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Newsletter of the Trinity River Authority of Texas

# Trinity River Authority named WEAT Exemplary Employer



# Bennett elected WEAT president

Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System Project Manager John Bennett is the newly elected president of the Water Environment Association of Texas.

This honor caps more than 20 years of service to WEAT, with involvement in Operations Challenge, professional wastewater operator training, safety training and progressive leadership positions on the local executive committee and the state board.

Shortly after joining WEAT, Bennett established TRA's Operations Challenge team, the CReWSers, and served as captain for eight years until retiring in 2003.

He founded WEAT's safety committee in 1999 and went on to become chair of the state professional wastewater operator committee, where he was responsible for organizing and leading the Texas Operations Challenge competition, held in conjunction with the annual Texas Water conference. Bennett broadened his involvement to the national level when he was called upon to serve

as special assistant to the Water Environment Federation Operations Challenge competition committee in 2004 and 2005. He was then selected to chair the local competition committee for the WEFTEC.06 national conference in Dallas in 2006.

Soon after, the North Texas section of WEAT elected Bennett to leadership positions on its executive committee, from vice president to president and now, past president. Bennett served as WEAT board president-elect in 2011 before taking office as president this year.

As a testament to his dedication to WEF and WEAT, Bennett received the Arthur Sidney Bedell Award in 2011 for outstanding contributions to the water environment profession as well as to the state and national professional organizations.

Bennett has worked in wastewater for 25 years. Immediately after graduating from high school in 1986, he joined Central Regional Wastewater System as a seasonal grounds care employee.

Within weeks he was promoted to maintenance mechanic I and then advanced to chief maintenance mechanic three years later. Bennett was named manager of DCRWS in 2003. Under his leadership, DCRWS was recently recognized with a National Association of Clean Water Agencies Platinum Award for seven years of continuous compliance with its discharge permit.

Throughout his career, Bennett has accrued more than 1,200 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality-approved training hours and a class A wastewater certification. He holds an associate's degree in management from Tarrant County College, where he was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Bennett shares his experience and training with operators at TRA and throughout the state, teaching a variety of maintenance, wastewater operations and safety classes. He is also an approved instructor for TCEQ-accredited courses, and



**DCRWS Project Manager John Bennett**

has encouraged hundreds of his colleagues to pursue professional development and to work safely. In addition, Bennett has given dozens of technical presentations at seminars and conferences nationwide.

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## Trinity River Authority named WEAT Exemplary Employer



*On the cover: WEAT President David Briggs, left, and WEF Representative Scott Trotter, right, present TRA General Manager Kevin Ward and Northern Region Manager Fiona Allen with the Exemplary Employer Award. Above: TRA was honored with many other awards at the 2012 Texas Water conference. See stories and more photos on page 2.*

The Water Environment Association of Texas has honored the Trinity River Authority with the Exemplary Employer Award for supporting and facilitating employee involvement and activities in WEAT and its national counterpart, the Water Environment Federation.

Throughout its history, TRA has actively encouraged its employees to contribute thousands of hours to fulfill leadership, technical and creative roles within WEF and WEAT.

Staff members have served in officer positions, as committee chairs, and as program leaders at national, state and local levels.

They have shared technical knowledge with WEAT members one-on-one, on subcommittees, in presentations and in facility tours – and TRA personnel have helped both organizations document and publicize activities.

In addition, TRA employees have promoted wastewater treatment excellence through their involvement in the Operations Challenge competition – both as team members and through their leadership in developing the program into a nationally recognized powerhouse.

## TRA welcomes new director



Gov. Rick Perry recently appointed Harold E. Jenkins to a two-year term on the TRA board of directors, representing Dallas County. Jenkins, from Irving, serves on the board's legal committee and is one of four directors representing Dallas County. He is president of CTJ Maintenance Inc., a commercial maintenance and labor staffing company. In addition to being a member of the Dallas Building Owners and Managers Association, the Dallas and Irving/Las Colinas Chambers of Commerce, and the Texas Judicial Compensation Commission, Jenkins is also a past board member of the Texas Workforce Investment Council, the Bear Creek Development Corporation and the Dallas County Child Welfare Board. He earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University.

## Cleveland earns WEAT Pillars of the Profession Award



The Water Environment Association of Texas recently honored Patty Cleveland, TRA's Northern Region assistant manager, with its Pillars of the Profession Award. The Pillars Award is reserved for longtime members of WEAT or the Water Environment Federation who have demonstrated meaningful and substantial contributions toward the improvement of the water environment through a distinguished career in the wastewater treatment or water quality industry.

Cleveland is a 36-year veteran and a steadfast leader in the water and wastewater industry. She is a longtime participant and supporter

of WEF, WEAT and the American Water Works Association.

Cleveland has fulfilled many leadership roles in WEF and WEAT, including serving as president of WEAT. She is also a past president of the Texas Association of Clean Water Agencies.

Cleveland repeatedly has earned recognition for her achievements, including eight WEAT Service Awards, the WEF Arthur Sidney Bedell Award, the Quarter Century Operators Club and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Presidents Award for outstanding service and committee involvement.

## Ten Mile Creek Regional Wastewater System biosolids program wins award



Left to right: WEAT President David Briggs, TMCRRS Chief Maintenance Mechanic Basilio Chavez, Chief Operator Sam Colvin, Project Manager Ed Mach, Chief Operator Donald Thompson and WEF Representative Scott Trotter.

The Water Environment Association of Texas recently presented TRA's Ten Mile Creek Regional Wastewater System with the Ronald B. Sieger Biosolids Management Award for significant accomplishments in the field of biosolids technology and management practices.

Six years ago, TRA undertook a comprehensive overhaul of the biosolids program at TMCRRS. Wanting to provide sound environmental stewardship, along with cost savings for customers, TRA sought innovative design solutions that would be a good fit for the system's existing facilities and conditions.

Features of the resulting process include a new solids dewatering facility; the conversion of a former sludge storage lagoon into a wet-weather storage basin; and future improvements to anaerobic digesters.

Benefits include tremendous cost savings on everything from transportation and disposal of sludge to construction and daily operations and maintenance. The wet-weather basin will also protect the environment by preventing sanitary sewer overflows. Future plans include improvements to further decrease maintenance expenses and produce fuel to offset energy costs for the anaerobic digester heating process.

## Mangham receives environmental sustainability award



The Water Environment Association of Texas recently honored TRA Planning and Environmental Management Assistant Webster Mangham with the Alan H. Plummer Environmental Sustainability Award. This award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions in the field of environmental sustainability practices.

Mangham joined TRA in 2005 as a water quality technician and advanced to his current position in 2006. His main duties include study design; coordination and execution of river field studies; GIS analysis and database management; and report writing for TRA's planning and environmental management division.

Mangham's most impressive contribution to date was an unprecedented study and three-month data-gathering effort on the main stem of the Trinity River during a record-setting drought and heat wave. He and his team covered hundreds of miles by boat, collecting samples, taking measurements and notes, snapping georeferenced photos and characterizing habitats. In his quest to complete the study, Mangham went well beyond the call of duty, once working a stretch of 45 consecutive days with no time off while temperatures in the field soared above 110 degrees.

To ensure the success of the project, Mangham partnered with private consultants as well as other public agencies, including the Texas Water Development Board and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. These partnerships helped ensure the collection of sound and credible data that will be vital to understanding the ecological health of the river and making science-based conclusions regarding a host of water-related issues in the Trinity River basin.

Prior to joining TRA, Mangham served as a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Central Oklahoma and a master's degree from the University of North Texas.

## PID earns WEAT/AWWA Watermark Awards



PID received four Watermark Awards for communications. Public Information Assistant Debbie Bronson and Public Information Officer Michelle Clark accepted the awards at the Texas Water 2012 conference in San Antonio.

TRA's public information division has earned four Watermark Awards for producing top quality communications pieces. The Water Environment Association of Texas, together with the Texas section of the American Water Works Association, presents Watermark Awards each year as part of the Texas Water conference, with the goal of heightening awareness among water resource professionals of the importance of effective communication.

TRA's winning pieces included the 2010 annual report; PowerPoint templates and graphic standards; a summer 2011 drought series in *inTRA*; and TRA's participation, along with 17 other sponsors, in Hamline University's *Waters to the Sea: Trinity River* educational software.

## Finance by the numbers

Every day, TRA's finance division works behind the scenes processing invoices, writing checks and making payments and wire transfers. In FY 2011, finance staff racked up some impressive numbers.

950

Wire Transfers

1,530

Automated Payments

13,180

Checks

37,570

Invoices

\$355  
MILLION

Paid

# CReWSers win all five Operations Challenge events to bring home 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive state championship

The Trinity River Authority CReWSers Operations Challenge team swept the state competition held in April at the Texas Water conference in San Antonio, taking first place in all five events and claiming its 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive state championship.

Central Regional Wastewater System Project Manager Bill Tatum believes the team's focus on accuracy and efficiency has been a key factor in its unprecedented success.

"Over the last 15 years, the team has won first place in 57 of the 75 events it has competed in at the state level. In other words, these guys win 76 percent of their events, and that's impressive," said Tatum. "But it's even more impressive that they have finished in the top three in 74 of the 75 events, or 99 percent of the time."

The CReWSers have only swept the state Operations Challenge competition four times in their history – the last time was in 2003. When asked about the team's improved performance, Team Captain Dale Burrow said they were determined to perform at their highest level after finishing third at the national competition last fall and

losing a key event to another Texas team.

"We were disappointed in our third-place showing at nationals last year," he said. "We knew the Austin Dillo Xpress would repeat its winning performance at state, and it would be an uphill battle to hang on to the championship."

CRWS Manager of System Operations and Maintenance Mike Young, who trains the CReWSers and helps them prepare for competition, pushed the team extra hard with strenuous conditioning workouts and numerous practice sessions.

"All the training paid off, but now that we've won state, Mike will push us even harder," said Burrow. "He's already told us we'll have to improve over our state performance to win at nationals."

In addition to winning the Operations Challenge competition, the team also won the Vitraulic exhibit event, a new contest separate from the Operations Challenge competition. For this event, teams are given parts and equipment, tools and a picture of a structure. They are required to assemble the structure using the parts provided. No further instructions are given. Burrow was

pleased with how well the team worked together on the event.

"We've had the same four core team members since 2005," said Burrow. "We know all our strengths and weaknesses and were able to delegate each task to the best person and make quick work of it."

This summer CReWSers team members Jacob Burwell and Steve Price will compete with team members from the Dallas Aquatechs and the Austin Dillo Xpress at an informal regional competition in Atlantic City, New Jersey. While regional contests do not count toward the team's official record, the events are designed and judged much the same as the national competition and therefore provide a preview of what to expect.

In October, the CReWSers will travel to New Orleans to compete at the national Operations Challenge competition at WEFTEC.12.

TRA's team has won four national championships and will be working hard to stay in contention this year. If you attend WEFTEC.12, stop by the competition and cheer for the CReWSers. Read about the national competition on TRA's website at [www.trinityra.org](http://www.trinityra.org) and in the October/November issue of *inTRA*.

## About Operations Challenge

Operations Challenge, supported statewide by the Water Environment Association of Texas and internationally by the Water Environment Federation, is designed to showcase the skills and education of wastewater operators. Four- and five-member teams compete in five events: laboratory, collection system, pump and motor maintenance, safety and process control. Each event requires technical knowledge and physical skill, and teams are judged for both accuracy and time.



The CReWSers display a winning combination of brains, brawn and speed in the collections repair event. Seen here from left to right are Senior Maintenance Mechanic David Brown; Chief Operator Steve Price; Construction Inspector II Jake Burwell; and Interceptor System Specialist and Team Captain Dale Burrow.



TRA management receives the state championship trophy for supporting Operations Challenge. Seen here from left to right are DCRWS Project Manager John Bennett; CRWS Manager of System Operations and Maintenance Mike Young; CRWS Project Manager Bill Tatum; General Manager Kevin Ward; Northern Region Assistant Manager Patty Cleveland; and Northern Region Manager Fiona Allen.

## Texas Shoot Out



Karen Stafford-Brown, Northern Region manager of engineering services, left, and Christian Garcia, CRWS maintenance engineer, saw through 14-inch PVC pipes in the Texas Shoot Out pipe-cutting contest.

## Junior Meter Madness



TRA's intern from the Arlington Independent School District, Javier Celestial, in the green T-shirt, assembled a water meter at lightning speed in the Junior Meter Madness competition.

# General Manager's Message

## Water industry professionals investigate new approaches to meeting infrastructure funding gap

In June, water industry professionals from around the world are scheduled to assemble in Dallas as part of ACE12, the American Water Works Association's annual conference and exposition. Here, members of the water community will gather to share our unique knowledge, experiences and best practices. I'm honored to have been asked to speak as part of a panel discussion on Leadership in a Shifting Landscape, and one of the key areas of emphasis will be an examination of the state of water and wastewater infrastructure and related funding across the United States. It's an issue that often keeps water professionals awake at night – how will we keep up with the demands of our aging infrastructure systems?

In many cases, the drinking water treatment plants and distribution lines, sewer lines and storage facilities our nation relies on for clean and safe water are aging to the point of deterioration and even failure. In fact, in 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers graded the United States' wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, giving both systems a grade of D-. When we consider that some components of our nation's water infrastructure are more than 100 years old, this isn't surprising – but to ensure that we can continue to depend on the health, environmental, social and economic benefits of clean and safe water, sustainable infrastructure is essential.

In its *Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure Gap Analysis*, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that if capital investment and operations-and-

maintenance costs remain at current levels, the gap in funding for years 2000-2019 could reach \$263 billion for drinking water infrastructure and \$270 billion for wastewater infrastructure. And this assumes no changes in state or federal regulatory guidelines. The Congressional Budget Office has also concluded that "current funding from all levels of government and current revenues generated from ratepayers will not be sufficient to meet the nation's future demand for water infrastructure."

But all hope is not lost – we certainly aren't helpless in the face of this nationwide challenge, but we may have to change some long-held paradigms about how we fund water and wastewater systems. Those daunting figures represent what can happen if the challenges of deferred maintenance, inadequate capital replacement and a generally aging infrastructure are ignored. At TRA, we have no intention of doing that; nor do our customers or our partners. And the same EPA report that estimates the funding gap also indicates that it largely disappears if municipalities increase clean and drinking water spending at a real rate of growth of three percent per year.

Prior to the late 1980s and early 1990s, the federal government shouldered much of the financial burden of infrastructure development through a series of temporary subsidies. Then in 1987 and 1996, Congress enacted the clean-water and drinking-water state revolving loan fund programs. The SRF programs authorize the EPA to award annual capitalization

grants to states, who use them, plus a 20-percent state match and other state funds, to provide loans and other assistance to public water systems. Communities repay their loans into the fund, thus replenishing it and making resources available for other communities. In Texas' case, the program is administered by the Texas Water Development Board.

But federal assistance has not kept pace with demand. Between 1997 and 2008, Congress appropriated approximately \$9.5 billion for the SRF program. This 11-year total is just slightly more than a single annual capital investment gap for each of those years as calculated by the EPA. And throughout this process, most clean water and drinking water systems across the nation have kept end users' water rates artificially low – many times by deferring much-needed maintenance.

At TRA, we make a tremendous continued effort to stay ahead of our infrastructure needs while keeping costs reasonable for our customers. During this current fiscal year, we're scheduled to begin 20 construction projects throughout the Trinity River basin to protect the integrity of our systems, and we have more than \$400 million in capital projects currently under way. Since 2004, we've invested more than \$750 million in improvements to our Central Regional Wastewater System alone – mostly using SRF funds.

Texas' regional approach to statewide planning to meet water and wastewater needs affords us regular opportunities to examine



General Manager J. Kevin Ward

how and where our state is growing, along with how the funds at our disposal can best be dispatched to meet those needs. But unless we're prepared as a nation to raise end-user water rates to allow full recapture of relevant costs, we need to investigate new financing models. Those include options like lifting state caps on private activity bonds; creating a Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Authority; establishing a Clean Water Trust Fund; developing public/private banks, government-sponsored enterprises or a Federal Water Infrastructure Bank; or enhancing existing mechanisms like the SRF program, state bond banks and federal guarantees of utility bonds and loans.

Nationwide, the dialogue is already open – with legislators, regulators, utilities and the financial community – and I look forward to hearing feedback on this issue from my colleagues in water management from all over the world at ACE12. Rest assured that TRA will keep its stakeholders apprised of our efforts to find appropriate ways to finance the essential services we provide throughout the Trinity River basin every day.

## TRA directors visit operating projects



Christina Melton Crain, Fiona Allen, Martha Hernandez, Ed Mach, Joe McCleskey, Kevin Ward and William Collins Jr. examine the outfall at Ten Mile Creek Regional Wastewater System.

In early May, Trinity River Authority facilities throughout the Trinity River basin hosted TRA directors Dennis "Joe" McCleskey of Trinity County; Christina Melton Crain and Harold E. Jenkins, both of Dallas County; and Martha Hernandez and William Collins Jr. of Tarrant County in order to give them a behind-the-scenes look at their operations.

The group, accompanied by General Manager Kevin Ward and

Northern Region Manager Fiona M. Allen, P.E., spent a full day in North Texas visiting all five wastewater treatment facilities, plus the Tarrant County Water Supply Project. They then spent a second full day, hosted by Southern Region Manager Jim Sims, touring TRA's three Southern Region water treatment facilities, along with Wolf Creek Park, Tigerville Park and Lake Livingston Dam.

"These tours were an amazing



Kevin Ward, Mark Waters, William Collins Jr., Joe McCleskey and Harold E. Jenkins get a close-up view of the Lake Livingston Dam tainter gate.

opportunity to see the good work that TRA does every day – work that is so important to the health and well-being of our Texas communities," said Hernandez. "I especially loved getting to meet more of the TRA staff and pat them on the back for making sure the communities we serve have access to safe, clean water. Our employees are outstanding."

The tour group saw everything

from the use of bar screens and aeration basins to laboratory tests; Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition equipment; and the operation of gates at Lake Livingston Dam.

"This was a great experience," said McCleskey. "We hear so much about operations during our board and committee meetings, but seeing everything firsthand really drives home the level of expertise at every TRA facility."

**Employee Milestones**

**New Hires**

LLP welcomes Robert Hall as maintenance helper.

TMCRWS is excited to have Michael Minkley as operator I.

LRF welcomes George McDonald as park ranger and William Stripling as office clerk.

**Current Events**

TMCRWS Senior Maintenance Mechanic Martin Madaras earned his B wastewater license.

CRWS Operator II Paul Hopkins earned his B wastewater license.



*Carol, daughter of Internal Auditor Ann Carver, recently attained the rank of major in the U.S. Air Force.*



*Allison K. Bennett, daughter of DCRWS Manager John Bennett, recently graduated from Martin High School. Allison plans to study nursing at Tarrant County College.*



*Chad Alec, son of LLP Security Guard Cecil Alec Jr., recently was named to the dean's list at Angelina College. Chad has completed his studies in HVAC and will begin electromechanical technology studies this fall. Chad is also a proud member of the Coushatta tribe of Louisiana.*



*Lindsay Shelton, wife of Construction Inspector II Troy Shelton, recently earned an associate's degree in nursing from Tarrant County College.*



*Christopher Gonzales and Jeffrey Ramsey, both CRWS electronic technicians II, earned praise from the Grand Prairie police and fire department after they came to the rescue of a biker that fell from his motorcycle near Highway 360. Gonzales and Ramsey immediately implemented the emergency response plan from their safety training. They blocked off the intersection with their truck's safety lights and traffic cones to protect the biker from oncoming traffic. They then helped the crash victim to a safe place and summoned emergency personnel, staying until help arrived.*



*MCRWS Operator II David Scott welcomed his newest granddaughter on April 13. Charlotte Eloise McAdams was 6 pounds, 12 ounces and 19.29 inches at birth. Her proud parents are Michael and Nikki McAdams.*



*Michelle Davis, daughter of NR Senior Secretary Susan Davis, recently earned an associate's degree in radiologic technology from Tarrant County College. Michelle graduated with honors and is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. She is a state-certified radiologic technologist and is currently employed at both Huguley and Arlington Memorial hospitals. Michelle is also working toward a certification in magnetic resonance imaging.*



*Congratulations to CRWS Maintenance Operations Chief Jimmy Chadwick and his wife, Pam, on their 29th wedding anniversary on May 7.*

**General Office employees strive for improved health with Biggest Loser competition**



*Back row, left to right: Pam Thomas, senior secretary; Charles Burns, information systems analyst; Shawn Ballard, GIS support technician. Front row, left to right: Susan Davis, senior secretary; Melissa Saniuk, senior accountant, Dr. Hong Wu, planning and environmental management assistant.*

Round Two of the Trinity River Authority General Office's Biggest Loser Competition is in full swing, with participants eager to continue meeting their fitness and weight-loss goals.

The first round of the employee-led weight-loss competition began in January and ran for twelve weeks. Due to popular demand, a second round began in May. NBC's TV show *The Biggest Loser* has inspired weight-loss competitions in other workplaces throughout the country, and TRA's Central Regional Wastewater System held a similar contest in 2008.

Unlike the series on television, participants each contribute a fee to the prize pool. The highest percentage of weight lost determines the winner. A neutral observer confidentially records participant weight every two weeks for a total of seven weigh-in appointments. Each contestant may skip two of the appointments, but must weigh in a minimum of five times to be eligible for the prize. Participants

must also pay a fee of one dollar per pound gained to sweeten the prize pool. Contestants track their weight privately, but individual percentages and the total pounds lost by the group are posted after official weigh-ins.

Contestants meet their goals in a variety of ways, including diet and exercise. Some walk, jog, run, lift weights, hike and work out with fitness DVDS. Others choose to engage in competitive sports. "I developed a basketball schedule that I continued after the first round ended and have seen my weight continue to decline," said Shawn Ballard, GIS support technician.

The group lost 98 pounds during the first round of the competition and voted to keep going. The contest has helped many participants keep their weight-loss goals in focus, while encouraging others to meet theirs. "Knowing total pounds the group lost is encouraging and creates a sort of camaraderie. We all want everyone to succeed," said Senior Accountant Melissa Saniuk. "Twelve weeks of effective accountability is a great motivator."

## TRA staff travel to Buenos Aires for Argentine Operations Challenge

Central Regional Wastewater System Interceptor System Specialist Dale Burrow and Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System Project Manager John Bennett recently traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to participate in the Olimpiadas Sanitarias, the Argentine version of Operations Challenge.

The Water Environment Federation sponsored Burrow, along with three other distinguished Operations Challenge competitors, to represent the United States in the Argentine competition. Burrow is captain of the Trinity River Authority's Operations Challenge team, the CReWSers, one of the most successful U.S. teams. He has played a crucial role in the CReWSers' 15 consecutive state championships, as well as their four national wins.

Bennett, recently elected president of the Water Environment Association of Texas, a member association of WEF, accompanied the U.S. Operations Challenge team. Bennett was chosen for the honor on the strength of his long-term and extensive involvement with Operations Challenge at both state and national levels. He was instrumental in building the

CReWSers, and since retiring from the team has continued to support Operations Challenge, coordinating competitions and mentoring teams.

The Argentine Operations Challenge is similar to the U.S. competition in some ways and vastly different in others. Both competitions feature the same five events executed the same way, although Argentina uses an older version of the events and slightly different equipment in some instances.

"They use the equipment and rules that we did in 2003," said Burrow. "And naturally, they follow Argentine standards and equipment if they are different from the U.S. versions."

For example, in the U.S. collections event, two separate pipes are joined with a rubber gasket; the Argentine teams join the pipes with a bolted coupling.

Burrow found the most challenging aspects of the Argentine Operations Challenge to be language and units of measure.

"All written portions of the competition were in Spanish and all measurements were metric," he said.

Jeannette Brown, past WEF president, traveled with the team

and provided English translations and conversion tables.

While language and measurement differences were challenging, Burrow asserts it was the Argentine philosophy and values that varied the most from the U.S. competition.

"They focus on safety and accuracy rather than speed," he said.

The Argentine team members perform one task at a time with only one person in motion. After one team member fills out a work order, for example, another hands out tools. Errors are not allowed.

Another collections-event example illustrates this point. During the event, a leaking pipe is repaired by cutting out the ruptured section and inserting a new piece. Once the repair is complete, the pipe is filled with water and pressurized to check for leaks. The U.S. competition rules call for leaks to be penalized by adding one second to the team's time for every drip that escapes the repaired pipe. In Argentina, one drip will disqualify the team.

The U.S. team finished sixth out of 16 teams. The first-place Argentine team will travel to the United States to participate in the national competition at the WEF national conference, WEFTEC, in October. In 2006, the TRA CReWSers assisted the winning team with mastering Operations Challenge event routines for WEFTEC.06 in Dallas. Burrow hopes the CReWSers are in the same position to practice with the Argentine team in October.

"WEFTEC.12 will be in New Orleans, and Texas is home to the closest established Operations Challenge teams. We hope to have the opportunity to help Argentina learn the events," said Burrow. "Working with another team is rewarding, and we always learn a lot ourselves."

While Burrow focused on the competition, Bennett, together with other WEF delegates, met with wastewater industry leaders and company presidents to share information about training and licensing procedures and materials. Nearly everyone he met was



*WEF selected CRWS Interceptor System Specialist Dale Burrow to represent the United States in the Olimpiadas Sanitarias competition in Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

familiar with Texas.

"They named Texas cities and asked about cowboys and oil," he said.

Bennett was struck by the Argentine spirit and passion, especially the Operations Challenge teams. Co-workers and all levels of management attend competitions and provided enthusiastic support for their teams.

"There are so many spectators, they sat in grandstands to watch the events," said Bennett. "While a team was competing or receiving an award, its supporters erupted in celebration, waving the team's flag, singing, chanting and jumping up and down. They made sure their team felt the love."

The task of distributing awards for each event and the overall competition is reserved for VIPs such as industry executives and local elected officials. Bennett was honored to be asked to present the overall award to Argentina's championship team.

After the competition, the U.S. team and the WEF delegates toured local wastewater treatment plants. Both Bennett and Burrow agreed there are more similarities with the Argentine wastewater community than differences.

"It all boils down to cleaning water," said Burrow.

"We are all one big global family when it comes to the environment," added Bennett.



*The WEF delegates meet with an Argentine wastewater engineer. From left to right: John Bennett, manager, DCRWS; Steve Harrison, WEF staff and Operations Challenge national coordinator; Jeannette Brown, WEF past president; Daniel A. Nolasco, P.E., NOLASCO y Asociados S. A.; John Hart WEF trustee.*

## MCRWS plant improvements under way

Construction crews are busy moving dirt, setting rebar and pouring concrete to add a third clarifier to Mountain Creek Regional Wastewater System's treatment plant. Once this new clarifier is complete, the two existing clarifiers will be taken offline, one at a time, and rehabilitated. MCRWS' clarifiers became unlevel when supporting soils shifted. Thirty-inch piers set beneath the outer walls and underneath the concrete-slab basin floors will be anchored to the bedrock far below the basins to provide more solid support. New floors will be added below the current floors, and supportive feet will join the piers to the basin. Construction crews are also building a foundation for new cloth filter units at the plant, as well as a solids staging area. MCRWS treats wastewater for Midlothian and Venus, plus the southern part of Grand Prairie. The system includes a 3.9-million-gallon-per-day treatment plant and 23 miles of collection-system pipelines.



## Regional planning, drought, legislation guide Trinity River Basin Master Plan updates

TRA's planning and environmental management division recently updated the Trinity River Basin Master Plan to reflect regional water planning activities, the 2011 record-setting drought and recent legislation that affects the flow of water throughout the basin.

TRA is required by its enabling legislation to prepare a master plan that delineates development of water resources for the entire Trinity River watershed. Historically, the plan has focused on broad, long-term objectives that have the potential to impact the Trinity River basin as a whole.

Glenn Clingenpeel, senior manager of TRA's planning and environmental management division, notes that these objectives have not changed dramatically from year to year, but that demographic and environmental issues are now driving more frequent expansions and additions to the master plan.

"As the basin becomes more densely populated and competition for water resources increases, planning and legislative activities, and even extreme weather events, have a greater impact on the Trinity River watershed," he said.

Water supply strategies, identified by the state's regional water planning groups to meet demands for the next fifty years, top the list of factors with the potential to impact the Trinity River basin.

Consequently, TRA maintains water plans for Region C, representing the northern portion of the Trinity River basin, and Region H, representing the southern portion, in the water supply section of the master plan. A reader-friendly table synthesizes the major water supply strategies for the two regions.

The water supply section also includes more information about water rights in the lower Trinity River basin than it has in the past. As water use in this area of the basin trends away from agricultural and toward municipal use, the master plan has been updated to specify the disposition, seniority and ownership of several key water rights affected by this trend. In addition, a list of known water-rights holders in the lower Trinity basin now appears as an appendix.

As was illustrated by the severe 2011 drought, extreme weather events can have a dramatic impact on water resources in any river

basin. For this reason, a new section including key facts about the 2011 drought now complements an existing section on flooding, another extreme weather event that occurs in Texas.

Another piece of legislation impacting the Trinity River basin is Senate Bill 3, requiring the development of environmental flow standards with the goal of assuring sufficient water to provide for a sound ecological environment in Texas streams, rivers, estuaries and bays. Flow standards specify the amount of water to be left in the river, as well as the amount that should be allowed to reach Galveston Bay. TRA updated the section of the master plan concerning SB 3 and added an appendix with the actual standards.

Looking to the future, Clingenpeel sees an expanded role for the master plan as a resource for

agencies throughout the basin wanting to develop and use natural resources in the Trinity River watershed.

"The master plan can function as a blueprint detailing current and planned watershed activities carried out by any number of agencies. It will be a single source that brings together projects throughout the basin and encourages communication among agencies," he said.

The first master plan was adopted by the TRA board of directors in 1958. Since that time, TRA has authored several revisions. These include a major review in 1976-1977, the addition of a reuse section in 2003, a comprehensive update in 2007 and minor amendments in 2010.

### ROCRWS expansion substantially complete

Construction to expand treatment capacity at TRA's Red Oak Creek Regional Wastewater System from 3.5 million gallons per day to 6.0 MGD is substantially complete, with minor changes to collection system lift stations still ongoing.

ROCRWS' expansion project kicked off in 2008 with improvements to the system's solids dewatering and screening processes. Once those components were in place, construction crews installed more pumps, converted existing facilities into additional aeration basins and performed a complete overhaul of the dewatering, screening, grit removal, tertiary and disinfection processes at the plant.

ROCRWS Project Manager

Billy Hill reports that the four-year construction project posed many process and mechanical challenges as operating equipment was rotated to allow for continued operations during the retrofit. The staff did an excellent job coordinating with the contractors to ensure a minimum of disruption to treatment processes. Furthermore, while Hill is pleased with all the improvements to the treatment processes, he is especially grateful for two of them.

"ROCRWS now disinfects with ultraviolet lights instead of chlorine. Having fewer chemicals at the plant improves safety and security for plant staff," said Hill. "Also, the old  
*Continued on back page. See ROCRWS.*

### TRA adds flexibility to leave benefits

In a move to enhance its employee benefits package, the Trinity River Authority recently modified and expanded policies governing several types of paid leave.

The funeral leave benefit, allowing employees to take up to three days of paid leave to attend funerals for immediate family members, has been expanded to include the employee's step-parents, step-children and the employee's spouse's parents.

The sick leave benefit has undergone two significant changes. First, the maximum sick leave accrual has been increased from 90 to 120 days. Also, to increase the balance in the sick leave pool, sick hours from terminating or retiring employees will be rolled into the sick pool. Any employees with catastrophic illnesses or injuries who have exhausted their personal sick and vacation leave balances may apply for the sick

pool. Employees may also choose to contribute unused sick leave to the sick pool.

Finally, with the elimination of the annual requirement of 40 or 80 consecutive vacation hours, employees now enjoy greater flexibility when planning vacations.

"Employees may now take vacation hours and days at their discretion, subject to the approval of their supervisors," said Personnel Services Manager Taylor Huynh. "And the maximum carryover is 240 hours from year to year."

Employees will be notified automatically via email if they accumulate more than 240 hours of vacation at any time during the year.

TRA offers leave benefits to help employees balance work and personal time by providing time off for holidays, vacation, illnesses, funerals and other personal needs.

### TPWD looks to Lake Livingston Dam for striped bass brood stock



TPWD staff examine, tag and weigh striped bass caught in the tail race of Lake Livingston Dam before the fish are transported to hatcheries. This year, TPWD plans to stock Lake Livingston with all of the fingerlings that resulted from this effort.

The oxygen-rich waters in the tail race below Lake Livingston Dam attract large numbers of striped bass fish, making it an ideal place for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to capture brood stock to use in fingerling production and stocking programs.

Every April since 1980, the Trinity River Authority has assisted TPWD by providing access to the restricted area just below Lake Livingston Dam, preparing a ramp to the river for trucks and trailers to reach the water's edge and towing the trucks onto level ground with a bulldozer when the effort is complete.

This year, TPWD personnel found significantly fewer female striped bass with full caches of eggs than they have in the past. Inland Fisheries Regional Director Brian Van Zee believes warmer-than-usual

winter temperatures caused the fish to spawn a few weeks before the scheduled brood stock harvest.

"With the warm winter, water temperatures are higher than normal for this time of year," he said. "Other species of fish all over the state spawned early too."

TRA Director Dennis "Joe" McClesky of Trinity County was on hand to view this year's event. He was joined by TPWD Commissioner Dick Scott from Wimberly, Texas.

TPWD transports the brood fish to hatcheries, where fingerlings are produced and incubated until they are sufficient size to release in lakes throughout Texas. This year, all 600,000 fingerlings produced by the brood stock captured at Lake Livingston Dam will be released into Lake Livingston.





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## Anniversaries

### 30 Years

Steve J. Price, chief operator, CRWS

### 10 Years

Michael T. Pifer, operator II, LRWSS

### 5 Years

James L. Thomas, electronic tech. II, CRWS  
Erik S. Sanders, main. mech. II, CRWS  
Nathan N. Dollar, main. mech. II, CRWS  
Kenneth E. Surratt, main. mech. II, TMCRRWS  
Mary L. Thomas, senior secretary, CRWS

### 3 Years

Eric L. Blackmon, operator II, DCRWS  
Jeffrey Ramsey-El, electronic tech. II, CRWS  
Meredith P. Grace, chemist, CRWS  
Brandon W. Harris, main. mech. II, CRWS  
Michelle A. Critz, lab tech/bookkeeper, CRWS  
Willard L. Fluary, main. mech. II, CRWS  
Susan M. Davis, senior secretary, GO

## Improving manganese removal and retention



This self-contained biofiltration pilot scale filter recently arrived at Tarrant County Water Supply Project. The TCWSP treatment plant plans to convert to biologically active filters in the future. The pilot scale study will evaluate methods for biologically active filters to remove the naturally occurring mineral manganese from the water. The study will also look for ways to retain the manganese already captured on the filter media. Manganese does not pose a health risk but can contribute an unpleasant color to the finished water product. This specially designed model will simulate a full-sized TCWSP filter. It will use radio telemetry to mimic actual operations in order to evaluate feasible procedures for avoiding, or minimizing, the release of manganese in treated water. The study, jointly supported by TRA, Carollo Engineers Inc. and a grant from the Water Research Foundation, will be managed by Carollo Engineers Inc. as the principal investigator. It began in mid-May and will continue for approximately nine months. Study results will benefit the water treatment community in general as well as TCWSP.

### ROCRWS, continued from page 7.

solids drying beds were converted to biofilters, which work much better and reduce odors a lot.”

ROCRWS provides wastewater treatment services for Cedar Hill, DeSoto, Glenn Heights, Lancaster, Ovilla and Red Oak, all located in northern Ellis County.

This is the first expansion at ROCRWS since the system began operations in 1991.