

## NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

### 85<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE, November 14-16, 2016, San Diego, CA

The 85th Annual National Water Resources Association Conference was held in San Diego on November 14-16, 2016. Representatives present from Nebraska included Glenn Johnson, Don Kraus, Tom Knutson, Matt Lukasiewicz, Jasper Fanning, Deb Eagan and Lyndon Vogt. The total registration for the conference was 332. Johnson attended the Budget and Finance Committee meeting on November 14 where the committee reviewed minor changes to the proposed 2017 and 2018 budgets, including a 4.0% dues increase in 2017 and 2018; adjustments in net conference revenues and certain operating costs in both years; elimination of dues from the Professional Services Caucus; and including dues from the new Associate Member category. They adopted a motion to present this budget to the Board for approval.

Kraus attended the meeting of the Policy Development Committee. Minor correctional and format changes were made and one new resolution titled "Water Infrastructure Financing."

Each of the Caucuses met in business meetings, including Groundwater, Municipal, Irrigation, and Professional Services. Johnson attended the Groundwater Caucus, where there was discussion on potential refiling of groundwater rules by the US Forest Service, the lawsuit between Mississippi and Tennessee on a shared aquifer, and Indian claims filed on groundwater basins in California in the Coachella Irrigation Project area. The TaskForce concerns or priorities included: state primacy, GW conservation measures, storage vs recharge, drought planning, and water supply.

Kraus attended the Irrigation caucus where there was discussion on media techniques for public relations programs. In addition, Edward Swain – Arkansas Natural Resources Commission discussed the growth of irrigation in Arkansas and problems that have developed in some areas because of groundwater development in the East Mississippi alluvial plain (some areas have seen over 100' decline). Efforts are underway for two surface water diversion projects with support from the COE – at a cost of over \$900M.

The Welcome Keynote Speaker was Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET). MET is the water wholesaler to 6 counties and 19 million people with supplies primarily from the Colorado River and the State Water Project from Northern California. He related that this systems first real test was in the 1989-1992 drought which brought on water rationing. They were forced to rethink their future approach, especially with increasing populations. They instituted integrated resources planning, including reduction of demands, increased storage, and use of recycled water. This has allowed them to go from 14 million people and 2.4 MAF demand in 1990 to 19 million people and a 2.0 MAF demand currently.

He described one of the most challenging constraints in California is the Endangered Species Act, with 200-300 species listed. California has taken three approaches including 1. Litigation challenge, 2. Investment in science, and 3. Habitat conservation and planning with no certainty

on a compromise approach. The State Water Project has lost 30% of its water supply to ESA rulings.

The next session was the Federal Affairs Committee general review. Speculation on the impact of the 2016 election included less vigorous regulation and rule-making (e.g. WOTUS and USFS Groundwater directives) and a focus on infrastructure. NWRA needs to make sure that water projects are included in the focus of infrastructure. NWRA will also be working with other organizations to develop a list of recommendations for appointments to second and third tier department leaderships. NWRA and members staffs from Washington talked about the election changes to Congress with Republican majorities in both houses, and also about the potential actions in the remaining days of the session. The Federal Affairs Committee then conducted breakout sessions. Johnson attended the Water Supply/Corps of Engineers/Groundwater session. Topics included more flexibility for the Title 16 Funding, the Water Resources Development Act passage, and adding water supply as a Corps of Engineers primary mission. Kraus attended the Water Supply, COE and Water Supply session with priorities for completion of WRDA legislation and water supply.

The first general session was on Weather Forecasting and Water Supply, moderated by Tim Quinn, Association of California Water Agencies. The first speaker was F. Martin Ralph, Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes, Scripps Institution of Oceanography. He described "Atmospheric Rivers" (AR) and their impacts on California and the western US. CA has the largest year-to-year precipitation variability and is due to the ARs. They are trying to use this information to forecast impact on reservoir operations to take advantage of surplus precipitation events. The second speaker was Bin Guan, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, UCLA. He gave a technical presentation titled "Subseasonal to Seasonal Prediction of ARs" with a global focus and investigations into how climate change will affect ARs.

Next were two breakout sessions: Effective Advocacy with Congress and Federal Agencies; Case Studies in the Evolution of Groundwater Management. Johnson attended the Groundwater breakout, whose presenters were Stacy Steinbach, Texas Water Conservation Association, and Christa McJunkin, Salt River Project in Phoenix. McJunkin remarked that Arizona population has grown six times during the period 1957 to 2016, with an economy growing twenty times, while total water use has stayed the same. In AZ, groundwater supply development started out as a supplemental source. The first management came through the 1980 Groundwater Management Act establishing five management areas encompassing 10% of the state (population centered). Each area has its own goal consistent with a move from an adequate water supply to an assured water supply. Recharge and recovery have become significant tools in groundwater management in the state.

Steinbach talked about Texas groundwater management, starting with a 1904 court case establishing the "Rule of Capture" as an unlimited right to capture the underlying water with a nonliability doctrine. This was followed by legislation in 1917 adding a water conservation amendment and the Texas Underground Water Conservation Act on 1949. In 1997 the legislature adopted Senate Bill 1 which established Groundwater Conservation Districts as the preferred method of groundwater management. The GWCDs were expanded and regionalized

in 2005 which are required to do Joint Planning every 5 years. The final change was in 2011 with legislation on ownership of groundwater.

Kraus attended the session titled Effective Advocacy with Congress and Federal Agencies. Christine Arbogast emphasized the importance of establishing a relationship with congressional staffers. In addition she identified four important issues for the meeting: 1. WHO – small group is better and include affected stakeholder; 2. WHAT – Limit topics (2 or 3) 3. WHEN – Work with scheduler 10 to 30 days out; 4. WHERE – Take advantage of breaks if possible

Dave Reynolds, Director of Federal Affairs, ACWA focused on who and suggested individuals in the organization who have passion, technical knowledge and patience.

Lane Dickson, Senior Manager of External Affairs – Salt River Project emphasized that the “ask” should be “right sized” and reasonable. He recommended using coalitions to amplify positions.

Brad Hiltcher, Executive Legislative Representative, MWD of So Cal, emphasized the importance of a tour to see the project and being open about opposition and support.

The Keynote Speaker, Tuesday morning, was Estevan Lopez, Commissioner, US Bureau of Reclamation. He talked about the evolution of the USBR relationship with NWRA and the agency as a whole, moving from project construction to a water management agency. He also talked about the agency budget and the prospect of the Continuing Resolution. He said that the agency and its partners will need to address the impact of climate change on water resources, including such things as changes in the 100-year storm size. He described the changes in the WaterSMART program and the schedule for applications.

The next general session was titled “Social Media is Mainstream: Make it Work for Your District”. Presenters included Jennifer Persike of ACWA who gave statistics and talked about the impact of social media (primarily Facebook and Twitter) on the 2016 Presidential election. She talked about how social media has changed how we engage and communicate with the public, with customers, with the benefits of both immediate and two-way communications. Ashley Metzger of Desert Water Agency in Palm Springs talked about how that agency uses social media in its operations. They utilize four social medial platforms: Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Next Door. The last presenter, Doug Kemper, Colorado Water Congress, made an interesting comparison about how communications have been done in the past back to carbon paper and personal phone calls to today’s social media, with the biggest impacts being on time involved and immediacy of message. He stated that “it is better to be approximately correct than precisely absent from a discussion”.

Late morning, all the Nebraska representatives present met as the Nebraska Caucus and had an informal discussion. This included the proposed additional Policy Statements and the NWRA budget. In addition, priorities were identified for the NWRA meeting in Las Vegas.

The luncheon speaker was the Honorable Duncan Hunter Sr., former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. He commented on the impacts of the Endangered Species Act on water supply projects. He was instrumental in getting a congressional waiver of environmental

regulations for a 14 mile fence between Tijuana, Mexico and California and suggested that there should be a push for an Executive waiver of environmental regulations if the Secretary of Interior determines that the water project is necessary for US interests. He said he is also an advocate of volunteer and private efforts.

The Awards Presentation was chaired Tom Knutson and included the following NWRA awards:

Water Statesman – Estevan Lopez  
Water Statesman – Steve Stockton, Chief of Civil Works from COE  
Water Statesman – Wes \_\_\_\_\_, Arizona  
Distinguished Service Award – Ivan Ray  
Distinguished Service Award – Glenn Johnson  
Distinguished Service Award – Fritz Beason, Salt River Project  
John Sullivan Water Policy Award – Christine Arbogast, CO  
John Sullivan Water Policy Award – Dave Reynolds, CA  
John Sayer Leadership – Thomas Myrum  
John Sayer Leadership – Dave Koland  
Lifetime Achievement Award – Bill Plummer  
Lifetime Achievement Award – Terrell Grinley  
President Awards – Ron Sullivan, CA  
Water Buffalo Award – Robert Johnson

The next general session involved three breakout sessions: 1. The role of groundwater in river compacts (Texas vs New Mexico); 2. WaterSMART and other Reclamation Grant Programs; 3. Public Affairs Workgroup. Johnson attended the groundwater session which had two speakers: Steve Hernandez, attorney for the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and Mike Gheleta, another attorney. Steve explained the history and development of the EBID Project with beneficiaries in New Mexico and in Texas and also an allocation to Mexico under a Compact. Drought has led to litigation and the main question has been on the inclusion of groundwater. A Special Master has been appointed and has issued his first report. Gheleta continued with a presentation on the role of groundwater in the Texas - New Mexico river compact.

Kraus attended the Water Smart presentation by Avra Morga, Program Analyst – Policy and Administration – USBR. She discussed new program opportunities being released this fall: WaterSMART grants for small projects (\$2M); 2. Water Marketing (\$2M); 3. Water Conservation and Energy Efficiency (\$2M).

The final presentation on Tuesday was the Inside Washington panel, including the Honorable Ray Kogovsek, Robert Szabo, the Honorable Mary Bono, and Norm Semanko, NWRA member from Idaho. They opined on numerous topics but primarily on the 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections and how this may impact Congressional operation, the budget, Administration rules and regulations, Supreme Court appointments, etc.

The general session on Wednesday was titled “Challenges for Municipal Water Managers in 2017.” The first panel member was Cheryl Zittle, Salt River Project (SRP) which uses a combination of Colorado River Water, water from their own storage reservoirs, and 270

groundwater wells. Issues they face include aging infrastructure, drought management, aging workforce and catastrophic wildfires in their watersheds. Mark Krause, Desert Water Agency, talked about concerns as to reliability of the State Water Project with drought and the ESA and Delta smelt issues. Other concerns include the sustainability of the Groundwater management Act, tribal water issues, and infrastructure deterioration. He explained that desert Water Agency had the highest per capita water use in California and were given a 37% reduction requirement for conservation, a level which has significant impact on the Agency's bottom line. Kevin Ward, General Manager, Trinity River Authority of Texas discussed the challenges with managing water in an 18,000 square mile watershed and supplying 1/3 of the water needs of Dallas-Fort Worth. Concerns included ESA impacts and new regulations. Tage Flint, Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, Utah, was the final panelist. Weber District serves drinking water to sixty agencies and cities, and also provides pressurized secondary water to two counties for outside watering (about to add meters). Their issues include expected population growth from 640,000 to 1,300,000 in 45 years, infrastructure repairs and replacement, and conversion from agriculture water to municipal water. He said their best chance is water conservation, considering it their best water supply projects, along with tiered water rates, and expanded partnerships.

The NWRA Board of Directors met, with Glenn, Don, Lyndon, and Tom all having seats on the Board. Actions included adoption of a final budget for 2017 and a tentative budget for 2017 (with a 4.0% dues increase): approval of Ian Lyle as the Executive Vice President of NWRA to replace retiring Bob Johnson; election of Officers (Ron Thompson, President; Cheryl Zittle, Vice President; and Tom Myrum, Treasurer; approval of Bylaw amendments; and participation in an Amicus Brief on the WOTUS lawsuit. The next meetings of the National Water Resources Association will be a Leadership Forum on January 10-11, 2017 in Las Vegas (to set priorities and agenda for 2017) and the Federal Water Issues Conference in Washington DC on March 20-22, 2017.

*Prepared by Glenn Johnson and Don Kraus*