



THE Pipeline

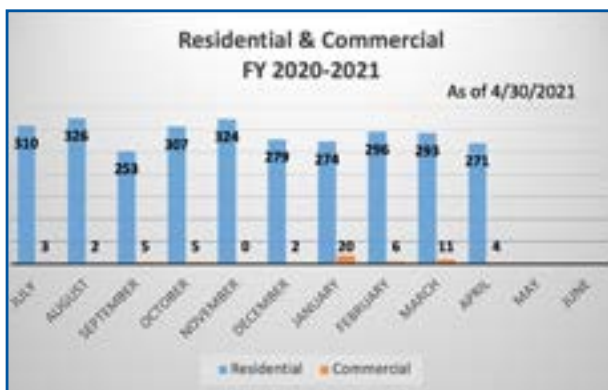
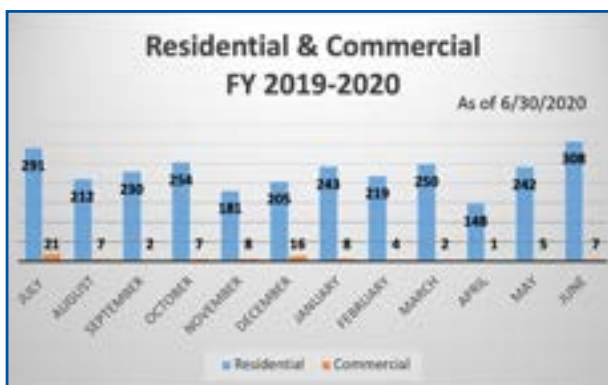
Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department

RWRD Thrives Despite Pandemic

by Lilian von Rago

Before the pandemic, Arizona was one of the fastest-growing states in the country, with most manufacturing taking place in the consumer products, bioscience, ecommerce, and transportation/logistics sectors. It makes sense: Arizona has less density, a great climate, a lack of natural disasters (allowing for continuity of operations), and remains affordable—all of which position the state as a force coming out of the pandemic. The Tucson Metropolitan area's population has exceeded one million, capturing the attention of enterprising businesses wanting to expand or relocate to the area.

In spite of the pandemic and the resulting economic downturn, local development has not slowed, partly because most construction work is done on contract, and those contracts were signed well before the virus arrived. Furthermore, in the spring of 2020, **Gov. Doug Ducey** declared construction essential, so the industry wasn't hindered by lockdown orders. While most of the



Graphic depiction of new connections for the past three Fiscal Years.

economy was down in the second quarter, contracting revenue was up.

Construction goes hand in hand with wastewater revenues, as RWRD derives significant revenues from new customers paying for their share of the system's capacity. In fact, revenue for wastewater utility fees (new connections) has exceeded predictions for two years in a row, as strong demand for residential housing is pushing the market. Single family home permits are up 40% in the suburban areas over last year. There is also significant new commercial development attracted to Tucson's low cost of living and growth-oriented environment.

Tickets to mark sewers ahead of construction saw a small drop at the beginning of the pandemic, but jumped back up quickly and have remained strong throughout the recovery. Developers seem to be putting their money on the appeal of dense urban living outlasting the pandemic. Watch for exciting projects on the horizon as the manufacturing and technology sectors continue to demonstrate an interest in the region.

DIRECTOR'S VIEW



As Director, I receive a great deal of information from the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) about the COVID-19 vaccine. Their information comes from scientists, doctors, nurses, and numerous credible sources including the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I want to take this opportunity to share some myths and facts with you that are circulating about this disease.

- **"I don't trust the vaccine. It happened too fast".** The vaccine **did not** come about at warp speed. There were no shortcuts taken in the vaccine development process. The fact is that messenger RNA (mRNA) technology has been studied for decades. The emergency use authorization could be granted when it was, because of years of study and trial and error. The world was in crisis, and vaccine manufacturers and the scientific community dropped everything to learn the genomic sequence of the coronavirus, and to develop a vaccine.
- **"You are injecting the virus into my body".** None of the COVID-19 vaccines use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The virus is not

by Jackson Jenkins

being injected into your body, the vaccine is training your body to produce antibodies necessary to fight the disease.

- **"The vaccine is all about drug companies trying to get rich".** Drug companies are always trying to get rich, and they will, but trial and error is how innovation happens. That is why drug companies will spend millions and millions of dollars in research. Trials are intentionally broad and conclusive and include people of all races and ethnicities.
- **"I don't want to spend money getting the vaccine".** The vaccine is **free**.
- **"Should I be suspicious that you are not charging me"?** Some things that the government invests in are for the good of the people. Our taxes contributed to the development of the vaccines. Vaccines are prevention.
- **"I heard that the government is altering my DNA".** This is **false**. Injecting RNA into a person doesn't do anything to the DNA of a human cell because it never enters the nucleus of the cell which is where your DNA is kept.
- **"I heard that the vaccine is being used to track people via microchip".** This is **false**. The government is not using the vaccine to track you.

There may be trackers on the vaccine shipment boxes to protect them from theft, but there are no trackers in the vaccines themselves. State governments track where you got the vaccine and which kind you received using a computerized database to make sure you get all recommended doses at the right time. You will also get a card showing that you have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

- **"I don't have the time (or the time off from work) to go get a shot".** In addition to major vaccination centers like Kino Event Center and Tucson Convention Center, Pima County has set up mobile vaccination centers at theatres, churches, book stores, high schools, casinos, colleges, parks, etc. The mobile clinics do not require an appointment, and many hold hours until 8:00 p.m. For locations and hours visit: pima.gov/covid19vaccine

I join the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) in their commitment to ensuring that in 2021 our community is able to resume enjoying the variety of activities previously experienced before the pandemic. For more information, visit the Pima County COVID-19 Vaccine page and click

See "VACCINE" Page 4

The Pipeline, an Award-Winning Publication

CONTRIBUTORS:

Ken Coultas
Justyn Dillingham
Jackson Jenkins
Jenette Lee
Patsy Padilla
Lilian von Rago

EDITOR:

Lilian von Rago

MISSION STATEMENT

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



PIMA COUNTY
WASTEWATER RECLAMATION

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 724-6265.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Please submit your stories for the June issue to pipeline@pima.gov by **Monday, May 17**. If you will be submitting a photo, please send as a separate high-res JPEG attachment.

Warning: Extreme Heat is Imminent

When we think of natural disasters, we think of events like tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and other events that have a high potential to cause significant death and injuries, not to mention property damage. Would you be surprised to know that extreme heat is a natural disaster that causes more than 600 deaths per year? Not surprising to us desert dwellers: extreme heat kills more people than extreme cold.

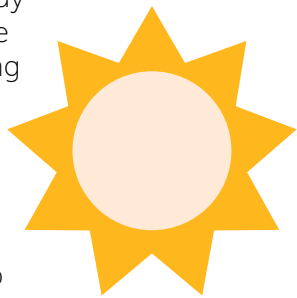
According to Planet Deadly, heat becomes dangerous when the body is unable to effectively cool itself, which leads to heat stroke (hyperthermia). This particularly affects the young, old, and infirm, as cooling requires significant cardiovascular effort.

In May, we can expect to see a significant increase in temperatures leading up to the monsoon season, which officially starts on June 15th. May is generally when we will see our first 100-degree day and have unrelenting sun as it is our driest month, averaging only .1 inches of rain for the month.

RWRD makes every effort to ensure its employees are safe, which includes protecting everyone from heat-related illness.

The following are some tips from the CDC for preventing heat-related illness:

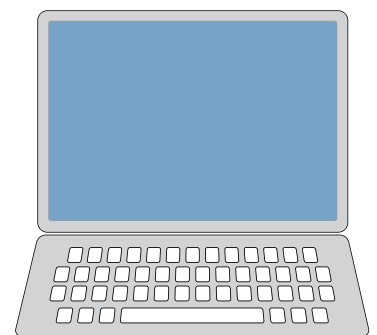
- **Stay Cool** – Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and stay indoors if you can. Schedule activities in the early morning and not during the hottest portion of the day. Do not overexert yourself and try to find shade as often as you can. Wear a broad spectrum sunscreen to help reduce the sun's damaging rays. Also avoid hot and



Stay **Cool**



Stay **Hydrated**



Stay **Informed**

heavy meals as they add heat to your body.

- **Stay Hydrated** – Drink more fluids and do not wait until you are thirsty. Continually hydrate and remember to replace the salt and minerals you lose when you sweat.
- **Stay Informed** – Pay attention to the local weather forecast, including the temperatures you can expect during different times of the day. Use the buddy system by monitoring the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness.

There are many infographics available to post in work areas, including **Beat the Heat: Extreme Heat** from the CDC, which is available at www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/pdf/beready_extreme_heat.pdf. The Safety Office recommends that you talk about heat-related illness often and during safety and tailgate meetings.

May is a beautiful month in Tucson, but it's also the beginning of the significant increase in heat that will last through at least September. Please remember to stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed to best avoid heat-related illness for yourself and your co-workers

SAFETY SHARE

Be Aware of Snakes!

Rattlesnakes are emerging with the heat, please use caution when you are on the field or at our facilities.

Do you have a Safety Share to share?
Email pipeline@pima.gov



2021 Wildfire Season/Wildfires Preparedness Tips

The 2020 wildfire season was reported as the second-worst in Arizona, during which 2,520 wildfires burned nearly 1 million acres across the state, according to the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management.

The spring outlook from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows an expanding drought with a drier than normal April, May and June for a large part of the country from Louisiana to Oregon. Most of Arizona is currently in an extreme to exceptional drought, according to the United States Drought Monitor. Experts report the 2021 wildfire season could be very bad due to drought in the western states, which has led to the third driest year on record and a

severe potential for wildland fires and rapid-fire spread across the state this year. **As of April, the 2021 season has already seen over 250 wildfires across Arizona.**

While there is no need to panic or pack up the family to move to a less “fire-friendly” area, there are several ways that we can prepare ourselves for the 2021 wildfire season.

- 1. Recognize Warnings and Alerts** - Have several ways to receive alerts. Download the FEMA Mobile app (www.fema.gov/about/news-multimedia/mobile-app-text-messages) and receive real-time alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide. Sign up for community alerts by registering for Pima County MyAlerts (MyAlerts.pima.gov).
- 2. Make an Emergency Plan** - Make sure everyone



Wildfires are unplanned fires that burn in natural areas like forests, grasslands or prairies. These dangerous fires spread quickly and can devastate not only natural areas, but also local communities and utilities.

in your household knows and understands what to do if you need to evacuate quickly. **Each family member and pet should have a Go Bag**, a collection of items you may need in the event of an evacuation. A Go Bag should be packed in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or suitcase on wheels and should be easily accessible if you have to leave your home in a hurry. Make sure it is ready to go at all times of the year.

3. Strengthen Your Home – One of the most proactive acts that you can take is to create a fire-resistant zone or Defensible Space that is free of leaves, debris or flammable materials from around your home.

- Trim back any dead/dying tree limbs or shrubs that come within a few feet of your property.
- Remove all fuel sources from within 30 feet of your property. This includes propane tanks, lumber, woodpiles, or anything else that could ignite quickly.
- Keep gutters and porches free of pine needles, leaves, and other debris.

- 4. Know Your Evacuation Zone** - You may have to evacuate quickly due to a wildfire. Learn your evacuation routes: practice with your household and your pets, and identify where you will go. Follow the instructions from local authorities. They will provide the latest recommendations based on the threat to your community and appropriate safety measures. Evacuate immediately if authorities tell you to do so!

“VACCINE” FROM PAGE 1

on the **Myths vs. Facts** button. It’s very comprehensive and provides more detailed answers to these, and other questions you may have.

I also would like to thank every employee who has already received the COVID vaccination. I request that those of you who

still plan to get vaccinated do so as soon as possible. For those who do not plan to get vaccinated, I request that you take this opportunity to reconsider the overall COVID situation and review the many different perspectives on this topic. I hope that if you are not physically or religiously prevented from getting vaccinated, that you carefully consider doing so.



Sustainability and You: A Guide for Employees

Sustainability means to use our current resources responsibly so that they will be there to sustain future generations. There are numerous actions that Pima County employees can take to protect the environment and help to ensure a clean and healthy future for all of us.

One way to begin living a more sustainable life is to ask yourself about the impact of an action before you take it. When you drive your car to work, throw away an empty soda can, or leave the lights on when you leave your office, how does it affect the environment? How much energy does it use, and how much waste does it create? Is there an alternative?

Making sustainable choices can start even before you arrive at work in the morning. Taking the bus instead of driving is a sustainable option that can also save you the money you would spend on parking downtown. Pima County offers a bus pass subsidy program to eligible employees to defray the cost of taking public transportation to work.

Riding your bike to work is an even more environmentally friendly option than taking the



bus, since a bike doesn't produce any emissions at all! Biking is also great for your health. You can find online bike maps, safety tips, and more at www.bikeped.pima.gov.

There are plenty of small steps you can take during the day to avoid waste. Try only to print emails and other documents when absolutely necessary. If you have to print a long document, use both sides of the paper. If you have a window in your office, open the blinds and leave your office lights off whenever possible.

It's also important to recycle paper, aluminum cans, and other suitable items. Plastic food containers, such as yogurt cups, should be rinsed before recycling. Remember to empty your office's recycle bin or box into the rolling bins yourself. You can find a list of what can and cannot be recycled in Tucson at www.tucsonaz.gov/es/recycle.



Time for a break? Use the stairs instead of the elevator to conserve energy—and to get in a little exercise. If you bring your lunch to work, pack it in reusable containers. Instead of using a paper bag, use a lunch box. When it's time to go home, turn off your computer monitor—and your printer, if you have one—and don't forget to turn off the lights before leaving.

RWRAC UPDATE

by Justyn Dillingham

The Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC) held its monthly meeting virtually on April 22, 2021.

Finance and Risk Management Department (FRMD) Director **Michelle Campagne** reviewed FRMD's recommendations for the 2021 Financial Plan, which include issuing \$160 million of new sewer revenue obligations to fund future capital improvement projects for the next four fiscal years, using unrestricted cash to prepay debt for those years, and maintaining the current sewer revenue rates.

The committee voted to support the plan.

RWRD Director **Jackson Jenkins** talked about some of the key performance indicators (KPIs) that the department is tracking. He reviewed the department's results in turnover, vacancies, absenteeism, sanitary sewer overflows, recordable injuries, and other important KPIs.

RWRD Senior Business Intelligence Analyst **Belinda Gamboa-Felix** and Senior Program Manager **Rudy Daniels** explained how RWRD is using the software program Power BI to better manage its data.

FRMD Administration Support Services Manager **Mandy Armenta** provided an expense and revenue summary for Period 9 of the fiscal year 2020/21. Finally, **Alison Jones** of the Citizens Water Advisory Committee provided a summary of the committee's most recent meeting.

The RWRAC will hold its next meeting on Thursday, May 27. The meeting will once again be held virtually. To view the agendas, minutes, and videos of previous meetings, visit the RWRAC page on www.pima.gov/wastewaterreclamation.

Conveyance Honors Patrick Smith as the EoQ

Patrick Smith, Utility Maintenance Worker I, is the Conveyance Division's Employee of the Quarter (EoQ) for the first quarter of 2021. Patrick was chosen by Conveyance Division supervisors and managers, all of whom respect and appreciate the "can-do, let's get it done" attitude that he brings to work every day. He has only been with the Department for two years, but he is definitely leaving his mark.

Patrick was born and raised in Tucson and has a construction and roofing background. Like many of us, he learned from his dad. Later, while seeking other opportunities, Patrick adapted to the existing economic climate, and began working at a call center. His mindset is always to learn as much as he can, and give 110 percent to anything that he does.

At RWRD, Patrick enjoys



Patrick Smith is presented his EoQ certificate by his supervisor George O'Hagin.

operating the vactor and combo trucks. He volunteered to work at night during the early months of the pandemic to get the experience, as well as to help the department out in a time of need. Patrick is very interested in enhancing his skills, and studies to achieve advanced ADEQ certifications. Among his mentors are Utility Maintenance Worker III **Manny Medina**, **Joe Flores**, and **Angel Tapia**; Utility

Maintenance Worker II **Steve Celaya**; and PW Crew Supervisor **Arturo Aguillon** and **Derek Harrington** (who recently left the Department).

Outside of work, Patrick is a father of five children, and a football fan, especially a fan of the Denver Broncos. It is then fitting for him to quote the late legendary football coach **Vince Lombardi**, who said, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence."

WW Operations Assistant Manger, **George O'Hagin**, his supervisor, said, "Patrick is an outstanding young man with a great drive to become the best utility maintenance worker he can become. He has worked very hard to move up in the ranks while being here a short period of time. His hard work is appreciated by all the supervisors and managers alike."

COMINGS AND GOINGS

NEW HIRES – Welcome!

Miriam Aleman-Crouch

WW Laboratory Technician
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Angel Duran-Rodriguez

Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

Christopher Hopkins

WW Mechanical Maintenance Tech.
Treatment Division

Devon Pilgram

Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

Armando Smith

Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

by Patsy Padilla

Matthew Woodhall

Industrial Wastewater Inspector
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Francisco Zavala

Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

Jeffrey Zimmerman

Utility Maintenance Worker I
Conveyance Division

PROMOTIONS – Congratulations!

Neil Bailey

Utility Coordinator
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Luis Cantu

Equipment Operator/Landfill
Treatment Division

John Luper

Contract Specialist
Treatment Division

Adrian Magallanes

Trades Maintenance Specialist
Treatment Division

Savannah Perno

WW Laboratory Chemist
Technical Services & Engineering Division

Matthew Tolley

Supply Technician, Principal
Treatment Division

RETIREMENTS – None