Western’s McKinney Underwood Named Community & Government Affairs Director
Continues focus on community engagement and legislative outreach

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Public relations veteran Michele McKinney Underwood was promoted recently to Western Municipal Water District’s director of community & government affairs, a strategic and streamlining move by Western’s General Manager John Rossi.

“Michele’s public affairs and marketing expertise combined with her extensive knowledge of the District, as well as the region and community, made this move the perfect choice,” explained Rossi. “A true public servant, she’s had tremendous success in managing Western’s outreach programs, and I’m confident that she’ll continue to spearhead a forward-thinking approach to our engagement efforts that will benefit our customers and stakeholders.”

In the position of director of community & government affairs, McKinney Underwood is responsible for overseeing the community engagement, customer interaction, outreach, educational and legislative functions at the District, in addition to assisting with the District’s comprehensive strategic planning. She has worked at the District since 2001; most recently serving as the community affairs manager. Prior to Western, McKinney Underwood worked at The Press-Enterprise where she coordinated public relations for the newspaper and for the last five years of her career managed the company’s educational program. She holds a bachelor’s degree in communication studies from California State University, San Bernardino, and is also a graduate of the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce Leadership Riverside. McKinney Underwood is a member of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Communications Committee and the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) Communications Committee; she is a member of the Public Relations Society of America, Inland Empire Chapter.

Department efficiencies also included the promotion of Rachel McGuire to community affairs supervisor; she previously served as the District’s senior-level community affairs representative. McGuire will help lead day-to-day department activities, including community engagement, special projects, publications, social media, crisis communications and the District’s educational program.

McGuire joined the District in 2011 and has a decade of public-sector communications experience. Prior to Western, she has served in communication positions at the cities of Carlsbad, Palmdale and Lancaster, Calif. She currently serves as the president for the California Association of Public Information Officials. Her education includes a master’s in business administration from the University of Redlands and a bachelor’s degree in communication studies from the University of California, Los Angeles.
The recent addition of Lana Haddad, a seasoned government affairs professional, rounds out the streamlining of the Community & Government Affairs Office. Haddad recently joined the department as Western’s government affairs liaison. She builds upon the District’s strong legislative relationships at the local, state and federal levels with an emphasis on water supply reliability, financial stability and water use efficiency.

Haddad’s previous experience includes work for the city of Glendale’s Department of Water and Power as a senior administrative analyst. She also worked at the city in the position of administrative analyst and at California State University Long Beach as an administrative support coordinator. A graduate of California State University, Long Beach with a bachelor’s degree in Women’s studies, Haddad is also pursuing her master’s in public administration from California State University, Northridge. She is a member of the legislative committees for the California Special District Association and the California Municipal Utilities Association and represents the District’s legislative interests with a variety of related associations including the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority and the Association of California Water Agencies.

# # #

*Western Municipal Water District provides water supply, wastewater disposal and water resource management to the public in a safe, reliable, environmentally sensitive and financially responsible manner.*