dentler (agriculture tour).
- Staff conducted educational field trips to 231 students from Record Elementary in San Jacinto Unified School District, Whittier Elementary in Hemet USD and French Valley and Temecula in Temecula USD.

- Staff conducted business outreach networking efforts by attending events and meetings with various organizations and representatives including: Hollywood YMCA, Huntington Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Los Angeles African-American Chamber of Commerce, Irvine Chamber of Commerce, City of Long Beach Job Fair, Anaheim Chamber of Commerce and the Riverside Chamber of Commerce.
- Staff conducted outreach to residents near the Weymouth plant regarding the beginning of construction of the Solids Handling facility.
- There were 2,734 visitors to the Clayton Record Viewpoint and 1,115 visitors to the Diamond Valley Lake Visitor Center.

### ***Legislation and Government Relations***

*(Complete and updated reports for Sacramento and Washington, D.C., are given orally during the Communications, Outreach and Legislation Committee.)*

#### ***Federal***

- Staff continued to work with House and Senate committee staffers to urge Senate action on House-passed bills that have been supported by Metropolitan member agencies. During the lame-duck session, however, Congress decided to act only on the comprehensive intelligence legislation, leaving the entire package of other water resource development bills to be acted on in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- The 108<sup>th</sup> Congress proved to be a very productive year for California water interests. Highlights included enactment of HR 2828 (CALFED) and new appropriations for perchlorate cleanup, coupled with increased funding for regional water use efficiency programs. While some important programs sustained modest reductions because of budget constraints, every single budget line item that was advocated by the Metropolitan Water District for appropriations in 2006 was given the green light by the Congress and the president at the conclusion of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### ***State***

- Staff provided a legislative report to the ACWA Region 8 membership during the ACWA fall conference. Issues highlighted for the upcoming 2005-06 legislative session included CALFED user fees and reintroduction of special district reform legislation.
- On Dec. 6, the California State Legislature convened for the first day of the 2005-2006 legislative session. The Legislature will reconvene on Jan. 3. Legislation introduced on the first day of session included a measure by Sen. Dean Florez (D-Shafter) aimed at preventing the state from interfering with water contracts between the federal government and a person or agency so long as that water was being used for “reasonable and beneficial” reasons. This measure was spurred by an U.S. District Court judge ruling last August that ruled enough water must be sent through Friant Dam and down the San Joaquin River to restore the river’s salmon run.
- Staff participated in the development of a water user response to the California Bay-Delta Authority’s Dec. 9 approval of a framework for a CALFED user fee. A letter to CBDA signed by Metropolitan, Kern County Water Agency, the Santa Clara Valley Water District and others expressed various issues and concerns, and included a statement that water users are willing to contribute to CALFED programs that provide a clear, definable benefit to their taxpayers and ratepayers. CBDA’s recommendations will be forwarded to the governor’s office to be included in a proposed state spending plan.

#### ***Regional***

- Staff coordinated a meeting during the Colorado River Users Association conference in Las Vegas between Metropolitan and representatives of the Palo Verde Irrigation District to review objectives and progress of an agreement for Metropolitan to purchase water from PVID under a unique water transfer, land management and crop rotation program. Prior to the Las Vegas meeting, officials announced the selection of nine members for the PVID Community Improvement Board, which will help oversee the disbursement of millions of dollars in community impact funds set aside by MWD as part of the water transfer program.

- Staff represented Metropolitan at the Southern California Association of Government's Water Policy Task Force meeting. The committee heard presentations on growth and water issues in the Antelope Valley; the next steps for the City of Los Angeles on the passage of Measure O, the Clean Water, Ocean, River, Beach, Bay Storm Water Cleanup Measure; and the need to form a countywide funding proposal for watershed management and pollution controls for Los Angeles County.