Western GM Selected for Excellence in Water Leadership

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – For more than 25 years, Western Municipal Water District’s General Manager John Rossi has devoted his career to public service. His dedication to leading Western in securing regional water supplies and his many achievements in water industry were honored with a 2013 Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Excellence in Water Leadership Award.

“When I decided to go into public service in the water field, my goal was to develop additional sources of water while providing great service to customers and reducing costs. I’ve worked with some of the best and brightest professionals in the industry, who’ve helped make projects a reality,” said Rossi. “It’s an honor to receive an award for something that I’ve always had a passion for.”

Tim Quinn, ACWA executive director, said, “Rossi was selected for his long history of leadership, problem-solving and numerous other contributions to California water.”

Rossi is Western’s court-appointed watermaster for the Santa Ana River and the San Bernardino groundwater basin. He serves in numerous leadership positions throughout the region and state, including second vice president for the WateReuse Association and the president of the California Utility Executives Management Association. He’s also a board member for the Urban Water Institute and the University of California Riverside’s Water Science & Policy Center’s Advisory Board, to name a few. During his nearly 10-year tenure at Western, Rossi’s excellent working relationships with the District’s engaged and supportive board of directors has provided the synergy needed to pursue and achieve a variety of ambitious programs and projects. Board President Tom Evans, explained, “John’s steadfast approach to developing local sources of water and collaborating with agencies to ensure customers in western Riverside County receive safe and secure water at their tap is commendable.”

Celeste Cantu, SAWPA general manager, echoed Evans’ comment. “He’s a true supporter of water, the community and the environment, and his contributions to water can be seen throughout the region.”

Increasing local water supplies through securing local water rights, water recycling, groundwater desalting, stormwater capture, water transfers and investments in technology are many of the top priorities Rossi has spearheaded since he joined Western in 2004. He and his team have also been able to achieve unprecedented success by securing a $51 million grant from the California Department of Public Health for the region’s Chino Desalter expansion.

Rossi, as well as co-recipient Marsi Steirer, deputy director at the city of San Diego Public Utilities Department, were awarded the ability to allocate a $2,500 charitable donation to an organization associated with California water. “I chose the WateReuse Foundation as it’s dedicated to scientific research and very effective,” Rossi said.

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