

• External Affairs' April 2005 Activity Report

Summary

This report discusses significant activities in which External Affairs was involved during April 2005

Attachments

None

Detailed Report

Communications

Media Relations

The selection of Dennis Underwood as Metropolitan's new Chief Executive Officer/General Manager was covered in the news media, including stories in the Los Angeles Times, San Diego Union-Tribune, the North County Times/Californian and the Riverside Press Enterprise. Press relations activities at the federal signing ceremony for the Lower Colorado River multispecies conservation plan below Hoover Dam resulted in stories in the Los Angeles Times and San Diego Union-Tribune, the Las Vegas Sun, Las Vegas Review Journal and New York Times. As a part of these activities, reporters from several newspapers throughout the West interviewed Mr. Underwood regarding Secretary of Interior Gale Norton's decision to maintain Lake Powell releases as provided for in the 2005 Annual Operation Plan.

Other press releases for April included the extended cable television run of Metropolitan's two-part Straight from the Tap video program featuring the transformation of a Southland home from an ordinary garden space to a California Friendly sanctuary; the Board of Director's approval of a groundwater recovery project in Simi Valley; and the upcoming Solar Cup event, resulting in promises of pre-event articles in the Riverside Press-Enterprise, Orange County Register and Ventura County Star.

More than 400 viewer calls were received during the reporting period for the Straight from the Tap "Garden Makeover" episode. Diamond Valley Lake promotions and positive news coverage about fishing and a spring flower show in the hills at DVL contributed to increased visitors at the lake.

Publications and Internet

Metropolitan was recognized nationally in April for its outstanding internal and external publications. For the second year in a row, the League of American Communications Professionals named employee newsletter People.Interactive the top publication in its class, as well as the most creative overall. The online version also won best in its class and was ranked 15th best out of 382 entries. The 2003-04 Annual Financial Report received the 2005 Communicator Award of Distinction for Design, besting 5,078 entries from the United States and several foreign countries.

Staff produced and distributed a brochure explaining the wildflowers of DVL, as well as an overview sheet explaining the district's employee recruitment program.

There were 33,140 visitors to Metropolitan's Internet Web site, 9,800 visitors to Bewaterwise.com, 38,900 visitors to DVLake.com, 580 visitors to the *People.Interactive* magazine, 2,660 visitors to Aqueduct magazine, 16 visitors to the Board of Directors site, 16 visitors to the Member Agency site, 1,055 visitors to the Ethics area, 213 visitors to the Water Quality Reports site and 590 visitors to the Straight from the Tap site.

Education and Outreach

School Programs

Preparations are wrapping up for the annual solar-powered boat race at Lake Skinner, with 30 teams signed up for the May 13-15 competition. All technical reports have been turned in, scored and returned to student teams. School site visits began April 18 and continued through April 29, with final technical inspections on April 30, where all boats were inspected, skippers weighed, ballasted and swim-tested.

Metropolitan's newest curriculum, called *Water Times*, is printed and ready to roll out to sixth grade teachers throughout the service area. It replaces the long-running *California Smith, Investigator* and is interdisciplinary, covering subject requirements in science, history-social science, language arts and mathematics. The curriculum is the product of extensive collaboration and will be one of the featured curricula used as Metropolitan furthers develops the Water Education Network in support of water and environmental education.

City Makeover Program

The City Makeover program received 75 entries by the March 30 deadline, a 75% increase over the first year. Projects fall within the service areas of 20 member agencies. Each entry will be evaluated by a team of five judges, who will meet May 4 to make their final decision.

California Friendly Program

The advertising campaign began featuring its "Spring Tune-Up" message, encouraging residents to check their irrigation systems for leaks, broken heads and proper settings. Radio ads are running on 30 stations throughout the region.

The native plant knowledge hotline, sponsored by Metropolitan, received 77 calls from October 2004 to January 2005, its first quarter of existence. Call volume increased from four in October to 37 in January. Of all the calls, 55% were regarding plant selection, care and maintenance issues, 13% were seeking referrals for services, and 7% were regarding restoration and revegetation. The rest of the calls were requests for educational presentations, materials, and from members of the media.

Metropolitan, Calleguas Municipal Water District and Las Virgenes Municipal Water District officials briefed Building Industry Association members on why the "California Friendly" Model Home Program was of benefit to the future of water supply for southern California. Calleguas MWD will provide up to \$2,500 to encourage homebuilders to do more in the way of conserving water in their service area. The BIA offered to mail out the "California Friendly" Model Home Program materials to all their activity builders in the Ventura County area.

Community and Business Outreach

Metropolitan held a Construction Strategies Workshop in Orange County for general and sub-contractors regarding bond issues, dealing with scope of work changes, managing contract requirements, and executing a close-out plan.

Business Outreach held a two-day class, "Strategies for Public Sector Contracting," in the Inland Empire. Attendees learned about how to obtain capital for their business needs; submitting an effective proposal/statement of qualification; marketing strategies for bidding on Metropolitan contracts; and human resources issues facing small businesses.

Metropolitan co-hosted the 12th Annual Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair, with 10 booths dedicated to the Community Partnering Program, Conservation, Human Resources and Business Outreach. This event drew nearly 250 exhibitors and 3,000 attendees.

Interim Vice President of External Affairs Bobbi Becker and Executive Legislative Representative Kathy Cole addressed the California chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) during its state legislative conference in Sacramento. Their remarks highlighted Metropolitan's Business Outreach Program and an overview of the CALFED program, its importance to the Southern California business community, and administrative and legislative efforts to finance the program over the long-term.

Metropolitan participated in community events and activities in conjunction with: Association of California Water Agencies, Blythe Area Chamber of Commerce, Bolsa Chica Conservancy, and Heal the Bay. We also participated in the California Friendly plants exhibit at the San Juan Capistrano's Earth Day event on April 22.

Legislative Update

Sacramento

CALFED: Metropolitan staff continues to participate in a series of CALFED finance plan meetings led by Department of Water Resources Director Lester Snow. The meetings are focused on revamping the originally proposed \$8.1 billion, 10-year plan to be more reflective of realistic state and federal funding and to ensure that near-term plan activities are prioritized to reflect the core mission of the CALFED program.

Local government "reform" legislation: Metropolitan staff, in coordination with member agencies and Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) representatives, were working to oppose SB 393 by Senator Deborah Ortiz (D-Sacramento) – a measure that, as introduced, would have imposed unnecessary requirements on special districts, including board member compensation and reimbursement limits, a new set of "whistleblower" protections, a ban on district-paid benefits for board members, auditing requirements and other provisions. Other current reform legislation includes: AB 1234, a bill by Assemblyman Simon Salinas (D-Salinas), that would provide criteria for compensation and reimbursement practices, but would also allow local governments to adopt their own guidelines as long as the policies are publicly adopted and accessible; and SB 274, a bill by Senator Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles), that seeks to limit individuals' ability to serve on two or more local entities if the offices held are "incompatible." An amendment to SB 274 will ensure that existing statutory provisions that allow for the holding of two offices in specified cases, such as the Metropolitan Water District Act, are preserved.

Current water related legislation of interest includes:

- SB 820 – a bill by Senator Sheila James Kuehl (D-Santa Monica) that seeks to develop better reporting of water use and improved water planning. In April, the Board adopted a support if amended position on this bill.
- AB 371 – a bill by Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg (D-Los Angeles) which seeks to reduce barriers to the use of recycled water. Staff will be recommending a support position at the June Board meeting.

- SB 773 – a bill by Senator Dave Cox (R-Fair Oaks), that as amended on April 4, would: exempt from the definition of waste drinking water that is percolated, injected, or otherwise conveyed into storage in a groundwater aquifer for later recovery and use; direct the State Water Resources Control Board and regional boards to encourage projects in which drinking water is injected, percolated or otherwise conveyed into groundwater aquifers for later recovery and use by the public; and authorize the requirement of certain reports concerning this method of storing public use groundwater – thereby effectively giving all regional boards authority over drinking water aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) projects. The author has agreed to make this a two-year bill and work with the various parties to resolve concerns. Metropolitan has not taken a formal position on this bill.

Regional

Metropolitan's staff briefed and provided a site inspection of the Arrowhead Tunnels for David Varnam, District Representative for Congressman Gary Miller (R-42nd). Included in the tunnel tour was a briefing on the two proposed Central Pool Augmentation alignments, and their possible impacts to the residents in the Congressman's district. Additionally, the tour included an inside tour of the excavating activities in the Strawberry Canyon Tunnel.

Staff assisted the Orange County Business Council (OCBC) on a Business Leaders Trip to Sacramento, attended by about 45 business leaders. The purpose of the trip was to meet with state legislators and members of the administration to discuss current legislation on various issues, including CALFED.

Metropolitan staff accompanied 52 delegates from the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce to Washington DC to lobby on key issues affecting business in Los Angeles County, including water. Thanks were expressed for support of federal funding of CALFED, removing radioactive tailings away from the Colorado River near Moab, Utah; funding to remove perchlorate from drinking water supplies; and requesting new support for \$37.5 million in funding to build a 10,000 acre-foot reservoir along the Colorado River near the All-American Canal and removal of 100 years of sediment buildup from Laguna Dam.

State Elected Officials Dinner – The event, hosted by the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) and sponsored by Metropolitan, brought together more than 150 business leaders and 35 state and county legislators to discuss business issues affecting the San Fernando Valley, including key water issues.