

- **Board of Directors**  
**Communications and Legislation Committee**

August 15, 2006 Board Meeting

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7-6

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**Subject**

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Approval of Education Plan

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**Description**

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Since 1983, The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has provided high-quality water education and conservation programs, curriculum and supplemental materials, assembly programs, teacher in-services, and classroom presentations for K-12 teachers in Southern California. In recent years, the program has expanded to college campuses as well. The program has reached over 2.3 million students, thousands of teachers, families, and local communities.

Metropolitan's efforts have been expanded to include local water science fairs, where member agencies, entire school communities and local elected officials, all became involved in the educational event. Metropolitan has also added successful programs such as Solar Cup and the Southern California World Water Forum College Grant Program.

Metropolitan's Education Plan was presented to the Board earlier this year. The draft plan was developed in response to three ongoing education outreach challenges for Metropolitan and member agencies:

- The growth in our service area, increasing the number of new schools, particularly in the Inland Empire;
- The need to meet content standards and testing criteria for teachers and administrators in K-12 schools; and
- The increased level of duplication of services in water and environmental education programs.

Since the draft plan was first presented earlier this year, it has been reviewed and refined through discussions with member agency education coordinators, focus group feedback, and feedback from other resource agencies. As a result, staff is confident the plan has the right emphasis on maximizing staffing capabilities, collaboration with member agencies and other organizations, cost-effectiveness, and approaches to avoid duplication of services.

During public review of the plan, staff identified the priority actions to address the plan's four essential objectives:

- Objective #1. **“Build Upon What Works” by continuing to develop curriculum and programs that address important current issues.**

New Water Education “Native Plant and Outdoor Conservation” Curriculum Supplement

This summer, after discussion with member agency education coordinators and in order to support the California Friendly conservation program, staff will begin to develop a new water education curriculum supplement on native plants and outdoor conservation. This will include the creation of an advisory committee that in addition to member agency representation and teachers (selected, in part, by member agencies) will also include experts in the area of native plants, environmental education and nonprofit organizations.

Measuring Success: The timeline for completion of this curriculum supplement is the end of the 2006/2007 fiscal year. We will utilize the same diverse advisory group process that was so successful

in developing the curriculum in our recent “Water Times” program. As with the other programs, we will establish clear utilization goals that will guide our marketing and distribution campaign.

Objective #2. **Leverage partnerships to enhance the size, scope and cost-sharing opportunities in water and environmental education.**

#### Enhancing Member Agency Services

During the second half of 2006, staff will meet with each member agency to listen, discuss and identify short- and long-term education needs. Each member agency will complete an educational resource matrix to identify the staff, programs, resource materials, events they annually implement and what the overall impacts are in the school communities. Based upon that input and analysis, Metropolitan will take education outreach actions that incorporate available local and regional resources and opportunities.

Measuring Success: Prior to meeting with each member agency, staff will send out a survey that assesses the member agency’s degree of satisfaction with education program services and resources. Additionally, the focus of the meetings will identify resources and the short- and long-term education outreach needs and plans of each agency. This will provide Metropolitan staff with a baseline of both quantitative and qualitative information. It will also be the impetus for Metropolitan to bring together the appropriate resources and program options and collaborations. At the end of the 2006/2007 fiscal year another customer satisfaction survey will assess the progress made in meeting both the member agency and Metropolitan’s needs.

#### Model Environment/Resource Education Partnership

Staff is constructing a model partnership with selected, strong Southern California resource and government agencies, environmental, business organizations and educational entities. The alliance is creating a network that will enhance Metropolitan’s ability to implement programs, identify and secure additional funding, expand our teacher and student outreach, and also impact the adult communities. As this becomes successful, the same model approach may be used in other parts of Metropolitan’s service area.

Measuring Success: Per our present objectives, success will be achieved by establishing a functioning network education supported by four or more investment partners, with the California Regional Environmental Education Community as the central hub. The network will be effectively functioning by directing additional resources for programs, materials, and events – including Metropolitan’s – to other partners, the education community, nonprofits and other agencies and organizations interested in resource and environmental education.

#### Maximizing Inspection Trips by Creating Partnerships

Staff will work with the Board and member agencies to further diversify the number of community and regional leaders, decision makers and constituents who attend Metropolitan inspection trips. The success of these partnerships will provide Metropolitan with a significant opportunity to educate a key adult constituency on Metropolitan and member agency priorities. It also will provide momentum in establishing follow-up outreach opportunities with these guests to enhance their knowledge of water.

Measuring Success: During the first part of the 2006/2007 fiscal year staff will review the most recent trip season information to evaluate the different types of affiliations and their percentages that have been tapped for trips. Among the categories will be elected officials and boards (including legislative staffers), community-based organizations, planning and other types of commissions, business groups and state and federal government agencies. This information will be captured, analyzed and presented to assist in identifying key groups that may benefit from increased involvement on inspection trips and will further enhance Metropolitan’s and the member agencies’ return on investment.

**Objective #3. Expand and enhance Metropolitan's use of the Internet and other new technologies.**Develop Concepts to Enhance the Education Web Page

A cross-functional team will be assembled to revamp and enhance the Education Web pages, making the site more attractive, interactive, and functional for its intended audience, with links to additional water-related sites, and other elements.

Measuring Success: Staff will determine a baseline number for the prior fiscal year of the unique visitors to the Education Web pages. When completed, a new Education Web site would be expected to show a significant increase on this measurement.

**Objective #4. Improve Assessment and Tracking Systems for programs.**Develop a Consistent and Effective Approach to Assessment and Tracking

Staff will survey Metropolitan's member agencies and water agencies around the state to identify best practices on data acquisition, performance measurement, and program evaluation. New methods will be discussed with member agency education coordinators prior to implementation.

Measuring Success: The updated database, program assessment and tracking system will provide an established percentage increase in the level and frequency of program evaluation by teachers, students, community members, and decision makers, including inspection trips, and member agencies.

The thrust of this plan is that Metropolitan's Education Unit will continue to develop and support top quality curriculum and classroom materials that are regional in scope and that serve to protect water resources and water infrastructure, to support Metropolitan's mission. This will be accomplished with the active participation of member agencies and regional educational partners.

Staff will report progress to the committee on a regular basis on the implementation of this Education Plan.

**Policy**

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Metropolitan Water District Act Section 126: Dissemination of Information

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

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CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is categorically exempt from CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The overall activities involve the approval and implementation of Metropolitan's Education Plan for water awareness programs and training that do not involve physical alteration. Accordingly, the proposed action qualifies for a Class 22 Categorical Exemption (Section 15322 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

The CEQA determination is: Determine that pursuant to CEQA, the proposed action qualifies under a Class 22 Categorical Exemption (Section 15322 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

**Board Options**

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**Option #1**

Adopt the CEQA determination and approve the Education Plan.

**Fiscal Impact:** The education program budget will remain at its present level of \$1.1 million, which covers school programs as well as inspection trips. However, implementation of the plan will result in reallocating some funds to new categories of expenditures, including member agency and partnership support and services, and professional services in the application of technologies.

**Business Analysis:** This option allows Metropolitan to optimize staffing allocation, expand member agency services, and decrease duplication of programs, thereby supporting the General Manager's Business Plan.

**Option #2**

Do not approve implementation of the Education Plan and refer it back to staff for further review and revision.

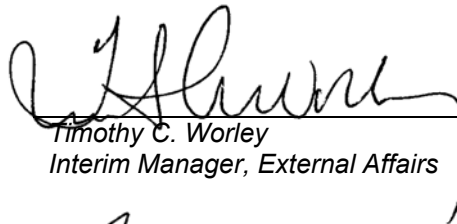
**Fiscal Impact:** The fiscal impact will depend upon the cost of actions indicated by revisions to the Education Plan.

**Business Analysis:** This option may delay implementation of particular outreach programs.

**Staff Recommendation**

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Option #1

  
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Timothy C. Worley  
Interim Manager, External Affairs

7/25/2006  
Date

  
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Jeffrey Kightlinger  
General Manager

7/25/2006  
Date