



March 9, 2021

Board of Directors
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153

Re: General Manager Hiring Outreach Plan

Dear Board of Directors:

We wanted to make sure that you saw [this blog post](#), especially in light of the recent revelations about management practices in your organization. Barbara Barrigan-Parilla, the Executive Director of Restore the Delta, writes of the experiences of her organization and their volunteers as they attend MWD Board meetings.

Their journey parallels what the public has learned about the experiences of MWD employees- intimidation, dismissal, and a complete lack of respect. Older, disabled, and BIPOC members of the public- those who MWD is meant to serve- are denied adequate seating, intimidated by security guards with guns, and receive smirks and glares by the overwhelmingly white, male board. Board members falsely speak on behalf of Delta residents.

Barrigan-Parrilla says, “repairing seating is not needed if you do not want the public present. Unwelcoming. Disinterested. Intimidation of community. Period. This was the culture at MWD that we experienced first-hand. Both of these scenarios speak to the outsized influence of MWD throughout the state, and its no-holds-barred approach in executing power over people for its agenda – whether over people’s lives locally or over the people’s water resources throughout California.” This evident lack of respect for MWD employees, ratepayers, and those who live on the land that MWD exerts its force over, makes it clear that an agency under this leadership has no right to make life-altering decisions for anyone.

“If MWD cannot hold onto its local member agencies over broad systematic mistreatment of its workforce, how can it ever hope to pay for a Delta tunnel project – a project that further symbolizes its overreach for power at the expense of California’s people, land, and waters?” Constructing a project of such magnitude- billions of dollars of public funds, trillions of gallons of water, and millions of lives affected- should be reconsidered in light of the leadership and behavior of those who have always been at the helm of this project. How can the public trust an agency’s leadership to make such a huge and

permanent decision for our state, when it has treated its own this way? How can the MWD board trust its agency's leadership, given everything that has come to light, and Monday's "question of the day- what else don't [we] know?"

As Barrigan-Parilla says, "the brushing off and quick dismissal of harassment and violence against women within MWD shows how MWD leadership treats these cases as individual misconduct. But repeated cases of harassment show the dysfunction of a deeply embedded power system of patriarchy that must be transformed in this government institution. Or perhaps the misconduct is so wide and extreme it should lead to a re-evaluation of MWD's charter?"

Barrigan-Parilla says that MWD has outlived its purpose and that California needs new water institutions. We would like to think that it is not too late for MWD to become the leader in water that it can be- that MWD can take a step back to look inward, find a fresh, new, outside hire as the next general manager, and do the hard work to fix the culture that has led to disgraceful treatment of employees, but also the misguided stewardship of land and water. Your employees, our land, our water, and our neighbors are not disposable. It's time for water policy that reflects the needs of the people and the environment, before profits.

Sincerely,

Caty Wagner
Southern California Water Organizer
Sierra Club California

Charming Evelyn
Sierra Club California Water Committee Co-Chair
Angeles Chapter Water Committee Chair

cc:

Diane Pitman
Group Manager, Human Resources
Metropolitan Water District