TRA brings home high honors from Texas Water 2013
TRA, Houston, ETEC take next steps toward hydropower project

At its regularly scheduled April meeting, the Trinity River Authority board of directors approved a contract for engineering services related to construction of a hydropower facility at TRA’s Lake Livingston Project. A collaborative project among TRA, the city of Houston and the East Texas Electric Cooperative, the proposed 24-megawatt facility will generate, on average, approximately 124 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. This amount can serve approximately 12,000 households without offsetting roughly 64,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil-fuel power-generating plants.

“While the primary purpose of Lake Livingston is to provide water for Houston and other communities, being able to also develop a clean, renewable energy source is a tremendous operational, a minimum release of 200 cfs will be maintained through the spillway to sustain aquatic life, and power will be generated only with flows released to meet downstream commitments or to pass stormwater runoff through the dam. Water will not be released for the sole purpose of generating power, nor will Lake Livingston be drawn down to accommodate construction or to generate power.

Hydropower project timeline
• 2007: Memorandum of Understanding among TRA, city of Houston, ETEC
• 2009: ETEC submits license application to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
• 2011: FERC issues ETEC license
• 2013: Parties execute agreements to proceed with hydropower project

TRA welcomes new manager of engineering services

Sherri van der Wege recently joined the Trinity River Authority as Northern Region manager of engineering services. She comes to TRA from AECOM, where she served as a project manager since 2008, providing engineering expertise in locales as close as TRA’s Central Regional Wastewater System and as far-reaching as Saskatchewan and Libya. Van der Wege brings with her a wide array of experience working on municipal water and wastewater treatment projects in various engineering firms across the globe.

“I’m confident that Sherri will be a strong addition to our team,” said Bill Smith, Northern Region manager of development. “Her solid engineering background, attention to detail and extensive experience will be invaluable as we continue developing our Northern Region facilities to best meet our customers’ growing needs.”

Van der Wege earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Arlington, a master’s degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is currently pursuing an additional master’s degree from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Woolsey receives WEF Life Member Award

Congratulations to Mike Woolsey, process systems automation engineer at the Trinity River Authority’s Central Regional Wastewater System, for receiving the Water Environment Federation’s Life Membership Award. This distinction recognizes individuals who have been a member of WEF and one or more membership associations for 15 or more consecutive years and are at least age 65. Woolsey joined 18 other individuals who received this recognition this year.

TRWs, TIFP middle Trinity River study

TPWD striper extraction

ROCRWS named Municipal Wastewater Plant of the year

See more stories online in Current News.
CReWSers celebrate 16th consecutive Operations Challenge state victory

The Trinity River Authority CReWSers Operations Challenge team now boasts its 16th consecutive state title, captured at Texas Water 2013, held in early April in Galveston. The team took first place in four of the five individual competition events – safety, laboratory, collection system and pump and motor maintenance – and brought home a third-place win in process control. The CReWSers also placed first in a new exhibition event: a timed race to see which team can change a rotor and stator the fastest. This event did not count in the final scoring of the overall competition, but did come with bragging rights and its own trophy.

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; each event requires technical skill, and teams are judged for both accuracy and time. This year marked Texas’ 25th annual competition.

This year also marked a change in the CReWSers team, with Chief Operator Steve Price moving from competitor to coach/senior operator. Raudel Juarez rejoining the team. Juarez previously served on the CReWSers team in 2008. Price has been a team member since 1995. “This was a good change for us,” said Bill Tatum, project manager of TRA’s Central Regional Wastewater System. “Steve has been such a strong competitor and a member of our four national championship teams, so he knows a lot about the events and offered great insight. And Raudel’s strength and experience gives us a great advantage in several events.”

The CReWSers competed this year against two other Texas teams: the Austin Dillo Xxpress and the Dallas Aquatech, all of whom were vying for spots at the national competition scheduled for October in Chicago. In addition, for the first time, three out-of-state teams competed in a separate division: the Jacksonville, Ark. Mixed Liquors; the Lafayette, La. Lus Cajuns and the Littleton/Englewood, Colo., Comrade Commandos.

“I push them hard; I know I do. That’s why we’re so successful.”

Mike Young, CRWS manager of systems operations

“Having the out-of-state teams compete was exciting for us,” said Mike Young, CRWS manager of systems operations, who trains the CReWSers. “It’s more fun for us with more competitors; it seems more like a mini-national competition, and it gave us all a good dress rehearsal.”

This year’s competition included an extra challenge: the weather. Galveston suffered an overnight storm, plus morning rain and strong winds during the second day of competition, adding another dimension to the safety, collection system and maintenance events.

Despite the additional challenge, the CReWSers emerged the overall winner. In Division II, the Littleton/Englewood Comrade Commandos took home the title. This team also has two national wins to its name.

In addition to the category wins and the overall victory, the CReWSers’ David Brown received the David Barber Competitive Spirit Award, given to the competitor with the best spirit and drive. This distinction represents one of the highest honors a competitor can receive and is voted on by fellow competitors. This award was created in 2008 in memory of the late David Barber, a longtime member of the Dillo Xxpress team.

“‘Our goal is to continue honing our strong points and shoring up our weakest event, which is the process control competition,’” said Young. “‘I push them hard; I know I do. That’s why we’re so successful.’”

The October/November 2013 issue of inTRA will update readers on the CReWSers’ success.

The TRA CReWSers:
David Brown
Dale Burrow
Rauld Juarez
Steve Price

The TRA CReWSers, shown here as they complete the Operations Challenge Maintenance event, brought home their 16th consecutive state title.

Teague takes fourth-place win in statewide Junior Meter Madness Competition

Larry Teague, the Trinity River Authority’s Water Careers Education intern from the Arlington Independent School District, placed fourth in the statewide Junior Meter Madness Competition held as part of Texas Water 2013 in Galveston. This fast-paced contest pits competitors against each other and the clock to assemble a working water meter from a bucket of assorted parts. Teague competed against other students from Arlington ISD, along with students from Irving ISD. Prior to Texas Water, the teams also met in Irving at the Valley View Municipal Center for a preliminary competition, in which Teague placed second. He is a senior at Arlington High School.

DCRWS staff recognized for support of WEAT presidency

John Bennett, project manager for the Trinity River Authority’s Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System and immediate past president of the Water Environment Association of Texas, recently recognized DCRWS staff members Mike Roser, Robert Ray and Julie Wilson for their support during his presidency. “They kept the plant operating smoothly and kept me informed anytime I was busy taking care of WEAT business,” said Bennett. “They all took on additional workloads in order to lighten mine, and I will forever be grateful to them for their support.”

In recognition of their efforts, Bennett formally presented Roser, Ray and Wilson with the WEAT President’s Service Award during the TRA board of directors’ regularly scheduled April meeting.

“They all took on additional workloads in order to lighten mine…”

Bennett also publicly recognized Patty Cleveland, assistant Northern Region manager, for her encouragement and support of Bennett’s participation in WEAT activities throughout his career.

Teague assembles a water meter as part of a preliminary Meter Madness competition.
The Trinity River Authority’s pretreatment division plays a vital role in protecting TRA employees and facilities, and, ultimately, the health of the Trinity River basin. The work they do largely assures TRA’s compliance with the U.S. Clean Water Act, designed to keep pollutants out of the nation’s waters and ensure fishable and swimmable water quality levels. As efficient as the wastewater treatment process may be, most facilities, TRA’s included, are designed to treat domestic wastes from householders, but not to treat toxic or non-conventional pollutants that may be present in industrial waste. Instead, such pollutants must be handled by industrial waste. TRA’s pretreatment program is also worker safety. “I like to think of our team as our facility workers’ first line of defense,” said Moore. “The work that we do protects them from fumes, sparks, explosions, or other hazards associated with toxic pollutants that might otherwise make their way into the system.” The National Pretreatment Program requires all large facilities, those that are designed to treat flows of more than 5 million gallons per day, along with smaller plants that accept wastewater from industrial users that could affect the plant or its discharges, to submit local pretreatment programs to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Doing so provides several benefits; it prevents interference with the operation of a treatment facility; it prevents the introduction of pollutants that could pass through a treatment facility into the receiving body of water; it improves the opportunity for reuse or recycling of treated effluent and biosolids; and it prevents the introduction of pollutants that could cause health or safety problems to the environment or the general public.

According to Environmental Services Coordinator Jennifer Moore, a chief purpose of TRA’s pretreatment program is also worker safety. “I like to think of our team as our facility workers’ first line of defense,” said Moore. “The work that we do protects them from fumes, sparks, explosions, or other hazards associated with toxic pollutants that might otherwise make their way into the system.” The National Pretreatment Program requires all large facilities, defined as those designed to treat flows of more than 5 million gallons per day, along with smaller plants that accept wastewater from industrial users that could affect the plant or its discharges, to submit local pretreatment programs to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Doing so provides several benefits; it prevents interference with the operation of a treatment facility; it prevents the introduction of pollutants that could pass through a treatment facility into the receiving body of water; it improves the opportunity for reuse or recycling of treated effluent and biosolids; and it prevents the introduction of pollutants that could cause health or safety problems to the environment or the general public.

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GENERAL MANAGER’S MESSAGE

Option agreement helps implement state water plan

While we might see some debate about the best ways to meet future demand, there is little disagreement that water shortages will become a reality if planners can’t find a way to access new supplies. Such inter-basin transfers may play an important role in that process.

In the Trinity River Authority’s case, the majority – 81 percent – of the Trinity River basin falls into either Region C, including the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, or Region H, which includes the Houston metropolitan area. In fact, the Trinity River basin accounts for the majority of Region H’s surface water supplies. Since 2008, one of the key strategies of the Region H water plan has been to assume an inter-basin transfer at some point from TRA to the San Jacinto River Authority to meet the needs of SJRA’s Montgomery County customers.

Toward that end, at its regularly scheduled April meeting, the TRA board of directors voted to approve an option agreement with SJRA for the sale of up to 50,000 acre-feet per year of water from Lake Livingston. The SJRA board of directors previously approved the same agreement during its regularly scheduled meeting in March. The agreement requires SJRA to pay an annual option fee.

This agreement accomplishes several things and represents a key step toward fully implementing the ideals of the state water plan. At its simplest, it provides up to a 15-year option period for the two river authorities to complete all steps – including necessary approvals for an inter-basin transfer – necessary to move water from Lake Livingston to Lake Conroe. We have a long way to go and many steps left in the process, but this is an important first step. We’ve taken action on an important component of the state water plan that has been in place and supported by the Region H planning group for several years.

Conducting long-term water supply planning is a responsibility TRA takes very seriously. We know it’s essential to our state’s success. We have to get water to the people who need it, and that simply can’t be done without strategic partnerships, especially between river basins. What we have been able to achieve through our partnership with SJRA is a great example of what Texas’ major water providers can do when they work together.

We’re still very early in the process. At a future date, TRA and SJRA will collaborate to determine appropriate timing and logistics for delivering water from Lake Livingston to Lake Conroe. TRA will keep inTRA readers apprised of progress and milestones along the way.

TRA proves strong competitor in Texas Shootout

Texas Water attendees are likely familiar with the Texas Shootout event, which allows anyone to race the clock and other competitors as they saw through pipe, similar to the Operations Challenge teams. The ultimate goal: bragging rights and the title of Fastest Saw Cut in Texas. Divisions include men’s, women’s and pro. This year’s event also marked the first time that utility executive staff had a chance to compete for the title.

The Trinity River Authority’s Northern Region Manager Fiona M. Allen, P.E., and Assistant Northern Region Manager Patty Cleveland stepped up as the first two competitors in the tournament. The two went head-to-head, sawing through an eight-inch pipe. Cleveland emerged the victor with a time of 58.25 seconds, advancing to compete against Austin Water Utilities Director Greg Meszaros in the next round. Meszaros, who cut a four-inch pipe in just under three seconds, edged out Cleveland by only .2 seconds.

TRA’s Raulud Juarez, senior operator at CRWS, won second place in the pro division with a time of 8.75 seconds for cutting through an eight-inch pipe. The event raised more than $200 for the Joe King II Memorial Fund.
New Hires

CRWS welcomes
Marius Eugenio as interceptor system specialist; Marcus Monthbriand, Christopher Farris and Dennis Randle as operators I; Kendrick Lane as maintenance mechanic I; Kenneth Hagewood as lab technician II; and Vincent Ball as senior electrician.

HRWSS is glad to have James Wars as maintenance helper.

Beverly King joins TCWSP as operator I, and David Terry is welcomed as maintenance mechanic II.

GO is excited to have Janet Marcello and Sherri van der Wege as senior accountant and engineering services manager.

LLP welcomes Caleb Shelly as maintenance helper.

EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Congratulations, TRA Families!

LeAnne, wife of Operator I Shawen Potts, TCWSP, and a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps, has received a general’s challenge coin for her outstanding performance on an inspection at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth. Much like a certificate of commendation or letter of appreciation, such a coin is awarded to service members who go above and beyond the call of duty.

Mikey, son of Mike Drouin, maintenance mechanic I, CRWS, qualified to participate in the Texas high school state track meet in Austin. He and his teammates represented Colleyville Heritage High School and the Grapevine ISD in the 4 x 400 relay. The team won first place in district competition and took second place in regional competition, missing the top slot by less than a second. Mikey runs varsity track and has already lettered this year.

Assistant Southern Region Manager Bill Holder and his family welcome granddaughter Kynlie Rae Holder, born April 12, 2013. Kynlie weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces. Her parents are Will and Alicia Holder.

Sarah Elizabeth Mikus, daughter of Greg Mikus, CRWS chief maintenance mechanic and his wife Tracy, graduated this spring from L.D. Bell High School. Sarah plans to attend Tarrant County College to earn her basic credits and then move on to a larger university that will prepare her for her passion for social work.

Congratulations to TRA’s team for winning Best Camp for its drive-in movie set as part of the 2013 Polk County Relay for Life. Special thanks to Marie Burns, LLP custodian, who has served as team captain for the past two years, and to Terry Burks, LLP senior maintenance mechanic, who created the roadster and old pickup for the drive-in. Event participants raised more than $235,000 for the American Cancer Society.

Congratulations to the staff at TRA’s Tarrant County Water Supply Project for winning the North Central Texas Regional School Best Tasting Water contest. The panel of judges for the 20th annual contest determined that the water TCWSP submitted was the winner of the contest in the surface water category. The contest is sponsored by the Laboratory Analysts Section of the Texas Water Utilities Association.

Congratulations to the staff at TRA’s Tarrant County Water Supply Project for winning Best Camp for its drive-in movie set as part of the 2013 Polk County Relay for Life. Special thanks to Marie Burns, LLP custodian, who has served as team captain for the past two years, and to Terry Burks, LLP senior maintenance mechanic, who created the roadster and old pickup for the drive-in. Event participants raised more than $235,000 for the American Cancer Society.

Suzanne Wen, daughter of Hong Wu, planning and environmental management assistant, graduated from Martin High School with summa cum laude honors. She will attend Rice University this fall, majoring in biomedical engineering.

Promotions

Sid McCain was promoted to TCWSP project manager.

Elia Ruiz II was promoted to electronics technician II at TMCRWS.

Clifford Woods was promoted to operator II at DCRWS.

Melissa Saniuk was promoted to accounting manager at GO.

Mark Reeves was promoted to operator II. Christopher Salazar was promoted to senior storekeeper and David Monroe was promoted to senior operator at CRWS.

Assistant Southern Region Manager Bill Holder and his family welcome granddaughter Kynlie Rae Holder, born April 12, 2013. Kynlie weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces. Her parents are Will and Alicia Holder.

Congratulations to Carion Taylor, southern region services coordinator, on receiving her five-year service award. She is shown here with Dewayne Caburn, manager of southern region support services.
CRWS operators receive Medal of Honor for Heroism

Chief operators Steve Price and Daniel Gonzalez, along with Senior Operator Raudel Juarez at the Trinity River Authority’s Central Regional Wastewater System, received the Water Environment Association of Texas’ Medal of Honor for Heroism at Texas Water 2013. This award recognizes individuals or groups who demonstrate exceptional bravery in the performance of heroic behavior toward their fellow man.

In late March 2012, the control room at CRWS received news that a contractor had fallen into the wet well at pump station 6. Price immediately secured the pumps at the pump station, while Juarez and Gonzalez called first responders and secured the gates at pump stations 6 and 6A, thus preventing the person being pulled into the opposite well. Once first responders arrived, Juarez and Gonzalez coordinated rescue efforts. As soon as crews successfully located the individual, Gonzalez secured the valve at the pump station to isolate the well. Back in the control room, Price monitored the wet well and manipulated the pumps to protect the area and ensure continued operation of pump station 6A to prevent backflow into pump station 6. After securing pump station 6, Juarez and Gonzalez continued to assist first responders, while Price helped direct the fire department to the accident location. Juarez led paramedics to the accident victim, who, by this time, had been retrieved from the bar screen area of pump station 6. With the arrival of several more ladder units and paramedics, Juarez and Gonzalez continued to assist with directions while the fire department assumed command of the incident.

“As a result of their expertise, professionalism and outstanding safety training, the trio assisted in saving a life.”

“As a fellow TRA employee and a WEAT leader, I cannot commend these gentlemen enough,” said John Bennett, project manager of TRA’s Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System and immediate WEAT past president. “They were thinking quickly, relying on their safety training and doing everything they could to help.”

As a result of their expertise, professionalism and outstanding safety training, the trio assisted in saving a life. All three received a standing ovation, first at Texas Water 2013, where they formally received their awards, and again at the April meeting of the TRA board of directors, where they also were honored as special guests.

Bennett receives WEF Outstanding Service Award

DCRWS Project Manager and WEAT Past President John Bennett receives the WEF Outstanding Service Award from WEF President Cordell Samuels.

John Bennett, project manager of the Trinity River Authority’s Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System, has received the Water Environment Federation’s Outstanding Service Award. This award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the water environment profession and to WEF and its member associations.

Bennett began working for TRA the day after he graduated from high school. Originally hired as a seasonal grounds care employee for TRA’s Central Regional Wastewater System, he soon advanced to maintenance mechanic I and soon after to chief maintenance mechanic. His skill, intelligence and perseverance in that position led to his reputation for getting the job done. During his career, Bennett has accrued more than 1,200 hours of TCEQ-approved training hours and earned his Class A wastewater certification in 2000. He graduated Phi Theta Kappa from Tarrant County College in 2001, and is a past recipient of the V.M. Ehlers Scholarship. He is currently pursuing a degree in management from Dallas Baptist University.

Bennett has participated tremendously in the benefit of others in the water and wastewater industry. His knowledge of maintenance procedures and process control allows him to serve as technical adviser not only to operators at TRA, but also at facilities across the state. He has served the industry as an instructor in several capacities and is a past team captain of TRA’s CREWSers Operations Challenge team. He has also held various leadership positions in WEF and the Water Environment Association of Texas, of which he is the immediate past president.
TPWD stripers extraction event proves great success

Since 1980, the Trinity River Authority’s Lake Livingston Project staff have assisted the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by providing access to the restricted area just below Lake Livingston Dam, where the oxygen-rich waters attract large numbers of striped bass. Over the years, this area has proven an ideal location for capturing brood stock to use in fingerling production and stocking programs.

Dam, where the oxygen-rich waters reach the water’s edge and towing support by preparing a ramp to and stocking programs. Tra and TIFP seek public input on design of middle Trinity River study

The Trinity River Authority and the Texas Instream Flow Program recently teamed up to host two public meetings in the mid-Trinity River basin to explain the purpose of a detailed study of the Trinity River that will be conducted over the next several years. Attendees also discussed the geographical area covered and how the public and stakeholders can participate in the study.

The project, centered on the area downstream of Dallas to Lake Livingston, seeks to identify how much water should flow in the middle reach of the river to ensure a healthy aquatic environment. This stretch of river travels approximately 270 miles through Kaufman, Ellis, Henderson, Navarro, Freestone, Houston, Leon and Madison counties. The public meetings took place in temperatures once a week so we’d know for sure when we reached ideal spawning temperatures. ”

TPWD collected a total of 178 female and 141 male striped bass at this year’s extraction event, and hopes to stock Texas lakes with nearly 9 million striped and hybrid striped bass.

Since 1880, the Trinity River Authority’s Lake Livingston Project staff have assisted the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by providing access to the restricted area just below Lake Livingston Dam, where the oxygen-rich waters attract large numbers of striped bass. Over the years, this area has proven an ideal location for capturing brood stock to use in fingerling production and stocking programs.

TRA’s Webster Mangham, manager of special studies and assessments, leads a group of stakeholders in discussion of a middle Trinity River study.
The Trinity River Authority’s Red Oak Creek Regional Wastewater System now holds the title of Texas’ Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant of the Year for Category 2, which includes facilities treating from one to 15 million gallons per day. This award, given by the Water Environment Association of Texas, is presented to a municipal wastewater treatment plant in Texas that has consistently exhibited outstanding performance of daily activities beyond the normal call of duty.

“We couldn’t be prouder of Project Manager Billy Hill and his team at ROCRWS,” said Northern Region Manager Fiona M. Allen, P.E. “They work so hard every day to make sure the plant is operating to its fullest potential, and this recognition is a well-deserved public acknowledgement of their dedication to producing the highest quality effluent.”

Facilities nominated for this award are subjected to a high level of scrutiny by representatives from 14 regional WEAT sections across Texas. Nominees must show a history of excellent permit compliance; an effective system of historical records and annual reports; a strong safety program; highly qualified operators and a detailed description of the facility, including treatment processes and capacity. Winning nominations must fulfill all requirements.

“I can’t thank my team enough for their continued effort and dedication,” said Hill. “Without them being on the front line, 24/7, observing, testing, adjusting, operating and maintaining the system, we could never achieve something like this. This award is dedicated to them for their outstanding loyalty and professionalism.”

Capable of serving a population of 60,000, ROCRWS consists of a 4.6-million-gallon-per-day treatment plant, plus nearly 28 miles of pipeline, and treats water to meet one of the most stringent limits in the DFW Metroplex. The treatment plant includes drum screens, aeration basins, aerobic digesters and final clarifiers. Odor-reducing biofilters dewater biosolids, and the facility uses ultraviolet light to disinfect treated water before discharging it into the Red Oak Creek ecosystem.

Designed to preserve the rural ambiance of the area surrounding the plant site, the treatment facility is sheltered from the road by trees and gently rolling berms, and it features a pastoral landscape design with low-intensity lighting, noise control features and an administration building designed to resemble a country home.

The system began service in 1991 and is currently permitted to treat 4.6 million gallons per day, with an average daily flow of approximately 3.3 MGD. The system serves all of Ovilla, Glenn Heights and Red Oak, along with portions of DeSoto, Cedar Hill and Lancaster.