



THE Pipeline

Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department

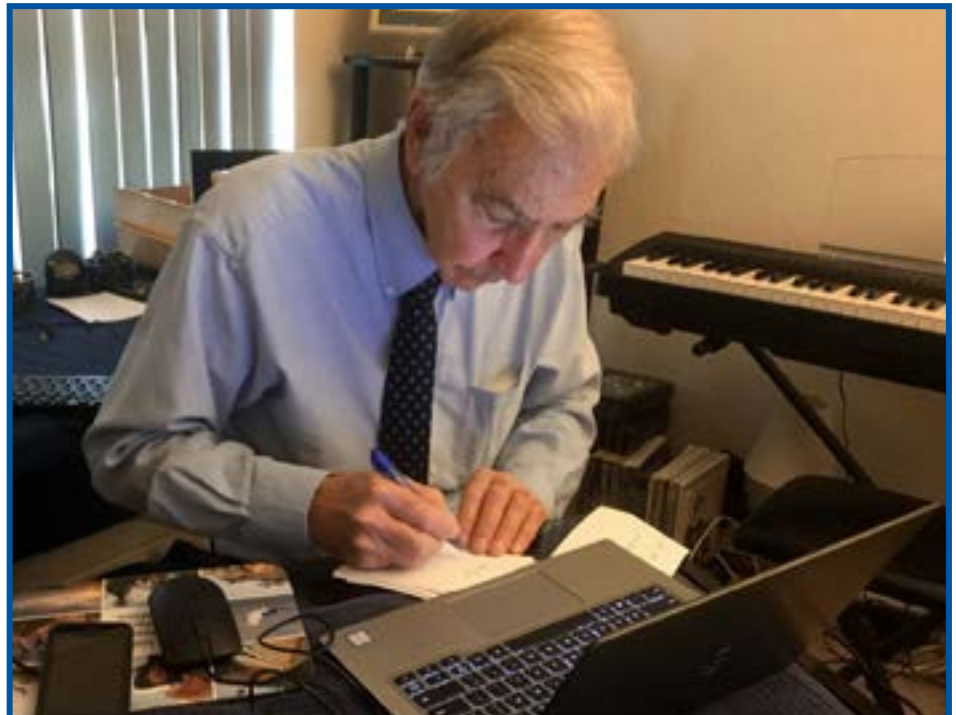
Gerry Koziol: A County 'Rock Star'

by Lilian von Rago

Gerry Koziol, Civil Engineering Assistant for the Development Services Department, has been with Pima County for 35 years. He left his home in western New York after the collapse of the steel industry in 1985, moved to Tucson, and became an employee of RWRD.

In 2017, during a County consolidation, he was absorbed into the Development Services Department (DSD), where he processes Wastewater Utility Fee permits for unincorporated Pima County. That entails providing sewer information such as the location of House Connection Sewers (HCS's), the location of sewer cleanouts, investigating all sewer-related questions and recommending solutions that are equally fair to Pima County and to its wastewater customers. All options are based on Pima County Building Codes and Pima County Ordinances.

Gerry said: "I am happy to help customers take care of their sewer issues and sewer informational needs." Asked where he sees himself in five years, he says he hopes to still be working for Pima County. Gerry genuinely enjoys working with RWRD staff and with Pima County Building Codes. He says there are many unsung heroes at Pima County who work hard, long, and smart to



Gerry Koziol works from home processing Wastewater Utility Fee permits for unincorporated Pima County.

advance the mission of Pima County.

Gerry is universally loved and respected by those who know and work with him. RWRD Deputy Director **Eric Wieduwilt** said: "Gerry's dedication to supporting the customers of RWRD through his roles with both RWRD and DSD goes beyond amazing. He gives every customer his full attention and works with them tirelessly to answer a question or resolve a complex problem. While Gerry is working

remotely now for DSD, we still hear from him almost daily in his efforts to provide excellent customer service. If there were an award for Customer Service Employee of the Decade, Gerry would be the clear winner."

Development Services Department Project Manager **Mark Masek** said: "Gerry has no bias. He takes equally good care of Pima County (by making sure that County

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DIRECTOR'S VIEW



Hard as it is to believe, spring is almost here! Traditionally, spring is thought of as a time of fresh starts and new growth (not to mention more comfortable weather). That's appropriate, because we have some exciting developments in the works here at RWRD.

One of those developments is the long-awaited Biogas Cleaning and Utilization Project, which is finally on the verge of completion. This will allow us to begin maximizing the use we make of the biogas that is generated at the Tres Ríos Water Reclamation Facility. In the past,

by *Jackson Jenkins*

we have only been using about 20 percent of that biogas; now, we'll be able to treat the rest of it, so that it can be sold as natural gas. We're partnering with Southwest Gas to deliver the gas to our end users.

This project has been more than three years in the making, and it's fantastic that we're finally ready to take it to the next level. Not only is this project going to benefit the environment, but it will also provide us with a new, ongoing revenue source for RWRD—which means that we will not have to rely on rate increases. This is something else we can be proud of: for the fifth straight year, we will not have to raise sewer user fees and wastewater utility fees.

On a different note, we are still working to keep the number of COVID-19 cases down in Pima County, so I'd like to remind you to stay diligent about wearing your mask, social distancing, and washing your hands frequently. Remember that even small steps like this can help save lives.

As the old saying goes, "The only constant in life is change." At a time of change, it's good to take stock of your successes, and I'd say we have a lot to be proud of here in our department. I'm confident that the months ahead will continue to be successful ones for our utility. I wish you all a happy March. Stay safe, everybody!

SUSTAINABILITY CORNER

by *Justyn Dillingham*

Sonoran Institute Highlights Changes in Santa Cruz

As relatively rare as flowing rivers are in Arizona, more than 80 percent of the state's wild plants and animals depend on river habitats at some point in their life cycle. In our part of the state, that role is played by the Santa Cruz River. Winding its way back and forth across the border and then up through the heart of Pima County, the river provides a haven for numerous desert plants and animals.

"We have a vision of the Santa Cruz as a living, flowing river that continues to be the foundation of our community's health and prosperity," said **Claire Zugmeyer**, an ecologist at the Sonoran Institute, a Tucson-based nonprofit group, at the most recent

meeting of the Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee.

Pima County has been discharging treated wastewater into the Santa Cruz River since the 1970s. However, the quality of that water has greatly improved since 2013, when major upgrades were made to the wastewater treatment process. The Sonoran Institute has been tracking the changes in the river since.

In particular, the upgrades have resulted in significantly lower levels of ammonia, a pollutant that is highly toxic to fish and other aquatic wildlife. As the river enjoys cleaner water, it has become a more hospitable

environment for fish, along with aquatic invertebrates such as dragonflies.

The Sonoran Institute leads an annual fish survey to identify the different types of fish that live in the Santa Cruz River. In 2013, only one species—the Western mosquitofish—was found in the river. Since then, five others have been found, including the endangered Gila topminnow.

"This little native fish came back to the river in 2017, presumably on its own," Zugmeyer said. "We don't know how it got back into the river, but it was found downstream of the Agua Nueva facility, and it's persisting, which is really exciting."

The Pipeline, an Award-Winning Publication

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MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to protect the public health, safety, and the environment by providing quality service, environmental stewardship, and renewable resources.



BE A CONTRIBUTOR

Is there something happening in your Division? On your team? In your office? We want to read about it! Share it with us by emailing pipeline@pima.gov or call 724-6543.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Please submit your stories for the April issue to pipeline@pima.gov by Friday, March 26. If you will be submitting a photo, please send as a separate high-res JPEG attachment.

Characteristics of Good Safety Committee Meetings

According to the National Safety Council, organizations with a higher percentage of their workforce on safety committees have lower injury and illness rates. In addition, safety committees are more likely to make a meaningful impact on workplace safety when the committees have strong and visible upper management support. RWRD has a strong commitment to each of these. Safety committee meetings are conducted in each of our divisions. Additionally, safety meetings are conducted with our safety coordinators and with the Safety Training Committee that develops and presents Annual Safety Training and In-Service Training.

What are some of the good characteristics of a safety committee? The following are some characteristics that safety committees should model:

- Safety committees are conducted in each division and should focus on their specific area.
- A centralized source to look for a potential overlap of information with the division safety committees.
- An effective committee leader that facilitates the meeting without being dominating or allowing someone to do so.
- It follows a clear agenda.
- Works hard to keep enthusiasm and bring in new members when the committee becomes stale.
- Rotating the committee's focus among a variety of topics.
- Management participation to make realistic decisions and recommendations.
- Employee participation to ensure their voice is heard.
- Requesting topics from employees prior to the meeting.

These are some great characteristics, with the most important aspect being communication. Clear communication from all levels of the department allows likely sources of injury to be identified and discussed, causal factors to be identified, and the implementation of measures that should be taken to eliminate similar future incidents. What are the topics that should be discussed in a safety committee meeting?

Below are some of the topics that should be discussed during a safety meeting:

- Safety Share
- Recordable injuries and First Aid/Near Miss reports with recommended preventive actions
- Safety procedures, including any updates
- Safety issues pertinent to their specific division/



- location
 - FEAP/COOP including updating coordinator lists
 - Review and update coordinator lists such as the Spill Plan and SDS
 - Review and update other authorized lists such as First Aid, BBP, and Fall Protection Competent Person
 - General safety topics such as LOTO, PPE, Confined Space Entry, HazCom, etc.
 - Safety-related training topics and presentations
- Meeting minutes summaries should be memorialized on the [Safety SharePoint site](#), and meetings should be limited to 1 hour. Finally, meetings should be held at least monthly in the most critical areas where injuries are most likely to occur.

Safety committees at RWRD have been shown to be informative, fun, and critical to the overall success of our Safety Program. The above information provides basic safety committee fundamentals which vary from division to division. By sharing safety information and identifying hazards, RWRD is a safer workplace and is trending toward becoming an injury-free workplace.

SAFETY SHARE

It's rattlesnake season!

You're most likely to encounter a rattlesnake outdoors from mid-March through October. Watch where you step, stay on the trail when hiking, and never approach snakes.



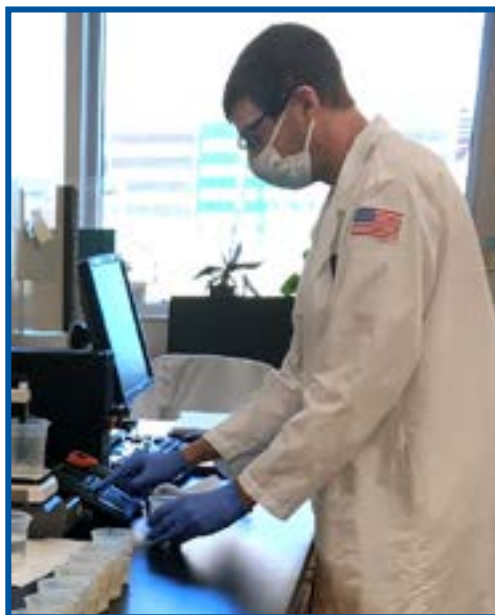
CRAO Laboratory Undergoes Biannual Audit

by Jenelle Chraft

On January 12-14, 2021, the Compliance and Regulatory Affairs Office (CRAO) Laboratory underwent its biannual audit by the Arizona Department of Health Services. This audit usually involves three auditors on site for three days.

The auditors usually spend a day and a half going over laboratory documents, such as our 217-page Laboratory Quality Manual, our 152-page Chemical Hygiene Plan, 106 different Method SOPs, Safety documents, Quality Assurance Documentation, and Laboratory Personnel Training Records. These documents are all thoroughly reviewed during the audit. In addition, the auditors select at least one sample from each method that the Laboratory is licensed by the state to perform.

During the review process, the auditors may request additional documents—such as instrument maintenance manuals or Certificate of Analysis records for chemicals used—if they have questions about what they are reviewing. During the remaining day and a half, the auditors would spend time in the lab areas watching and interviewing the chemists and technicians who perform the analyses.



Jack Van Riper Jr., Wastewater Laboratory Chemist, does lab work at the CRAO Laboratory.

To prepare for this, the Laboratory Unit Supervisors must locate the paper raw data packets and copies of all the electronic data files from the instruments as well as files used to merge the data with our Laboratory Information Management System that keeps track of the data. In addition, the Data Management Unit (DMU) must locate or produce the final laboratory reports that are reviewed and signed by the Laboratory Manager.

This year, however, due to the pandemic, the audit involved four auditors for three days and was conducted as a “desk” or virtual audit. This meant that, in addition to locating all the paperwork, documents and raw data files requested by the auditors, all of that paperwork also had to be scanned and uploaded as electronic files and submitted to the auditors in a format they could view.

We chose to use a Dropbox to upload all this virtual data into and gave the auditors access so that they could review all of it. Getting all of this documentation ready took the Laboratory Manager, Unit Supervisors, staff from DMU and some additional staff more than a week to prepare, while performing normal laboratory/job duties at the same time.

After all the preparation and anticipation, the audit went very smoothly. The Lab received three emails and two phone calls requesting additional information which were fielded by the Unit Supervisors. No chemists or technicians were requested for interview. In all, the Lab received four minor findings and three recommendations which will be reviewed for correction.

“GERRY” FROM PAGE 1

ordinances are adhered to) and the customer, by going over and above to help them solve their problem. Every manager should have an employee like Gerry.”

DSD Chief Building Official **Dan Ice** said: “Gerry is the hardest-working and most dedicated individual I have ever known. It is an honor to be working with him at DSD. Engineering Plans Technician **Olivia Canez** said: “Gerry loves his job. He LOVES his job. I wish I knew a fraction of what he knows

about building Codes and Pima County Wastewater. He takes his time explaining things to customers to ensure that they thoroughly understand County requirements.”

Civil Engineering Manager **Lorenzo Hernandez** said: “Wastewater has a rock star in Gerry Koziol.” Hernandez shares that sentiment with a constituent who praised Gerry for calling him back at 6 p.m. when most employees have already gone home for the day.

When asked about what he enjoys doing in his free time, Gerry said: “I

enjoy photography, yard work and weekend birthday trips to La Jolla. I once worked at Pima County part-time on weekends for 17 years. I enjoyed that as well.”

Gerry’s sunny disposition is evident by his answer to this question: “What is your motto in life?” He said: “I enjoy today. The now. Some people cannot wait until the weekend. I’m happy seven days a week. I enjoy each and every day.”

Congratulations, Gerry. You are an exceptional employee of Pima County!

by Jenette Lee

Safeguarding RWRD and Yourself: 5 Tips for Physical and Digital Security

Many people think that security refers to the software and hardware that Pima County implements in order to ensure the safety of the employees and assets of RWRD. While much of the responsibility to create a safe space for employees and to protect assets is on RWRD, employees can contribute significantly to ensure that existing security measures are successful. RWRD put certain provisions in place, but it also depends on the staff to follow them accordingly and proceed carefully to protect both RWRD and themselves.

As an employee, it is up to you to safeguard yourself and RWRD's information and assets as well. Below are 5 simple tips:

1. Take care of your belongings, such as your purse or wallet and your employee badge, as well as RWRD hardware and/or documents containing important or sensitive information. This sounds simple



enough, but it is easy to overlook such details and accidentally lose private or confidential information. Loss of data is not just dangerous; it is also extremely inconvenient. Make sure you lock your things up safely before leaving for the day.

2. Remain alert at all times.

Report any suspicious instances to higher authorities and security personnel, such as unknown people trying to gain entry into the office premises, unannounced repair work being done suddenly, and so on. Make sure you report if security systems don't appear to be working correctly. If you yourself are in a security position, do not let unauthorized persons enter the premises.

3. Notify your supervisor

immediately if you notice that any of your office equipment, such as hardware, drives, etc., are missing. Even if to your knowledge there was no important information on the missing device, report the loss to your supervisor immediately.

4. Be very careful about divulging

company information to outsiders or sources that seem the slightest bit suspicious. Be cautious of opening emails that look strange and if you have doubts, check with the person who has sent the mail personally. If it is an unknown mail address, it may be better not to click on it as it could be a virus or scam. Similarly, don't be liberal with confidential information over the phone.

5. Always ensure that your devices are protected by a strong password.

Password protection is another important security measure you must take when you are at work. Be sure never to leave your phone, laptop or desktop unlocked, as anyone may access these devices and gain hold of your private information or RWRD's data. Be sure to lock your computer if you leave your desk for any length of time. If you have a habit of forgetting passwords, keep them relatable and don't leave them written down anywhere near the desk space.

For more information, see the [Recognize the Signs](#) poster.

Update on Vaccine Shots for County Employees

by Justyn Dillingham

Since the first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine was administered to an Arizonan in December, more than 1 million people in Arizona have received at least one dose of the vaccine. When will the vaccine be available to Pima County employees?

The tentative answer is: soon.

"At the current rate, employees may be able to start getting vaccinated as soon as the end of March," said Pima County Administrator **Chuck Huckelberry** on February 19, 2021.

The schedule will depend on the availability of vaccine doses, he said. More than 200,000 doses of the

vaccine have been administered in Pima County, but low vaccine supplies led to the postponement of many appointments in late February.

Huckelberry also said that the County has amended its Pandemic Leave policy to reflect the fact that some employees may need to recuperate at home after receiving the vaccine.

Many people have reported fever, fatigue, and other mild effects after getting their vaccine shot, particularly after the second dose. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the side

effects are temporarily and will usually not last longer than 48 hours.

In order to ensure that people who are at the highest risk of infection get the vaccine as soon as possible, Arizona is following the CDC's recommendation to offer the vaccine in successive phases. Pima County employees fall into Phase 1, which is currently in progress.

The priority groups are:

- Phase 1A. Healthcare workers and healthcare support occupations, emergency medical services workers, and long-term

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RWRAC MEETING UPDATE

The Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC) held its monthly meeting virtually on February 25, 2021.

Claire Zugmeyer, an ecologist at the Sonoran Institute, presented data from the institute's most recent Living River Report. She discussed the role that the Santa Cruz River plays in our local ecosystem and the increased fish diversity that has happened since upgrades were made to the water reclamation facilities that discharge effluent into the river.

RWRD Director **Jackson Jenkins** gave a brief update about

by *Justyn Dillingham*

development at Canoa Ranch, and talked about meeting with each of the three newest members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors: **Matt Heinz**, **Adelita Grijalva**, and **Rex Scott**.

Division Manager **Michele Milensky**, of the Pima County Finance and Risk Management Department (FRMD), reviewed the 2021 Rate Workbook. She said that there is no need for a rate change any time in the near-future, based on the current numbers.

RWRAC Financial Subcommittee Vice-Chair **Mark Taylor** said that the financial subcommittee has

not met recently, but said that they would meet soon to elect a new chair. Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Subcommittee Chair **Matt Matthewson** said that the CIP subcommittee would not be meeting until June.

FRMD Administration Support Services Manager **Mandy Armenta** provided an expense and revenue summary for Period 7 of the 2020-21 fiscal year. Finally, Mark Taylor provided a report from the Citizens' Water Advisory Committee.

The RWRAC will hold its next meeting virtually on Thursday, March 25, 2021.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

by *Patsy Padilla*

NEW HIRES – Welcome!

Andrew Higgins

Industrial Electrician
Treatment Division

Joshua Murray

WW O&M Technician
Treatment Division

Gabriel Triste

WW Heavy Duty Maintenance Technician
Treatment Division

PROMOTIONS – Congratulations!

Gilbert Aguirre

WW Conveyance System Monitor
Conveyance Division

Armando Cordova

Administrative Services Manager
Treatment Division

Dion Kalastro

WW Heavy Duty Maintenance Technician
Treatment Division

Ian Sentz

WW Conveyance System Monitor
Conveyance Division

William Welchert

WW Heavy Duty Maintenance Technician
Treatment Division

RETIREMENTS – Farewell!

Esther Deschamps

Administrative Specialist, Senior
Administrative Division

W. Marc Brunson

Equipment Operator - Landfill
Treatment Division

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care facility staff and residents.

- Phase 1B (priority). Education and childcare workers, protective services occupations, and adults 65 and older.
- Phase 1B. Essential services and critical industry workers, adults with high-risk conditions in congregate settings.
- Phase 1C. Adults 65 and older, adults living in congregate settings, and adults of any age with high-risk medical conditions.

County employees who fall into the Phase 1A or priority Phase 1B groups may sign up for the vaccine at any

time. All other county employees will be vaccinated in Phase 1B or Phase 1C.

There is no cost for county employees to be vaccinated.

The CDC advises that even after you have received both doses of the vaccine, it is important to continue wearing a mask, social distancing, and taking other precautions to prevent transmission of the virus.



A Note to Our Readers



We're moving, folks! RWRD's Community Relations team has merged with the Pima County Communications Office.

Program Coordinator **Justyn Dillingham** and Special Staff Assistant, Sr. **Lilian von Rago** have moved to the third floor of the Public Works building, where they will join the new Public Works

Communications team. Program Coordinator **Jennifer Tate** has joined the Graphic Design team at the Pima County Print Shop.

In their new roles, Justyn, Lilian, and Jennifer will continue to support RWRD while branching out to serve the rest of Public Works.

Please email publicworkscommunications@pima.gov for all Communications requests, including website updates, in the future.