

**REGIONAL WASTEWATER RECLAMATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RWRAC) MEETING
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Thursday, December 17, 2020
8:00 a.m.**

Members Present: Steve Foley, Bill Katzel, Rob Kulakofsky, Matt Matthewson, Armando Membrila, Asia Philbin, Mark Taylor, Ann Marie Wolf, Claire Zucker

Members Absent: John Lynch, Corin Marron, Scott Oldendorph

Others Present:

Roman Aguirre (Member of Public), Melanie Alvarez (PAG), Mandy Armenta (FRMD), Laura Arnold (RWRD), Marla Berry (RWRD), Adam Bliven (RWRD), Victoria Buchinger (PCAO), Michelle Campagne (FRMD), Isai Centeno (FRMD), Jennifer Coyle (RWRD), Justyn Dillingham (RWRD), Drew Eppehimer (UofA), Barbara Escobar (RWRD), Mike Gerstenberger (RWRD), Andrew Greenhill (Tucson Water), Jodi Hoskinson (Jacobs Engineering), Jackson Jenkins (RWRD), Adam Krantz (NACWA), Veronica Lopez (RWRD), Julie McWilliams (RWRD), Richard Miranda (RWRD), Xavier Rendon (FRMD), Mary Valencic (RWRD), Caroline Vargas (RWRD), Eric Wieduwilt (RWRD)

A. Call to Order / Roll Call

Claire Zucker, Vice-Chair, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC), called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Veronica Lopez, Program Coordinator, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department (RWRD) took roll call and a quorum was present.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Call to the Audience – There were no comments from the audience.

Ms. Zucker provided virtual meeting guideline reminders to everyone.

D. Safety Share

Jackson Jenkins, Director, RWRD, stated when providing assistance to others to ensure it is safe to do so for not only their safety, but yours as well. Ms. Zucker encouraged everyone to continue to wear masks and maintain social distancing when possible.

E. Approval of Minutes – Meeting Minutes for November 19, 2020

ACTION: Bill Katzel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 19, 2020 with a minor correction to Steve Foley's name. Asia Philbin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Discussion/Action

1. National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Presentation of RWRD Awards

Ms. Zucker introduced Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer, NACWA. Mr. Krantz stated NACWA represents approximately 350 wastewater treatment agencies around the country and RWRD has

been a NACWA member since 1980. Mr. Krantz congratulated RWRD on the many prestigious awards the department has received. One of the most recent awards RWRD has received is the Peak Performance Platinum Award. Platinum Awards are given after five consecutive years of compliance. Mr. Krantz listed the awards RWRD received:

- Agua Nueva Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) – Gold Award
- Tres Rios WRF – Gold Award
- Mount Lemmon WRF – Platinum 12 Award
- Green Valley Biological Nutrient Removal Oxidation Ditch – Platinum 16 Award

Mr. Krantz stated that despite the challenges with COVID-19, the department continues to have excellent performance and that is something to be extremely proud of. Mr. Krantz explained the Utility of the Future Recognition Award was created by NACWA to showcase the innovation taken place at the various utilities. RWRD won this award in 2016 and again in 2020. Ms. Zucker congratulated Mr. Jenkins and the entire RWRD staff and thanked Mr. Krantz for taking the time to present these awards to the department.

2. Ecology Impacts Along the Santa Cruz River Presentation

Drew Eppheimer, PhD Student, University of Arizona, provided a presentation on the ecological impacts along the Santa Cruz River. Mr. Eppheimer explained some parts of the riverbed has substantial flow thanks to the effluent discharge from the local WRF's, Tres Rios WRF and Agua Nueva WRF.

Mr. Eppheimer discussed the impact the treated wastewater has on the aquatic macroinvertebrates that are living in the river and the study that was performed. Aquatic invertebrates are routinely used in biomonitoring, as is required by the Clean Water Act. Macroinvertebrate sampling was conducted both monthly and seasonally at 10 sites. Mr. Eppheimer displayed a graph of all of the various aquatic macroinvertebrates that were found in the Santa Cruz River. To date, over 150 unique aquatic invertebrates have been found. Mr. Eppheimer continued to discuss the findings of the study. The study revealed that there is a significant amount of microplastic pollution in the Santa Cruz River, which consists of fiber, fragments, film, and beads. The highest microplastics found is that of fiber. Mr. Eppheimer also stated that the microplastics have been found in the stomachs of mosquito fish.

In conclusion, the Santa Cruz River demonstrates the reality of effluent use to restore desert rivers and the potential for future management for environmental benefits. It also illustrates the remaining challenges of effluent management for ecosystems: nutrient dynamics, dissolved oxygen, stream drying, and microplastics. Mr. Eppheimer stated effluent discharge provides flowing water in what would be otherwise dry riverbeds with no water and no habitat. The benefits of effluent discharge outweighs the few challenges. The committee asked various questions.

3. Director's Update

a. Pandemic Update

Mr. Jenkins stated currently RWRD has just under 400 employees and to date approximately 25 employees have tested positive for COVID-19 and all have returned to work. Most of the employees who contracted the virus seem to have contracted it from external sources outside of work. Mr. Jenkins stated 2-3 employees seem to have contracted the virus from a co-worker. Due to COVID-19, there have been some staffing challenges that the department has had to address, but overall it has not been anything detrimental.

Pima County has recently approved a Stay-At-Home Plan to help curb the virus. This plan will begin December 21, 2020 and will run through January 10, 2021. Some RWRD staff will be on a reduced work schedule, but most of the department will function under normal operations. Mr. Jenkins stated he holds a weekly meeting with RWRD management to ensure all are kept informed on any and all processes, and to communicate any concerns that may arise.

Barbara Escobar, Program Manager, RWRD, discussed a graph displaying the Agua Nueva wastewater based epidemiology. Dr. Walter Bentancourt is performing the analysis, which is being performed at the West Center. Ms. Escobar stated the graph shows that there has been a huge increase of COVID-19 in the influent in the recent weeks.

b. Nuresys Update

Mr. Jenkins stated this is the process identified in which to harvest struvite to prevent it from building up in the pipes. The department went with the Nuresys technology and it has been installed at the Tres Rios WRF and it has been up and running for approximately a month. Mr. Jenkins explained the contractor must do a 60-day demonstration that the facility achieves certain expectations. The contractor wanted to make a few adjustments before starting the 60-day test, which should begin in the near future. Mr. Jenkins stated the department is already seeing the benefits, and as of now, this process is having a positive impact on the treatment plant.

c. Green Valley Crane Incident

Mr. Jenkins informed the committee of an incident at the Green Valley WRF in which a contractor caused property damage. The contractor accepted responsibility for the damage and will cover the repair costs.

d. Green Valley Aquifer Protection Permit (APP) Modification

The Green Valley WRF has the third largest flow out of all the facilities that RWRD operates. It sees approximately 2 million gallons per day. RWRD has a contract with Robson in which the department sells 1 million gallons of effluent. Mr. Jenkins explained there are two treatment processes at this facility, the oxidation ditch and the lagoons that treat some of the flow. The department wants to increase the capacity of the oxidation ditch to 2.8 million gallons a day. Mr. Jenkins stated the department has submitted the application to increase the capacity. Currently, A+ water is processed at this facility and it all goes to recharge. The department will be going from A+ to B+ water and this process will allow the department to recharge more water to the County and allow more water to the oxidation ditch.

e. Tres Rios – Jacobs Related Projects

Mr. Jenkins stated odor equipment will be placed in the front of the Tres Rios WRF. The department continues to make overall improvements to the facility where needed.

4. CIP Subcommittee Report

Mr. Matthewson stated the CIP Subcommittee December meeting was rescheduled and the meeting is now scheduled for Friday, January 8, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

5. Financial Sub-Committee Report

There were no updates to report.

6. Fiscal Year 2020/21 Expense and Revenue Summary

Mandy Armenta, Administrative Support Services Manager, Finance and Risk Management Department provided the Fiscal Year 2020/21 Expense and Revenue Summary for Period 5. The total operating and maintenance budget is at \$82.5 million and the forecast is at \$83 million.

7. Citizens' Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) Report – Meeting Report and Tucson Water Activities

Mark Taylor, Member, RWRAC, provided an overview of what was discussed at the most recent CWAC meeting, which was held on December 2, 2020. Mr. Taylor announced that Timothy Thomure will be returning to his position as the Tucson Water Director very soon. Mr. Taylor stated a main topic of discussion was the Water Service Area Policy, which is scheduled to go before the Mayor and Council on January 20, 2020. The CWAC held Chair and Vice-Chair elections, in which Mr. Taylor will serve as the Chair. Andrew Greenhill, Tucson Water, stated the Mayor and Council will review and discuss the differential rates at the January 5, 2021 meeting.

G. Future Agenda Items

- Capital Improvement Program Update
- Technical Services and Engineering Update

H. Call to the Audience – There were no comments from the audience.

I. Adjournment

ACTION: Mark Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Armando Membrilla seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.