Central Regional Wastewater System to undergo major rehabilitation
Above: Members of the Trinity River Authority’s board of directors enjoy a tour of the TRA-sponsored U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wallisville Saltwater Barrier at the mouth of the Trinity River. The barrier became operational in 1999 and controls saltwater intrusion by mechanically blocking its upstream movement from the Trinity River during low flows.

pictured from left to right are Shirley K. Seale, Chambers County; James W. Neale, Dallas County; Dennis “Joe” McCleskey, Trinity County; J. Carol Spillars, Madison County; Harold E. Jenkins, Dallas County; Ronald J. Goldman, at large, Tarrant County; David B. Leonard, Liberty County; John W. Jenkins, at large, Chambers County; Michael Cronin, Kaufman County; Jess A. Laird, Henderson County; Nancy E. Lavinski, Anderson County; Linda D. Timmnerman, Ed.D., Freestone County; Kim C. Wyatt, Navarro County; Harold Barnard, Ellis County; Ana Laura Saucedo, Dallas County; and TRA General Manager Kevin Ward.

After the tour, board members enjoyed an overnight stay in Anahuac. The following day, the TRA board of directors held its regularly scheduled October meeting at Whites Park in Hankamer, marking the first time the full board has met outside of TRA’s general office since 2007.

“This was a great opportunity to see more of the Trinity River basin and additional TRA projects,” said Board President Harold Barnard. “The more we’re able to see of the service area that TRA touches and the projects it sponsors and maintains, the better able we are to guide sound policy that best serves the entire basin.”

Moore retires after 34 years

Financial Services Manager Robert E. Moore, CPA, recently retired after 34 years in a variety of positions with the Trinity River Authority.

Moore began working for TRA in 1978 as the financial division manager. He later advanced to financial services manager and investment officer, overseeing all accounting operations; maintaining records, controls and budgets; and enhancing the accuracy of reported financial results.

“Under Bob’s leadership, TRA’s total fixed assets increased by almost $2 billion, and its annual operating budget grew by almost $200 million,” said TRA General Manager Kevin Ward. “He saw this organization through unprecedented growth and substantial changes in financial reporting requirements. Bob’s contributions to TRA’s success have been invaluable.”

Prior to joining TRA, Moore worked for Arthur Young & Company and also served as an international accountant with General Dynamics.

Moore earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin and became a certified public accountant in 1978. He is a member of the Beta Alpha Psi Accounting Honor Society and the Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society.

In addition, Moore served four years in the United States Navy in the Western Pacific and received the Navy Commendation Medal and an Air Medal for flight operations in a combat zone.

Major rehabilitation effort planned for older CRWS components

The Trinity River Authority’s Central Regional Wastewater System contains hundreds of valves, some of which were installed 38 years ago during the first two plant expansions. Older valves such as these present unique operational challenges—they can jam open, stick shut or simply leak, slowing operations and requiring maintenance. In an effort to decrease maintenance-and-operations costs and increase efficiency, engineers are designing rehabilitations to equipment and components, including dozens of valves, in critical areas of the CRWS plant.

Continued on page 5. See CRWS rehabilitation.
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Construction Services Manager Thomas Sanders’ tenure at the Trinity River Authority began 27 years ago with a baptism by fire. Sanders, who now has managed more than $1 billion in construction projects, joined TRA in May of 1985, just three months before TRA began the final extension of the Central Regional Wastewater System’s Elm Fork interceptor through Sandy Lake Amusement Park in Carrollton.

CRW’s Elm Fork interceptor collects wastewater from Addison, Carrollton, Coppell, Dallas, Farmers Branch and Irving in the northeast portion of the system’s service area. TRA began construction on the original Elm Fork interceptor in the 1950s and was ready to extend it to the northern reaches by 1985.

Installing this 1,200-foot segment of the interceptor posed several challenges: requiring precise scheduling and timing of construction activities. The Sandy Lake Amusement Park, directly in the path of the pipeline, represented a major hurdle.

“Nobody wants his property dug up for a pipeline, especially a business that operates mainly outdoors,” said Sanders. “From design through final construction, we focused as much as we could on accommodating the desires of the amusement park owners. Our top priority was maintaining a good working relationship.”

TRA’s standing with the park owners was solidified by an act of simple kindness. TRA Human Resources Manager Taylor Huynh

Ken Hufner, retired contractor, left, and TRA Construction Services Manager Thomas Sanders renew their friendship, which began 27 years ago when they worked together to extend CRW’s Elm Fork interceptor through the Sandy Lake Amusement Park, seen in the background.

when the park was closed, carefully planning to have all construction activities finished and the grounds restored in time for the spring opening.

In addition to the amusement park, construction crews would also have to work around the weather. While the project schedule allowed for delays caused by typical fall and winter rains, above-average wet weather could put everything behind schedule.

Installing a large-diameter pipe beneath an amusement park within a strict time frame during the winter months poses sufficient challenges, but this project faced an additional complication: an unusually high groundwater level.

The groundwater table lies just seven feet below the surface,” said Sanders. “We installed the pipe at an average depth of 12 feet. The pipe would zigzag around most of the park’s equipment, but the train tracks would be disturbed at several locations. To avoid disrupting park activities, TRA worked with the park’s owners to complete the project during the winter months.

The project finished on schedule with the park owners. Our top priority was maintaining a good working relationship.”

Future construction projects will face the same challenges as the original installation, along with a major new hurdle: there is not enough room to install a parallel pipe to accommodate the 7.5 million gallons of wastewater that flow through the pipe every day. Once again, TRA’s construction services division, along with its partners, will have to put its ingenuity to work.

Look for part two of this story in the December 2012/January 2013 issue of inTRA.

Also in 1985...

• Ronald Reagan is sworn in for a second term as president of the United States.
• Gas costs $1.09 a gallon.
• Back to the Future is the movie of the year.
• The car of the year is the Opel Kadett.
• USA for Africa records the single “We Are the World.”
• Coca-Cola changes its formula and releases new Coke. Response is overwhelmingly negative, and the original formula is back on the market within three months.
• A joint American-French expedition locates the wreck of the RMS Titanic.
• Microsoft Corp. releases the first version of Windows: Windows 10.

CSS: Then and Now

• 1985: TRA’s construction services division consists of three office and four field personnel.
• 2012: CSS has grown to five office and 24 field personnel.

Ken Hufner, retired contractor, left, and TRA Construction Services Manager Thomas Sanders renew their friendship, which began 27 years ago when they worked together to extend CRW’s Elm Fork interceptor through the Sandy Lake Amusement Park, seen in the background.

“TRAs’ construction services division, along with its partners, will have to put its ingenuity to work.”

Current Sandy Lake Amusement Park interceptor replacement triggers memories

The Trinity River Authority recently began offering employees a new benefit that will allow participants to save pre-tax dollars from their paychecks toward meeting a wide range of qualified expenses.

“We’re very excited to now offer two methods to pay for medical and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars.” - TRA Human Resources Manager Taylor Huynh

Retirement Account by allowing the balance to be owned by the participant and to accumulate earnings on a tax-free basis. The account balance also rolls over from one year to another; employees do not forfeit the money if they change jobs or retire. Participants may save up to $3,100 per individual or $6,250 per family each year, and participants age 55 and up may save an additional $1,000 under the plan’s catch-up provision. Contributions to this plan can be used to pay for medical expenses related to the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of disease or other types of treatments. Because the health savings account balance is carried over from year to year, participants can save long-term for planned medical expenses.

According to Internal Revenue Service regulations, participants in an HSA must enroll in a high-deductible health plan that does not include co-pays.

TRAs also debates this year a Flexible Spending Account that allows employees to pay for some medical and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars from their earnings. Each year, participants can set aside anywhere from $100 to $2,500 to pay for medical or dental premiums, deductibles, co-payments, non-covered, medical, dental or vision expenses, prescriptions and prescribed over-the-counter medications. Employees can also pay for between $100 and $5,000 in child care expenses with pre-tax dollars from the flexible spending account.

In contrast to an HSA, FSA balances cannot be carried into the next plan year, nor does participation require enrollment in a high-deductible health plan.

TRAs offers employees tax-favored benefits

The $2,500 to pay for medical or dental premiums, deductibles, co-payments, non-covered, medical, dental or vision expenses, prescriptions and prescribed over-the-counter medications. Employees can also pay for between $100 and $5,000 in child care expenses with pre-tax dollars from the flexible spending account.

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Wolf Creek Park wraps up memorable season

Wolf Creek Park closed Nov. 30 after one of the most memorable seasons on record.

“We are blessed with some of the best visitors any park could hope for,” said Wolf Creek Park Supervisor Charles (Eddie) Knight. “They motivate us to make the park the best it can be and provide first-class service during their stay.”

Family festivities began early in the year when the park hosted a wedding in the group pavilion in March. Family groups continued to enjoy the park from spring to fall with, among many others, the Doan and Woodcock families in May; the Morris and Owens families in June; and the Littlefair family in August.

The park also welcomed the Kirby Inland Marina Outreach employee picnic in May as well as the Sam Houston Amateur Radio Club for both spring and fall visits. In September, Country Music Television visited the park to tape an episode of Big Texas Heat – a reality show featuring the Trinity, Texas Police Department. For more than two days, film crews documented Trinity’s annual police retreat, which focused on health and fitness, as well as team-building exercises involving canoes and paddle boats, all with a humorous twist.

The 28th Annual Wolf Creek Car, Truck and Bike Show attracted more than 1,200 people in October, not including campers, to see the beautiful cars and partake in the festivities.

Park visitors enjoyed campfires and open-air cooking all season except for one short-lived burn ban in September. With Lake Livingston filled to normal pool level by plenty of rain, fishing was excellent both off the bulkhead and from boats launched at the park’s ramp. The park also welcomed the season’s highlights, as well as photos park guests have generously shared, on the Wolf Creek Park Facebook page at www.facebook.com/TRAwolfcreekpark.

Wolf Creek Park is a 110-acre overnight camping and day-use park on the western shore of Lake Livingston. The park has 46 campsites for RVs requiring full hookups and 57 sites with water and electricity. All sites have picnic tables, fire rings and grills. Park visitors have access to a boat ramp and fishing pier, three restroom and shower facilities, a group shelter, playground equipment and a marina store.

Over the winter, interested parties can follow park happenings and improvements on Facebook. By “liking” the page, visitors can receive updates from Wolf Creek Park through their individual Facebook news feeds.

The park will open for the 2013 season on March 1. Visitors can start reserving their favorite campsites Jan. 1.

General Manager J. Kevin Ward

This issue marks the last inTRA for fiscal year 2012 and finds those of us here at TRA thankful for a successful year and ready to move toward our goals for FY 2013, which begins Dec. 1. For many months, TRA staff have worked to establish goals and benchmarks, propose new endeavors and assign appropriate budget figures for each. As the result of these efforts, the TRA board of directors, as part of its regular October meeting, approved TRA’s FY 2013 operating budget – the planning device that allows us to quantify the cost of the work we aim to accomplish throughout the upcoming year. We take our budget-planning process very seriously; the final document holds us accountable for the responsible and prudent management of our resources, plus the effective execution of our programs.

The budget-development process is always an adventure for any organization, whether it comes from our strategic planning, a thorough understanding of organizational objectives and future programs, a little bit of a sixth sense about economic realities, and a healthy dose of trying to predict the unpredictable.

As a political subdivision of the state, TRA exists without the benefit of a tax base and/or appropriations from either the state or the federal government. Instead, our customers compensate us for the services we provide. All TRA projects are independent financial entities, which allows us to ensure that no one project, city or group of cities ends up subsidizing any other project or group.

Thus, in addition to the internal work we direct toward budget development, we spend a great deal of time reviewing each individual project budget with that system’s customer representatives. And, as is our custom, this year our board of directors approved a budget that had been reviewed and supported by all of TRA’s customers.

The FY 2013 budget reflects an increase in total revenues of 8.8 percent from $205.4 million to $223.3 million – primarily attributed to increases in contract revenue; inter-fund services and charges; professional fees; and administrative overhead.

We anticipate that total expenditures will increase 7.3 percent from $206.5 million to $221.7 million. This increase is largely related to increased costs for personal services; other services and charges; and scheduled debt service. In fact, debt service continues to be a key driver of our overall expenditures. We are growing services that TRA customers need require the building or expansion of facilities, which are funded through TRA-issued revenue bonds. In addition, costs for treatment of both drinking water and wastewater continue to rise as a result of increased regulations and more stringent requirements for compliance.

We face many strategic opportunities and challenges as we move forward, and I’m confident that the goals we’ve set for ourselves in the coming year will continue to strengthen TRA’s mission of protecting public health and the environment through the highest-quality water and wastewater treatment services available. Improved information technology and software increased water quality studies; additional personnel support for an expected $100 million increase in construction at TRA water and wastewater treatment facilities – each of these accomplishments will make our organization more proficient and will directly increase its positive impact throughout the Trinity River basin.

I’ve challenged the TRA staff during FY 2013 to be innovative and ambitious when it comes to improving the services we provide – everything from assessing watershed quality risks to increasing water sales opportunities, expanding facilities and maximizing current operations.

The chief executive of any organization is faced with basically the same challenge: to manage the organization’s time, objectives and resources in order to achieve meaningful goals and implement the ideas that most benefit customers. This is never an easy task, but I am fortunate to be surrounded by a leadership team, a board of directors and a roster of customer representatives who provide solid data and sound budget recommendations that continue to make TRA a success.

For more detailed information about TRA’s FY 2013 budget, please visit www.trinitytra.org/CurrentNews.

Limited space and resources prevent us from providing needed details in this issue, but we look forward to the next issue – Strategic planning continues on course.

The Trinity River Authority’s leadership team has continued its efforts toward development of a comprehensive strategic plan over recent weeks, and would like to thank everyone who has participated in strategy sessions to gather important feedback about our organization. In addition to these sessions, the executive management team also recently participated in a retreat designed to develop specific strategic imperatives and the paths necessary to reach them. Keep reading inTRA for more information and updates as the plan continues to take shape.

General Manager’s Message

TRA’s FY 2013 budget reflects strategic opportunities, challenges

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Labor Day will bring a special opportunity for everyone to enjoy the park in a different way, as Wolf Creek Park transforms into a wildlife habitat for an annual Labor Day event. The event features various educational and family-friendly activities, including a wildlife feeding show, a reptile show, a nature walk and a craft station. Visitors can purchase tickets through the park’s website or at the park’s visitor center.

TRA also announced that the park will host a fall foliage festival on Oct. 19 and 20. The festival will feature various activities such as a pumpkin patch, a corn maze and a hay ride.

The Sawyer family children enjoy Wolf Creek Park over Thanksgiving weekend.

See more photos at www.facebook.com/TRAwolfcreekpark.

TRAwolfcreekpark.

inTRA
Employee Milestones

New Hires
TCWSP welcomes Shawn Potts as operator I. CRWS is happy to have Calvin Nguyen as electronic technician I, Valery Jean-Bart as maintenance engineer, John Durbin as systems maintenance manager, and Bryce Haydin and Andres Vasques as operators I and II.

Promotions
Richard Gerard was promoted to assistant manager at LLP. Lupe Moreno was promoted to electronics technician II at TCWSP. Ron McCaffrey was promoted to chief maintenance mechanic at TCWSP.

Current Events
Congratulations to DCRWS Operator II Rosario Saldivar for earning a B wastewater license from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Public Information Officer Michelle Clark has been elected vice president of programs for the Greater Fort Worth chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

CRWS Electronics Technician Jeffrey Ramsey has been named Water Environment Association of Texas safety committee chair. See Jeff’s first safety article on page 38 of the latest issue of Texas WET.

Northern Region Manager Fiona Allen’s daughter, Elizabeth, won a 2012 Texas Section American Water Works Association scholarship. Elizabeth is a graduate of the Oakridge School in Arlington and is working toward a degree in chemical engineering from Texas Tech University, with plans to obtain a master’s degree in the same field. During high school, she played varsity field hockey and soccer, plus running track. Elizabeth was also a varsity cheerleader, a member of the National Honor Society, vice president of her senior class and involved with the Boys and Girls Club of Arlington.

TRW’s General Office winning United Way team enjoys part of the General Manager’s Prize: an afternoon at a Texas Rangers game. Seen here left to right on the top row are Susan Davis, senior secretary; Shawn Ballard, GIS support technician; Brenna Witt, senior secretary; and Tahauya Jackson, executive secretary. Bottom row: Melissa Saniuk, senior accountant; Alison Mackey, chief financial officer; and Michelle Harlan, real estate specialist.

TCWSP Operator I Shawn Potts, his wife, LaAnne, and their daughter, Taelynn, recently welcomed a new daughter and sister. Kaileigh Potts was born Nov. 12, weighing 8 pounds, 4 ounces.

CRWS Rehabilitation. Continued from page 1.
“This is a major rehabilitation project; the design engineers certainly have their work cut out for them. Forty-two valves will need to be replaced, and each one has to be manufactured to specifications,” said Northern Region Manager Fiona M. Allen, P.E. “But completing this project will help keep the plant running smoothly, improve safety for our employees, and reduce the cost of operating and maintaining TRA’s largest facility. Our customers stand to benefit the most in the long run.”

Engineers will design valve replacements for final clarifiers and aeration basins, as well as other types of equipment throughout the plant. They will also produce specifications for influent gate replacements, equipment coatings, pipeline and mechanical equipment rehabilitation, algae control systems, lighting and vibration control.

Each of these rehabilitation projects was outlined in either the 2005 Phase IV Master Plan Final Report or the 2009 Phase IV Liquid Treatment and Site Security Improvements Report, documents that identified and prioritized CRWS plant components in need of rehabilitation or replacement.

TRA’s board of directors has approved an engineering services agreement for $1,495,600 for design of the rehabilitations.

Executive Secretary Connie Jones and her husband, Gary, welcomed their seventh granddaughter, Jesse Finn Patrick Jones was born Oct. 17 to Paul and Bethany Jones of Colorado Springs, Colo.

TCWSP Maintenance Mechanic II Anthony Chavarria and his wife, Lorrie, join friends for their annual outing to a Dallas Cowboys game.

Congratulations to LLP Permit Administrator Lisa Lauritri’s son, Andrew, on signing a national letter of intent to play baseball next year for the University of Houston.

LLP Office Coordinator Kristie Munoz’s daughter, Brooke, recently participated in her first gymnastics skills meet. Brooke reached the gold level of level-three gymnastics on four apparatuses and received blue ribbons on the vault, bars and beam, plus a red ribbon on floor exercises.

Lorrie, join friends for their annual outing to a Dallas Cowboys game.
Lake Livingston Dam undergoes annual inspection

In an effort to ensure everything is properly maintained and operating correctly, the Trinity River Authority’s Lake Livingston Project personnel recently conducted a detailed inspection of the project’s facilities. This yearly examination and data-gathering exercise enables LLP staff to track changes in the project’s condition and prioritize repairs, if any. These data contribute valuable information toward a comprehensive inspection report on the overall condition of the project works.
TRI CReWSers claim 12th top-three win in national competition

TRI's Operations Challenge team, the CReWSers, won second place in the laboratory event and third place overall in Division 1 competition at the Water Environment Federation's national conference – WEFTEC.12 – in New Orleans. The win adds a 12th top-three claim to the team's remarkable record over the last 14 years.

The team also garnered a fourth-place finish in process control, the competition's pencil-and-paper event. The CReWSers finished fourth as well in both the collections and safety events and sixth in maintenance.

The national competition caps one of the team’s most exciting years in recent history. In April, the CReWSers swept the state competition to secure the team’s 15th consecutive championship. Shortly after, team members Jacob Burwell and Steve Price, along with members from the Dallas Aquatechs and the Austin Dillo Xpress, represented Texas at an informal regional competition in Atlantic City, N.J. In May, Team Captain Dale Burrow also competed on the U.S. dream team in Argentina, and in early September, the team took first place in a regional competition in Ocean City, Md. — the first time a team outside of Virginia has won this competition.

Capitalizing on its momentum, the team practiced relentlessly after the regional competition, consistently achieving fast and accurate results. The hard work paid off in another top-three win for the CReWSers at the national competition.

"It was an honor to advance, once again, to the national competition," said Burrow. “The CReWSers are grateful for support from both TRI and the Water Environment Association of Texas. Their belief in the team’s abilities means the world to us.”

LLP installs lightning protection in office

Maintenance personnel at the Trinity River Authority’s Lake Livingston Project recently installed a comprehensive system of lightning protection in the main office building after experiencing destructive strikes earlier this year.

Previously, 190-foot radio tower near the LLP employee parking area attracted and grounded lightning strikes, rendering them harmless. When the aging tower became unstable and recently was removed, lightning targeted the communications/wind data tower near the office building, bringing electrical charges close enough to cause disruptions to electrical and computing equipment.

“Every time a storm formed in the area, lights would flicker and computers switched off,” said LLP Project Manager Mark Waters. “We needed a system that would redirect lightning’s electrical charges away from our equipment and into the ground.”

LLP maintenance staff first buried a grounding cable attached to nine vertical rods around the back and both ends of the building to form the crucial backbone of the system. Next, they connected it to all electrical equipment, including the weather radar pole, the switch panel at the generator and the main electrical panel on the building.

They then shortened a communications/wind data tower near the west side of the building from approximately 60 to 26 feet high and attached it to the grounding cable as well. Finally, the maintenance crew mounted three lightning rods to the roof, one at each end and one on the middle gable, and connected them to the grounding cable.

LLP modeled its lightning protection system after another at the Kinder Morgan gas plant control buildings near the dam. The gas plant also suffered multiple strikes before installing a protective system two years ago, but has not had an incident since.

An engineer from the Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, the company that provides power to LLP, visited the project and provided his recommendations as well.

Trinity River Authority Holiday Schedule FY2013

Dec. 24, 2012 .................. Christmas Eve
Dec. 25, 2012 .................. Christmas Day
Jan. 1, 2013 .................. New Year’s Day
Jan. 21, 2013 ......... Martin Luther King Jr. Day
March 29, 2013 .................. Good Friday
May 27, 2013 .................. Memorial Day
July 4, 2013 .................. Independence Day
Sept. 2, 2013 .................. Labor Day
Nov. 28, 2013 ....... Thanksgiving Day
Nov. 29, 2013 ....... Day after Thanksgiving
You spoke – we listened
inTRA survey yields valuable insight

85% of survey respondents are either satisfied or very satisfied with inTRA’s overall quality.

Favorites
Features that readers say they most enjoy

1: Operational Developments
2: General Manager’s Message
3: Employee News
4: Water Industry Issues

What can you expect?
Content changes based on reader comments

32% of readers would be interested in seeing inTRA in an electronic format.

E-newsletter?
Some groups indicate openness to new format

Though most respondents indicated they would like to see distribution methods, publication frequency and format remain the same, the opportunity exists among some groups to pursue electronic distribution.