

● External Affairs January 2006 Activity Report

Summary

In January, shortage criteria negotiations among the basin states prompted strong media interest and the press office handled an average of two press calls a day on that issue as well as Bay-Delta matters, water supply, conservation, California Friendly homes, water quality, and Solar Cup (45 calls total). Four press releases were issued, including two related to CALFED and the Bay-Delta. Staff conducted six inspection trips reaching 240 community members, provided CEO-sponsored tours of the Colorado River Aqueduct and conducted overviews of local projects for the American Society of Appraisers and Leadership Tomorrow. Water curriculum training was provided to 63 teachers and 263 students received Diamond Valley Lake field trips. There were more than 15 presentations to the public or legislative offices by staff from across the group. The District's Web sites received 53,825 hits during the month.

Detailed Report

Initiatives

Bay-Delta

Metropolitan's special one-hour "Straight from the Tap" episode spotlighting the condition of Northern California's levees and their impact on the environment, water quality, land uses, and water supply reliability of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta aired throughout January in nine California counties. The two-part program also has been picked up by San Francisco's KQED public television station, where it is scheduled for broadcast from April to the end of the year. The companion Bay-Delta issue of Aqueduct Magazine was published in January, in advance of a public hearing on the South Delta Improvements Program. The 24-page issue included articles on the history of the Bay-Delta and CALFED, and detailed reports on environmental concerns, ecosystem restoration, water quality, levees and Southern California water planning, coupled with a look at the major players in the CALFED debate and their views.

Education Outreach

The "Water is Life" Calendar Student Art tour began with an exhibit at the City of Pomona and will be visiting 15 participating member and retail agencies through early June. In February, the tour will spend a week each at Otay Water District, Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Cucamonga Valley Water District and Calleguas MWD.

There will be a Southern California Preparatory Conference for World Water Forum IV at Metropolitan Union Station Headquarters on Friday, Feb. 10. The all-day water issues conference is expected to include several prominent speakers, including Vanessa Tobin, UNICEF Chief of Water, Environment and Sanitation, who will be a keynote speaker. Others expected to speak include Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon), author of the Water for the Poor Act, Mary Nichols, LADWP Board President, and John Keys, USBR Commissioner. Besides Metropolitan, conference sponsors include Friends of the United Nations, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the University of Southern California.

Community Outreach

External Affairs staff assisted Water System Operations by coordinating community and government relations outreach related to the Weymouth Improvement Project. The Master Site Plan and Landscape Improvement Project were presented to the City of La Verne Development Review Committee and the Planning Commission on Jan. 10 and 11, respectively. Both bodies adopted the city staff's recommendation to forward the matters to the City Council on Feb. 6 for approval.

External Affairs continued assisting WSO, engineering and others with community and government relations related to the Diemer Plant, Perris Valley Pipeline, Cross Connection Prevention Program, Lake Perris and Inland Feeder.

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External Affairs, along with the Chief Financial Officer's office and Water System Operations, presented an outline of the District's crisis communications plan to the member agency managers on Jan. 13. The plan, which lays out the logistics, chain of command and other protocol to be followed if a natural or manmade disaster affects the District, is to be finalized over the next six months.

California Friendly™

Metropolitan and the Otay Water District met with the Building Industry Association of San Diego's home builders and developers who are building in the Otay area. Metropolitan updated the water district and the home builders and developers on the latest media campaign for 2006 – including the outreach activities targeted for greater San Diego communities – and advised them how homebuilders can highlight their participation in the program.

External Affairs staff attended an Armstrong Garden Center employee-training event on Jan. 24-25 to educate more than 700 employees on tools and resources they can use to encourage the use of California Friendly™ plants.

Legislative Outreach

While the Legislature is in session, detailed information about pending legislation is included in a Legislative Matrix, with any changes since the previous month's meeting highlighted in gray. A new matrix will be distributed at the February Communications and Legislation Committee meeting.

External Affairs arranged for Water Resource Management group manager Steve Arakawa to participate in a panel discussion on valley water issues as part of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments "Leadership 21" Program on Jan. 27. Other panelists were the San Gabriel Basin Watermaster and a representative from the Los Angeles County Sanitation District. Arakawa spoke about Metropolitan's Integrated Resource Plan including data on specific local resources programs in the valley.

External Affairs staff accompanied more than 50 local elected officials on the California Contract Cities Association's annual lobbying trip to Sacramento. The local officials met with more than 40 state legislators over the three-day period to discuss their local platform, which included water infrastructure.

The Southern California Water Dialogue focused on California's water infrastructure needs and the pros and cons of the Water Resources Investment Fund at its January meeting at Metropolitan. Ellen Hanak, Sr. Research Fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California provided an overview of state infrastructure needs; Jerry Johns, Deputy Director of the Dept. of Water Resources spoke in favor of the WRIF, and Peer Swan, director of Irvine Ranch Water District, spoke against that proposed financing method. Approximately 40 people discussed the proposal.

Government relations representative Jacque McMillan was installed as first Vice Chair of the United Chamber of Commerce of the San Fernando Valley, a business advocacy group representing more than 22 chambers. Special guests at Metropolitan's table included Congressman Brad Sherman; Alex Padilla, League of Cities President and Councilman for the City of Los Angeles and his Chief of Staff, Felipe Fuentes; David Phelps, Business Director for Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa; and several Valley business leaders.

Levee integrity, flood management and California infrastructure – including water infrastructure – promise to be highly complex and top priority issues in Sacramento in 2006, as reflected by the number of new and revived legislative and gubernatorial proposals to address planning and funding for these purposes. To date, relevant Administration proposals include:

- **Governor's "Strategic Growth Plan" and other bond proposals** – This is a proposed 10-year, \$222 billion dollar plan for California's infrastructure improvements for transportation, schools, water and other public infrastructure purposes. General Obligation bonds would fund \$68 billion, with other funds coming from federal, local and private sources. Overall, the 10-year plan proposes total state, federal and local fund investments of \$6 billion for levee system and flood protection and \$29 billion for "integrated

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water management.” Several pieces of recently introduced legislation are related to the Administration’s proposals and reforms.

- The proposed “**Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006**” was submitted to the Attorney General’s office. While it is uncertain whether proponents will choose to continue to pursue this \$5.3 billion bond initiative on the ballot, there is some likelihood that elements of it will instead be incorporated into the larger bond package to be developed legislatively this year.

In coordination with other State Water Contractors representatives, Metropolitan Executive Legislative Representative Kathy Cole has conducted several meetings with key legislative staff over the past several weeks to discuss and support the release of the Department of Water Resources’ South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP) EIR/EIS. The SDIP EIR/EIS pertains to the Department of Water Resource’s plan to improve water quality in the Delta through installation of operable gates and – pending necessary environmental studies – to ultimately allow for increased rates of water conveyance from the Delta when environmental and hydrologic conditions allow for such increased pumping. Eighteen spoke in support of SDIP at the public hearing in Los Angeles – three times the number testifying against the program. The public comment period for the SDIP ends on Feb. 7.

The future of the CALFED program is also anticipated to be a key legislative issue this year. Specifically, given the recommendations of several reviews of the program last year – including an extensive review by the Little Hoover Commission – the Administration is expected to develop language to essentially eliminate the California Bay/Delta Authority in favor of shifting the staff of the CALFED program to the Resources Agency, establishing a policy council comprised of key state and federal entities and shifting some oversight responsibilities to the California Water Commission.