Riverside County Students Prepare for Year-long Solar Boat Competition

Competition provides students with water knowledge and teamwork skills

Riverside, Calif. – High school students from throughout Southern California are learning about science, technology, engineering, math and even visual arts thanks to a unique partnership between Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Western Municipal Water District. During this year-long Solar Cup program, students come together to build a solar-powered boat, which they will race in May 2015.

In Western’s service area students from Elsinore and Lakeside high schools in Lake Elsinore, with co-sponsor Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, as well as Riverside’s John W. North and Norte Vista high schools, both co-sponsored by Riverside Public Utilities, have been busy working on their boats with the help of an advisor from each high school in eager anticipation for race weekend.

To earn a coveted spot at the annual Solar Cup competition, is an honor for any high-schooler. Western’s students spend the entire year attending boat building and technical workshops, completing reports and producing public service announcements; the result is the three-day sprint and endurance competition at Lake Skinner in May.

“The competition isn’t easy, the students work tirelessly for months,” said Liselle DeGrave, educational outreach specialist. “But, the experience is phenomenal. Engineering, alternative energy sources, teamwork and of course water resources are all part of the learning process for the students.”

Each year, Metropolitan assigns boat allotments to its member agencies. As a member agency, Western Municipal Water District in Riverside, was given three allotments to sponsor teams for the 2014-15 school-year.

“We have participated in Solar Cup for the last eight years,” says Rick Wolter, Solar Cup advisor/teacher from Elsinore High School. “Due to program capacity limitations, we are excited to be able to partner our school with Lakeside High School. The partnership allows one more element of learning for my students.”
The Metropolitan-sponsored Solar Cup is the country’s largest solar boat competition, with roughly 700 students from Riverside, Los Angeles, Orange San Bernardino and San Diego counties participating. The event brings together interdisciplinary student teams that participate in activities that complement curriculum in science, technology, engineering and math as well as environmental studies and visual arts. The 2015 Solar Cup competition will take place in Lake Skinner in Temecula from May 15-17.

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