



VOL. 1 ISSUE 1 · APR 2020

NEWSLETTER

For a Sustainable Los Angeles



Minor March Miracle

JERRY GEWE

Once again, we have had a March Miracle that has improved the water supply available to the City of Los Angeles from the Owens Valley. While this was not nearly as significant as a couple of times in the past, you can see from the chart on page below that the water content in the eastern Sierra snowpack, where Los Angeles gets the largest and least expensive portion of its water in normal years, has gone up significantly since early January. Compare this with the 2014-15 year where the water content was zero. The snowpack, as measured in inches of water content, which usually reaches its peak
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DWR PHOTOS

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March Miracle

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HOW POWER COMPANIES ARE KEEPING LIGHTS ON DURING THE PANDEMIC

TRUMP WITHDRAWS WATER SUPPLY RULE

BAY DELTA ISSUES UPDATE

MEET "THE" FOUNTAIN

Guest of the Month

GREG HUYNH
MARCIE EDWARDS
RANDALL NEUDECK

ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPDATES



Highlights

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Bill Engels**
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- Dorothy M. Fuller**
- Gerald "Jerry" Gewe**
- Duane L. Georgeson**
- Edward A. Schlotman**
- Bruce Hamer**



DOROTHY FULLER RETIRES ONE MORE TIME...

After 20 years tirelessly helping the Associates, sweet, beautiful and multi-talented Dorothy says...



REMEMBERING A DEAR FRIEND

Melinda Rho and Jay, her husband of 33 years, on a field-trip to Pine Tree in 2019.

FROM THE DESK OF JERRY GEWE

Jerry with granddaughter.

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INTERESTED IN BEING A PART OF OUR TEAM?

It is fun to write what you are passionate about. Read a good book or watch a great movie on water and energy? Write a review and share it with us. Send to:

comments@waterandpower.com

The Los Angeles Water and Power Associates, Inc. is a nonprofit, independent, private organization incorporated in 1971 to inform and educate its members, public officials and the general public on critical water and energy issues affecting the citizens of Los Angeles, Southern California and the State of California.

Our secondary mission is to preserve the regional history of water and electricity and show its role in the development and growth of the city of Los Angeles. Also, to disseminate knowledge of the rich and diverse multicultural history of the greater Los Angeles area; to serve as a resource of historical information; and to assist in the preservation of the city's historic records.

There are many major issues facing both the water and energy sectors without even considering the impacts of the coronavirus on these sectors and our lives in general. We will be providing you with updates on the decisions and policies affecting water and energy policies in our future issues.

On the water side, there are the never-ending disputes about the allocation of California's precious water supplies, the effect of climate change on the water supply, and how to develop policies to make our way of life more sustainable.

On the energy side, there are policy issues regarding the appropriate roles for public and private utilities in providing power to Californians. The relative roles for electricity and natural gas in fueling our society, and how to reduce the impact on climate change are also of great importance to our future.

In short, the policy decisions regarding water and energy will have a crucial role in establishing the future of Los Angeles, Southern California, the state and nation.

We offer the knowledge and experience of our membership in assisting our policy makers to make sound decisions that will affect the future of ourselves, children and grandchildren.



From the Desk of Jerry Gewe

We want to acknowledge the passing of Dave McCoy, founder of the Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort who passed away at the age of 104. Dave, a hydrographer with LADWP in the Owens Valley, would ski up to 50 miles a day testing snow depths and water content. He used the knowledge gained through these snow surveys to establish a very successful ski resort at Mammoth. He started with a short rope tow at McGee Mountain in 1938, powered by hooking up a gear to his rear tire. In 1953 he received a permit from the Forest Service to develop Mammoth as a ski resort, which is now one of the premier ski resorts in the US.

We also want to acknowledge the passing of Melinda Rho, one of our directors, and a dear friend to many at LADWP. Melinda was a Water Quality Manager for LADWP whose expertise was widely acknowledged throughout California. She served as a primary liaison between the LADWP, EPA, and the California drinking water regulators for many years and played a key role in helping develop regulations to protect the health of Californians. See our special tribute to our dear friend in this issue.

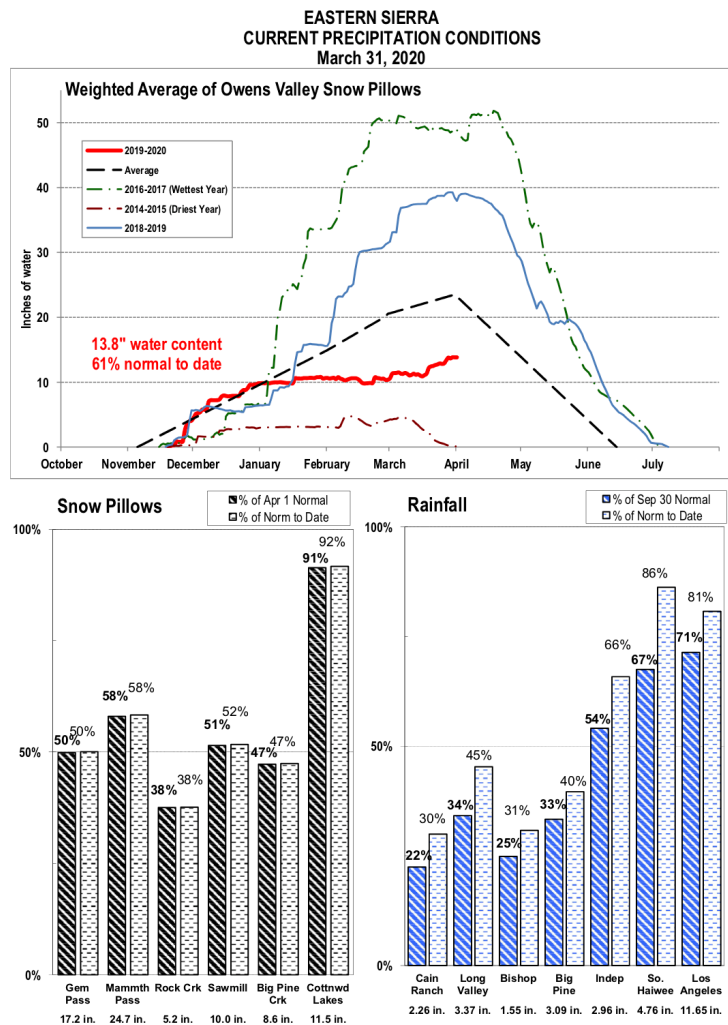
Thank you for your support of our efforts. 

Minor March Miracle
CONT. FROM PAGE 1

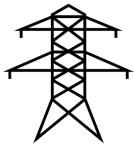
around the first of April stood at 61% of normal on March 31. The graph represents data from the snow pillows in the eastern Sierra, weighted according to the percentage of the runoff contributed from each area. The snowpack is not uniform as shown in the bar graphs of the individual snow pillows. The water content ranges from 38% of normal in the Rock Creek area to 91% of normal in the Cottonwood Lake area. The total supply will be somewhat larger than the average April 1 water content as carry over from the prior year's precipitation will increase the quantity of runoff during the year. Thus, the final supply will probably be in the mid to high 60% range. These results indicate that we need to continue our wise use of water, but that we need not fear water shortages this year. In addition to the water available from the eastern Sierra, Los Angeles will continue to obtain supplies from the State Water Project and the Colorado River (both of which have significant amounts of water in storage from prior years) purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, and local groundwater from the San Fernando Valley.

The LADWP has embarked on a major effort to install facilities that will clean up the groundwater from the San Fernando Valley and restore that supply that was available historically which has been substantially reduced by industrial contaminants. The LADWP is also investing substantially in facilities to allow a significant increase in the recycling of wastewater which will increase the local supplies available in future years.

Due to the strong Water Conservation ethic that has been developed in the City of Los Angeles, the City is currently using about 10% less water than in 1970 despite growing from a population of 2.8 million persons to over 4 million persons.



Measurement as Inches Water Content. Precipitation totals are cumulative for water year beginning Oct 1

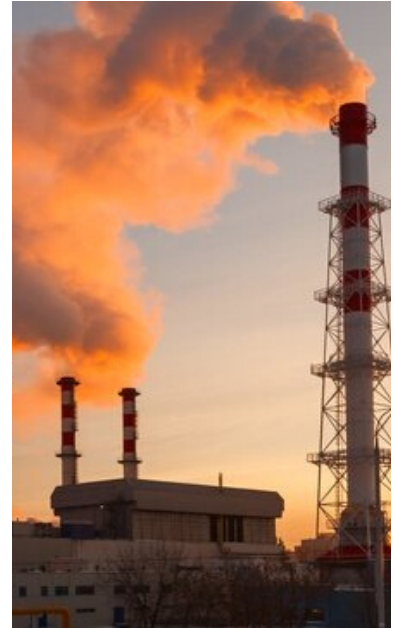


EPA GIVES POWER PLANTS, REGULATED ENTITIES POLLUTION COMPLIANCE FLEXIBILITY, CITING COVID-19 CONCERNS

CATHERINE MOREHOUSE, DIVE BRIEF MARCH 30, 2020

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency modified its enforcement policies to give power plants and other EPA-regulated entities more leeway on pollution control measures, citing potential coronavirus-related disruptions.

Environmentalists worry the relaxed enforcement could allow facilities to be less diligent about compliance with air and water pollution standards. "This is an open license to pollute. Plain and simple," Gina McCarthy, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement. "We can all appreciate the need for additional caution and flexibility in a time of crisis, but this brazen directive is an abdication of the EPA's responsibility to protect our health."



HOW POWER COMPANIES ARE KEEPING YOUR LIGHTS ON DURING THE PANDEMIC

SAMMY ROTH, LA TIMES BRIEF MARCH 19, 2020


The American power grid has been described as the world's biggest machine — and the people who run that machine say they're prepared to keep the lights on as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads.

"Say what you will about the utility industry — they're pretty good about contingency planning," said Stephen Berberich, president of the California Independent System Operator, which manages the electric grid for most of the state.

A key reality is that many utility employees can't work from home. They need to be in the field, operating power plants or repairing electricity distribution lines or checking for gas leaks in homes — often in close contact with each other or customers.

At Utah's Intermountain Power Plant — a major electricity source for Los Angeles — maintenance that would have shut down the plant for several weeks this spring has been postponed until next year. "If the worst-case scenario came about, we could operate the plant with a skeleton crew for an extended period of time," he said.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is going a step further. Marty Adams, the utility's general manager, told the City Council on Tuesday that LADWP will reconnect customers who have had their water or power shut off in the last 30 days. Adams said the utility is "planning for the worst," including a situation where a large fraction of its employees can't work.

"If we don't have much of a workforce, we'll go into complete remedial service mode, making sure that our field crews are able to keep the water on and the lights on," he said. 



History Mystery



Meet "THE" Fountain

JACK FELDMAN

At the corner of Riverside Drive and Los Feliz Boulevard in Los Feliz, spitting distance from the Los Angeles River, you'll find a shrine to the "Father" of L.A.'s water system, William Mulholland – built approximately on the site where Mulholland once lived in a cabin, worked as a water laborer (technically a ditch-tender) and taught himself to be a civil engineer.

What year was the Mulholland Fountain built?

- A) 1920 B) 1930 C) 1940 D) 1950

Which of the following were also named for William Mulholland?

- ◆ Mulholland Dam
- ◆ Mulholland Highway
- ◆ Mulholland American Whiskey
- ◆ Mulholland Drive
- ◆ Liberty Ship S.S. Mulholland
- ◆ Mulholland Middle School
- ◆ Mulholland Theatre
- ◆ Mulholland Military Academy
- ◆ Mulholland Town
- ◆ Mulholland Pump Station
- ◆ Mulholland Virtual Museum

***Answers on page 09**

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WATER & POWER
ASSOCIATES, INC.

P

NEWSLETTER TEAM

**Phyllis Currie
Jack Feldman
Bill Glauz
Jerry Gewe
David Oliphant
Thomas McCarthy
Thu Pham
Robert Yoshimura**

VISIT US AT

WATERANDPOWER.ORG

Do you know...?

During the last year, more than 150,000 visitors viewed 273,000 pages on our website.

Members and guests are invited to our monthly meeting held every second Wednesdays of each month. Please contact any Board member or send us a request at comments@waterandpower.org

Interested in becoming a member? Join us online at waterandpower.org or find information in this newsletter to join by mail.

The Water and Power Associates has cancelled its monthly meetings and all scheduled site visits until further notice.

The April 2020 newsletter issue will not be printed and distributed as usual due to the closing of all non-essential commercial businesses including printing facilities.

In the meantime, enjoy our online newsletter in a new format.



GUEST OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER 2019

GREG HUYNH


**Operating Agent Manager, 100% Clean Energy Innovations
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power**

The Green New Deal

SUMMARIES BY
ROBERT YOSHIMURA

The *Green New Deal* calls for the transition of Los Angeles Power System to 100% renewable energy sources. Originally, LADWP planned to repower its three coastal ocean water-cooled thermal generation plants (Haynes, Harbor, and Scattergood) to supplement renewable sources during the transition to full renewable power. However, as part of this initiative, the Mayor has called for the ocean water-cooled units to be scrapped to eliminate reliance on those plants at an earlier date and speed the transition to 100% green power. The elimination of the three coastal plants will result in the loss of 1,600 MW of energy, which will have to be replaced with renewable sources by 2024. Because of the Mayor's announcement, LADWP created "Clean Grid LA" to find new, innovative ways to generate power. In addition, in 2017, the City of Los Angeles directed LADWP to engage the services of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to conduct the 100% Renewable Energy Study (also known as the LA 100 Study) to assess all the issues and define how best to achieve 100% renewable energy including such factors as cost, reliability, and best technology to use. This broad study is underway and encourages input from all stakeholders through its Advisory Group, including representatives of the environmental community, neighborhood councils, IBEW Local 18, and several others.


As part of the solution to create clean energy, LADWP will build an 840 MW combined cycle generation facility to replace two of the coal-fueled units at the Intermountain Power Project in Utah. This facility will be able to utilize a fuel mixture of hydrogen and natural gas to generate electricity. Under this plan, solar and wind generated energy will be used to produce hydrogen gas which will then be stored in underground salt caverns located beneath the IPP facilities.

Existing transmission lines will be used to deliver that energy to Los Angeles. Coal-fueled energy from IPP will continue to be available until 2025, assuring a cheap and reliable supply of energy especially in the winter months when natural gas supplies in the Los Angeles area are subject to severe price spikes. The new 840 MW plant will be able to use a 70%/30% blend of natural gas and hydrogen with a full transition to 100% hydrogen by 2045. 

Life after LADWP

One of Marcie Edwards' first clients after leaving LADWP was the Sewerage and Water Board of the City of New Orleans, which engaged her assistance in the wake of major flooding during the summer of 2017. That disaster resulted in extraordinary costs to the agency and caused serious financial difficulties. Prior to Ms. Edwards arrival, the organization had rolled out a new customer information system that led to billing errors. The billing errors were surprisingly like those experienced by LADWP following the rollout of its new billing system. However, New Orleans response to the billing problems was to suspend collections which exacerbated ongoing financial difficulties. Ms. Edwards also serves on the Board of Directors of the Boys and Girls Club in the Santa Clarita Valley, and also serves as a Board member on a private corporation known as S&C Electric Products, based out of Chicago, Illinois. She was in discussions with a third organization for a seat on a publicly traded board.

During a Q&A period after the presentation, the following were discussed:

- ~ Should LADWP follow PG&E's policy and shut down during windstorms?
- ~ Could the creation of Community Choice Aggregations (CCA's) spread to municipal utilities?
- ~ Los Angeles' leaders may be considering cancellation of plans to convert a portion of the Intermountain Power Project (IPP) to natural gas for reliable backup during the transition to full renewable power. As part of the solution to create clean energy,
- ~ LADWP will build an 840 MW combined cycle generation facility to replace two of the coal-fueled units at the IPP in Utah. This facility will be able to utilize a fuel mixture of hydrogen and natural gas to generate electricity. Under this plan, solar and wind generated energy will be used to produce hydrogen gas which will then be stored in underground salt caverns located beneath the IPP facilities. 



*You are always there
ready to help
with a smile.
Thank you!*


Dave Oliphant



When Dorothy retired from the LADWP in the early '80s, she didn't know she was going to take up almost immediately another "job" for the next 20 years. The young energetic retiree joined the Water and Power Associates as a member to help promote better understanding and to advise the community of significant matters affecting water and energy in her beloved city of Los Angeles. She found out that the non-profit is a small organization and happily stepped up every time there was a need to have things done. Soon she took the full function of the editor, designer and producer of the newsletter and continued until recent months. This had been a time-consuming job that involved seeking, coordinating and editing the material for the articles, adding graphics, laying it out, and getting it printed. This was also followed by distributing it to the Associates members and to public officials.

Dorothy didn't stop her active volunteerism there. In addition to being a director of the Associates, Dorothy has been involved in a wide range of community activities including the California Science Center, the Community Police Advisory Board, and was a president of her Neighborhood Watch. While working for LADWP she served as the DWP's representative to the National Postal System Forums, Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals, the Los Angeles Credit and Collections Bureau, and the American Association of Blacks in Energy.

Due to her health, Dorothy recently informed us that she wished to relinquish her duties.

Dorothy - All your friends here at Water and Power Associates are thinking about you and sending you our best wishes. Many thanks for your continued support and contribution. We hope to see you at each and every one of our monthly luncheons as our honorary guest when we resume the meetings. 



History Mystery

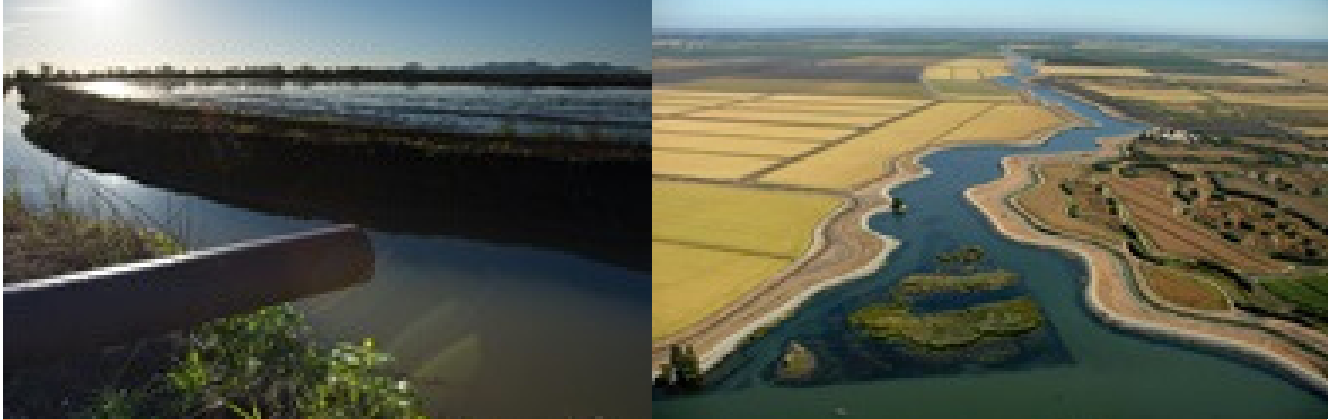
Answers to
Meet "THE" Fountain
mystery questions

What year was the Mulholland Fountain built?

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- ◆ **Mulholland Highway**
- ◆ **Mulholland Drive**
- ◆ **Mulholland Middle School**
- ◆ **Mulholland Pump Station**
- ◆ **Mulholland Virtual Museum**



DWR PHOTOS

GUEST OF THE MONTH

MARCH 2020

RANDALL NEUDECK


**Bay-Delta Initiatives Special Projects Manager
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
(MWD)**

Bay Delta Issues and Latest Conflicts

The focus of water supply issues in California has centered on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for many decades. The primary issue is how to manage the water in the Delta to fulfill the needs of all the beneficial uses identified for that water. Today, only 4% of water that runs off from the Delta's watershed is diverted by MWD (on average). Only 17% of the water is diverted for urban and agricultural uses in the Central Valley and Southern California. 31% of that water is diverted prior to reaching the Delta, and nearly half (48%) of the water escapes to the Pacific Ocean. The total flow to the Pacific Ocean is 20 million Acre-Feet (AF) per year. By comparison, the entire flow of the Colorado River is only 15 million AF/year. However, the Colorado River system boasts 60 million AF of storage capacity, while the State Water Project's (SWP) reservoirs can store only 15 million AF.

Consequently, the dearth of storage in the SWP precludes the conservation of excess water produced during major storms and during years of above average runoff. To further complicate this problem, the State Water Board's most recent water quality control plan for the BayDelta requires watershed users to release 40 to 55% of unimpaired river flow, which will reduce the amount of water available for beneficial uses or storage. Two-thirds of the state receives water from the Delta either through the SWP or the Federal Central Valley Project (CVP). In 2018, all Delta stakeholders agreed to settle the decades-long dispute over Delta water with a proposed solution (California WaterFix) consisting of two tunnels to bypass the Delta and deliver 9,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of flow to the SWP and CVP pumping facilities. However, in 2019, California's new governor Gavin Newsom issued a policy directive requiring a reevaluation of the 2018 two-tunnel solution and implementation of a smaller single-tunnel alternative. Thus the \$250 million Environmental Impact Report (EIR) produced for the Cal WaterFix is negated and a new EIR will be required for the revised project. Planning and engineering efforts are now

underway for the new Delta Conveyance Approach consisting of a single tunnel with 6,000 cfs capacity. Work on a new EIR is also underway and is expected to be completed during the summer of 2020 with the above developments, Federal agencies have conducted new biological assessments related to their CVP water operations. Biological Opinions resulting from those assessments were approved in 2020. However, California took exception to them claiming that they were insufficient in providing environmental protections for endangered species. California has subsequently sued the Federal Government and is conducting its own biological assessment to highlight the insufficiencies of the Federal assessment. At issue is the amount of water diverted by the CVP. Differences between the state and federal Biological Opinions will somehow have to be reconciled. A major concern is that the eventual resolution of those differences may result in a reduction of SWP deliveries and allocations to MWD.

The state's Department of Water Resources (DWR) has requested MWD and a few other affected water agencies (who have agreed to contribute to project funding) to join in the planning for Sites Reservoir, a proposed off-stream storage facility located near the town of Colusa, roughly halfway between Lake Shasta and Sacramento. The reservoir is ideally located to capture runoff from winter storms and is in a non-environmentally sensitive area. Water can be transported to and from the Sacramento River via existing irrigation canals. The project has received strong support from all stakeholders including environmentalists, the state and federal government, and the contributing water agencies. The state is providing partial funding from funds allocated pursuant to Proposition 1, which was approved by voters six years ago. Hydroelectric Power generation is not a part of this project because the likely low yield of such a project does not justify the high initial costs associated with such an undertaking. The major benefit of Sites Reservoir is the increase in SWP storage that will enable excess water from major winter storms to be diverted and conserved for subsequent use. 


<p style="font-size: 2em; color: #00a0c0; font-family: cursive;">Join</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BECOMING A MEMBER</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">*HELP PRESERVE LOS ANGELES REGIONAL HISTORY OF WATER AND ELECTRICITY</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">*DISSEMINATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE RICH MULTI-CULTURAL HISTORY OF LOS ANGELES</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">*BECOME INFORMED AND GAIN INSIGHT AND EXPERTISE ON WATER AND ELECTRICITY ISSUES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$30</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">ONLINE AT WATERANDPOWER.ORG</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">BY MAIL FILL OUT THE CARD AND WRITE CHECK TO: W&P ASSOCIATES, INC.</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">SEND BOTH TO: 467 CREST DRIVE ALTADENA, CA 91001</p>	<p>NAME</p> <hr style="border: 1px solid #f4a460;"/>				
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<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">• The W&P Associates, Inc. is an IRC 501(c)(4) organization, donations are not tax deductible.</p>					



Bay Delta Issues Update

It was a busy time for California water issues in the last few months. Trump visited the San Joaquin Valley, signed the Record of the Decision on the biological opinions which govern the operations of the state and federal water projects. This was followed by the state filing of a lawsuit the next day opposing the approval of the Record of Decision. Which was followed by the State Water Contractors filing a motion to intervene as a defendant in a companion lawsuit filed by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, along with a handful of other environmental nonprofits against the Record Decision.

The State Water Resources Control Board has been in the process of identifying the beneficial uses, such as fish and wildlife, municipal, agricultural, recreation and others, and then developing objectives to protect those beneficial uses along with a plan of implementation for achieving those objectives for ten years. It became clear that if the State Board issued their proposed water quality control plan, it would be tied up with years, if not decades, of litigation by all of the involved parties.

In 2016, the Brown administration began negotiations on a voluntary agreement process as a way to move forward protections for the Delta and to avoid long term conflicts and litigation. The voluntary agreement process has now stretched across two governors' administrations. The proposed voluntary agreement framework includes a commitment to provide flow, habitat, funding, and adaptive management through a science program. Flow component would provide between 200,000 acre feet and 900,000 acre-feet of environmental flows (depending on the water year type) above the existing regulatory baseline through a combination of dedicated flows and water purchases. The framework also has identified 60,000 acres of new and restored habitat with several projects identified that would contribute towards that habitat. About \$5 billion in new funding has been identified to implement the habitat and flows as well as the science program to help direct those resources to provide the most optimum way of implementing actions with the most amount of benefit. 

Milestones:

2016 - GOV. BROWN PROPOSES A 15-YEAR VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

DEC 2018 - FRAMEWORK OF THE VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT PRESENTED

2020 - TRUMP SIGNED THE RECORD OF THE DECISION ON THE BIOLOGICAL OPINIONS WHICH GOVERNS THE OPERATIONS OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL WATER PROJECTS. THIS ISSUANCE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD ALLOW SUBSTANTIAL INCREASED WATER TO THE CENTRAL VALLEY AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS, HAS TEMPORARILY DERAILED PROGRESS ON THE 15-YEAR VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT AND A SPATE OF LAWSUITS.

Remembering
a dear friend



MELINDA RHO

In 1980, LADWP was hiring many new professionals out of college to help the City of Los Angeles prepare for the 21st Century. There were new environmental initiatives that required DWP to change direction. Melinda Rho was one of those new employees. She was a USC graduate with multiple degrees in Biology and Environmental Engineering, with a focus on water quality. She was a woman who became a leader in the then male dominated science and engineering fields. She dedicated her 37 year LADWP career to assuring a safe and high quality drinking water supply for LA. Sadly, we lost Melinda last year, after twice surviving a difficult cancer prognosis. She was only 64 years old, taken from us much too soon.

Throughout her distinguished career, Melinda was responsible for compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations regarding drinking water quality and regularly presented at conferences and regulatory workshops for the Department of Water and Power, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Association of California Water Agencies, and the American Water Works Association (California/Nevada Section), among others. Among her many accomplishments, Melinda advocated for legislative and water policy development, planned for the containment, clean up, and restoration of LA's contaminated groundwater sources, and developed a contaminant response protocol in a multi-utility team effort that was adopted by the U.S. EPA Homeland Security Office for public water systems and incorporated into the Department's emergency planning. Melinda retired in 2017 as a Senior Manager in the Department's Water Quality Division. Even upon retirement she still stayed involved in LADWP issues through her work with Water and Power Associates as a Board Member. She was also dedicated to many special interests, including visiting local schools to read to first graders, being a leader in the Korean American Youth Foundation, and being a leader and moderator in LADWP's annual National Science Bowl competition for local high school students for over 20 years.

Melinda was a joy to work with and brought a tremendous level of enthusiasm to everything she did, whether it was directly work related or to make the work environment fun. She loved gardening, travel and food, and shared her loves with her co-workers, even challenging them to sample from her hot sauce collection. Melinda never stopped learning—and encouraging others to do the same. She loved to visit aquariums, oceans, and rivers in order to see and learn something new. Melinda enjoyed making things; she would research and master the skills to make homemade presents such as ribbon leis, French macarons, or Halloween costumes. An avid Trekkie, Melinda lived a long and prosperous life. She lived each day to its fullest and inspired others to do the same. Melinda's life was filled with rich and fulfilling relationships with her family, friends, and community. Her husband of 33 years, Jay Rho, knew the moment that he met her that he wanted to spend his life with her. For her daughter Michelle, Melinda was the strongest supporter and confidante, as well as the best partner in baking adventures. She also leaves behind an amazing extended family as well as the many of us that got to know her and were proud to call her and her family friends.

Trump Withdraws Water Supply Rule Amid Environmental Rollbacks

REBECCA BEITSCH THE HILL JANUARY 19, 2020

President Trump in January highlighted for farmers his plans to scale back Obama-era water policy, a move the White House believes could pay dividends with the farm vote in this year's presidential election. Speaking to the crowd at the American Farm Bureau Federation conference in Austin, Texas, Trump said he would be withdrawing a water supply rule proposed in the final days of the Obama administration. "I am proud to announce that I am taking another step to protect the water rights of American farmers and ranchers," Trump told the room of Texas farmers. "I am directing the Corps of Engineers to immediately withdraw the proposed rule and allow states to manage their water resources based on their own needs. "Water is the lifeblood of agriculture and we will always protect your water supply," Trump added. Trump's comments come as those with a stake in water rights await another rollback promised since the president's campaign days. The White House is soon expected to replace the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule, crafted under the Obama administration, which expanded the types of waterways protected by federal law. But farmers and other groups have argued the law was too far-reaching, requiring grand efforts to protect relatively small bodies of water that run through their property, ultimately subjecting large swaths of land to federal oversight.

It will bring criticism from other groups, adding to Democratic arguments that Trump's policies have been devastating to the environment and are hurting air and water quality while contributing to climate change.

Rolling back WOTUS or the Water Supply Act could help Trump secure the farm vote – a group he views as a key part of his base but one that has been jeopardized by trade wars and an ethanol policy that has hurt many farmers' bottom lines.


The EPA's independent Science Advisory Board reviewed Trump's WOTUS proposal earlier this year writing in a draft report that "aspects of the proposed rule are in conflict with established science and the objectives of the Clean Water Act."

A diminished federal role would leave a greater share of water supervision to the states, many of which have cut budgets for their environmental regulators over the last decade.

"There is no question that President Trump is making millions of Americans vulnerable to polluted water with this action. This rollback was bought and paid for by the mining industry, and it will have significant consequences for states, who will shoulder a huge burden to protect drinking water from pollution," Ryan Richards, a senior policy analyst at the Center for American Progress, said in a statement about WOTUS.

The January announcement follows a September rule that scrapped the prior definition of water, reverting waterway protections back to 1986 standards.

A coalition of 14 states sued over the September rollback, arguing that returning the U.S. to the narrower 1986 standard ignores studies showing how small bodies of water, even seasonal snowmelt, connect with and impact large bodies of water more typically targeted for regulation.

"Attorneys general across this nation will not stand by as the Trump administration seeks to reverse decades of progress we've made in fighting water pollution," New York Attorney General Letitia James said when the coalition first filed suit. 

California PUC Launches Rulemaking for Transitions from Natural Gas

KAYVA BALARAMAN UTILITY DIVE, JAN 17, 2020




The California Public Utilities Commission launched new rulemaking to regulate the state's transition from natural gas, addressing issues related to utility stranded assets and unfair costs to ratepayers. Regulators will also be looking into crafting updated reliability standards for gas systems, due to a string of safety, operational and reliability-related incidents that have plagued California's gas utilities over the last decade. Environmental advocates praised the rulemaking as a timely move, considering the wave of California cities adopting natural gas bans.

The rulemaking will be conducted in two tracks, with the second focused on developing a long-term strategy. Specifically, the commission intends to pinpoint what kind of gas infrastructure portfolios will be best suited for the state's utilities; how much of it is needed through 2045 and beyond; and how to address the short-term reliability need for gas in the IRP process. In the first track of the proceeding, the commission intends to review current reliability standards, and investigate rules around long-term contracting and tariff changes, among other things. According to the PUC, California state and municipal greenhouse gas emission laws will drive down demand for natural gas over the next 25 years. Pacific Gas & Electric, San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison are among the utilities named as respondents to the rulemaking.

"How do we ensure the safety and reliability of natural gas infrastructure in the state, as we consider this long-term strategy to manage the state's transition away from natural-gas fueled technologies to meet these decarbonization goals?" CPUC Commissioner Liane Randolph.

"From our perspective, what was interesting and what we appreciate [the PUC] getting ahead of is how we should be thinking about the gas system in an era of rapidly declining gas demand," Matt Vespa, staff attorney with Earthjustice, told *Utility Dive*. Reaching California's climate goals will necessitate electrifying buildings, according to Vespa, which raises questions over which customers are left to pay for the gas system and how to avoid unneeded investments. Part of the challenge will involve executing that transition without leaving behind low-income and other vulnerable customers.

But Jon Switalski, Executive Director of Californians for Balanced Energy Solutions, a coalition of natural and renewable gas users, said that while it supports the state's carbon reduction goals, it differs with the CPUC in how to get there. "We believe that pure electrification is an ideological, rather than pragmatic way to reach those carbon reduction mandates, and we believe that there should be an increasing role for renewable natural gas and eventually, one day, hydrogen," he said. 




US ENERGY OFFICIALS PUSH INNOVATION TO MEET EVOLVING ENERGY NEEDS

CRISSA STEWART POWER NOTES 2/26/20

As technological innovation spurs opportunities in the energy sector, the U.S. government wants to facilitate a major shift in how the nation generates its power, top federal energy officials said during a new S&P Global Market Intelligence podcast.

"We are in this incredible American moment where we are really seeing a fascinating transition in our energy landscape," Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Neil Chatterjee said on S&P Global Market Intelligence's second episode of Energy Evolution. "The challenge is that this transition is putting pressure on traditional forms of baseload power, namely coal and nuclear. As the regulator responsible for the reliability of the grid, ensuring that we can make that transition while maintaining reliability is a challenge."

The administration has taken several steps to try to support coal and nuclear power. However, agencies like FERC and the U.S. Department of Energy are also supporting the development of policies and technology that would support the growing role renewable energy plays in U.S. electricity generation.

"If the cost of renewables, the cost of storage, gets to a point where it can compete, I think that's great for consumers," Chatterjee said. "It's great for the economy. It's great for the environment and it's great for America." 

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*Maintaining
reliability
is a challenge.*

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*Federal Energy
Regulatory Commission
Chairman, Neil Chatterjee*