TO:     HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM:   CITY MANAGER                DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS
DATE:   APRIL 25, 2005              CMR:217:05

SUBJECT: PALO ALTO REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLANT
HONORED WITH THREE CALIFORNIA WATER ENVIRONMENT
ASSOCIATION STATE AWARDS

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

DISCUSSION
The Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant serves the Cities of Palo Alto, Mountain View Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, East Palo Alto Sanitary District, and Stanford University. The Plant is situated near the Palo Alto Baylands and has been selected by the California Water Environment Association (CWEA), a not-for-profit association of 7,700-plus professionals in the wastewater industry, to receive awards for Plant of the Year (Greater than 20 MGD), Plant Safety Program of the Year (26-75 employees), and Supervisor of the Year (Howard Yancey).

CWEA has been California's leader in wastewater training and certification since 1927. Every year CWEA offers hundreds of educational events locally, regionally, and statewide, training thousands of wastewater professionals annually. CWEA is dedicated to the educational development of its members, who are wastewater professionals. CWEA conducts training, disseminates information, produces training manuals, and tests for competency. The CWEA awards program serves to recognize outstanding professional achievements within the wastewater field, improve the professional status of all personnel working in the wastewater industry and related fields, and stimulate public awareness of the importance of wastewater treatment to public health and the water environment.

The CWEA Plant of the Year Award is based on compliance results, innovative practices, management systems, cost effectiveness and reduction, and other evidence of superior plant operations. The Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant (PARWQCP) sets an enviable standard of excellence for Operations and Maintenance. It has earned recognition for its long-term commitment to the public and positive contributions to environmental quality. The Plant has progressively improved its permit compliance record and has had zero violations for all of 2003 and 2004. The Plant negotiated a new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit that became effective November 2003. The new Enterococci Bacteriological Limit is saving over $100,000 per year in chemical costs. The Plant is leading the way in water recycling, environmental compliance, and continues to prepare for the next generations through its long-term goals study. This is the fourth State Plant of the Year award bestowed upon the regional treatment plant.
The CWEA Safety Program of the Year Award selection process examines the facilities safety record, incident investigation process, safety program, safety training, and employee participation. Specific areas that have made the treatment plant’s safety program a leader are: consistent training during weekly tailgate safety and health topics; automated external defibrillator (AED) instruction and on-site availability; security video camera system to enhance EPA’s Risk Management Plan; annual City of Palo Alto hazardous communication training; pulmonary function testing for respirator users; CPR/first aid training; chlorine/sulfur dioxide emergency response training; hazardous materials technician and incident commander that involves close participation with the Palo Alto Fire Department; and a job safety analysis program that identifies and eliminates hazards before they can cause accidents. The Plant has received this State award five times.

The CWEA Supervisor of the Year Award honors achievements in the wastewater industry that are evaluated by reviewing the supervisor’s summary of experience and duties, ability to plan and set objectives, problem identification and correction, setting a positive example, personnel problem solving, safety improvements, communication skills and training. Howard Yancey has been in the water quality industry for more than twenty-five years and he has been an employee of the PARWQCP for twenty-two. His dedication is expressed in many of his organizational contributions such as creating and administering the plant's hearing conservation and respiratory protection program, PARWQCP website administrator, and numerous improvements to both process control and personnel management. Howard is the third recipient of the State Supervisor of the Year Award from the treatment plant.

Bill Miks, Plant Manager, as well as Jannette Huber and Howard Yancey, both Operations Supervisors, attended CWEA’s 77th annual training conference on April 15, 2005 to accept the awards. Awards are given at the local section level and then advance to state competition. Winners at the state level are submitted to the Water Environment Federation for competition at the national level.


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