



# Purple Pipe

Volume IV Summer 2015



## Upper Narrows Pipeline Project Reaches Milestone



A view inside the 84" Upper Narrows tunnel where it meets a smaller 60" tunnel underneath C St. in Victorville. Large pipes will fill these tunnels to carry wastewater from the east side of the Victor Valley back to VWRA.



A 12 ton microtunneling machine being pulled from the Upper Narrows tunnel.

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The Upper Narrows Pipeline Project reached a major milestone in June with tunneling excavation completed from the Kemper Campbell Ranch area to 7th St in Old Town Victorville. Using a large 84" tunnel boring machine (TBM) at the Kemper Campbell Ranch site, workers managed to drill about a quarter of a mile through the rocky hills in a westerly direction and connect with a smaller tunnel. A 60" tunnel had previously been drilled in an easterly direction from 7th St underneath C St. This was nothing short of a major accomplishment with very little margin for error. Crews have been removing the TBM and microtunneling equipment from the tunnel. They plan to remove the cart tracks and put concrete on the floor before installing the huge pipes inside the tunnel. Once completed, the pipes in the tunnels will carry wastewater from Apple Valley, Hesperia, Victorville and Spring Valley Lake to the main VWRA plant. The Pipeline Project will replace a temporary sewage line that was built after a series of storms damaged the previous VWRA pipes back in 2010.

### In Memoriam

Our condolences to the family and friends of David Padilla, a contract worker from Pahrump, NV, who was killed in an accident at the Upper Narrows site on June 25th.



## A Message from our General Manager

I doubt the memory of the look on our construction manager's face, as he stared through my office window, will fade any time soon. I knew something very bad had happened. The tragedy of what unfolded that day at the Upper Narrows and the loss of life weighs upon the soul of everyone involved in the project. It resulted in the worst kind of change, that which is instantaneous, unforeseen and unwanted.



It reminds me of my drive to work one morning a few years back, when I came upon a terrible accident. As I held Jared's 13 year old hand, watching his gasping lungs and ashen face, every cell in my body prayed that he would survive. He did not. I still recall the look of his mom running barefoot in pajamas from the house down the street on that cold morning. Or his father leaping from his tow truck at the police barricade and sprinting to his son's side.

There is the show business saying about how "the show must go on", and indeed life goes on, but somehow it is different. The distinction is almost tangible, but just out of grasp of mind and body.

I also think back on the recent passing of friends and colleagues Scott Weldy and Manual Benitez. They too were taken quickly and their passing was unforeseen.

Too often we focus on the problems we have today, at this moment, and forget the blessings we received yesterday and last year. Regardless, death demands that we change. It confronts us head on. There is no way around it or through it. While death certainly brings sadness, it also brings with it an opportunity to reflect and consider what we value most in life. Perhaps, that is its greatest blessing, the moments of reflection... a pause in our busy lives to be with family and friends. Hopefully we will take the time to appreciate the little blessings that life bestows upon us, for it is the sum of those moments that makes something great.

*Logan Olds*  
Logan Olds, General Manager

## VWRA Finance Team Wins GFOA Award

The Finance Department at VWRA has been awarded the Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). The award was presented to the VWRA Finance Department for its comprehensive annual report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting. GFOA spokesman Stephen Gauthier said the award "represents a significant accomplishment" by the VWRA Finance Department. This is the fifth year that VWRA has earned this honor. Chieko Keagy, VWRA Finance Supervisor said, "I am proud of my team who works effectively and diligently."



(l-r, Xiwei Wang, accountant, Chieko Keagy, finance supervisor, Kyle Parker, accounting technician)

## VWRA Employees on CWEA-DAMS Board



VWRA's Logan Olds, Kristi Casteel (far left) and Latif Laari (far right) being sworn in as officers of CWEA-DAMS.

VWRA is well represented on the new CWEA-DAMS Board. Lead Environmental Compliance Inspector Latif Laari was sworn in as the new vice president of the CWEA-DAMS (California Water Environment Association-Desert and Mountain Section). VWRA GM Logan Olds was sworn in as treasurer and Secretary to the GM Kristi Casteel returns as CWEA-DAMS secretary. They all took the oath of office at a June luncheon at the Top of the Lake in Silver Lakes. CWEA-DAMS is hosting its annual Vendors Fair & Air Pack Derby on Thursday, August 13 at the Big Bear Elks Lodge. We'll see you there!



# VWRA Board of Commissioners



**Russ Blewett**  
City of Hesperia



**James N. Kennedy**  
City of Victorville



**Scott Nassif**  
Town of Apple Valley



**Jeffrey O. Rigney**  
County of San Bernardino

## Assemblyman Obernolte Tours VWRA Plant



Assemblyman Jay Obernolte and VWRA GM Logan Olds discuss water recycling and biogas to energy programs.

Assemblyman Jay Obernolte toured the main VWRA plant in Victorville in mid-May to learn more about our innovative biogas to energy program and the water recycling process. Assemblyman Obernolte sits on the Utility and Commerce Committee in Sacramento, which oversees public utilities as well as the California Public Utilities Commission. VWRA General Manager Logan Olds led the tour and showed Assemblyman Obernolte the Omnivore system. Omnivore is a first of its kind process that dramatically increases the production of biogas or methane. The biogas is used to power large 2G generators that provide virtually all of the electricity used at the VWRA plant. In light of the California drought, Assemblyman Obernolte was also interested in the the water recycling process at VWRA and how that process could be used throughout the state to help relieve future water shortages.

## Top State Water Officials Visit VWRA

A contingent of top state water officials visited the VWRA plant in early June. The group included Felicia Marcus, the chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, SWRCB vice-chair Frances Spivy-Weber and California EPA Undersecretary Gordon Burns. The State Water Resources Control Board has been tasked with creating a drought plan for the entire state, which includes mandatory water conservation. VWRA Director of Operations Gilbert Perez led the tour of the plant and showed the officials our UV water disinfection system as well as the Mojave River outfall where up to 7 million gallons per day of treated, recycled water is released. UV disinfection is the final step in our recycled water program. The VWRA stop was part of a larger tour of the region hosted by the Mojave Water Agency.



(l-r) Gilbert Perez VWRA Director of Operations, Felicia Marcus, chair of SWRCB, Frances Spivy-Weber, vice chair of SWRCB, Erik Ekdahl, SWRCB groundwater management, Gordon Burns, Undersecretary of Cal EPA.



# Around the Plant

## Latif Laari Employee of the Quarter

Lead Environmental Compliance Inspector Latif Laari is a man who is passionate about his job. He loves talking about flow rates and manholes. But his journey to VVWRA was a long one. Latif grew up in Casablanca, Morocco and spent some time in France before coming to the US in 1991. Early on, he worked as a computer network infrastructure operations manager. After taking a wastewater management class from VVWRA GM Logan Olds at VVC, Latif joined VVWRA as an intern in February of 2010. He was hired as an EC Inspector in training five months later. In 2011, Latif became Lead Environmental Compliance Inspector. In that position Latif has been instrumental in implementing the Allmax Operator 10 software (Ops 10). With his training and initiative, Latif has helped create and improve the MDAQMD permit data tracking, created formulas to calculate run hours and fuel consumption for emissions inventory. In addition, Latif created data views and hot spots for tracking ADM, septage and FOG received at the plant and worked with the Finance Dept. to set up septage billing reports for individual septage haulers, based on their deliveries to VVWRA. Latif is being recognized as Employee of the Quarter for the efficient, effective and professional way he goes about his job and administers various projects. Congratulations to Latif!



Latif Laari

### New Operations Supervisor Eugene Davis



Congratulations to Eugene Davis who has been promoted to Operations Supervisor!

### Member of the Board



GM Logan Olds installed for another year on the VVC Foundation board.

## Employee Spotlight--Ryan Love

Congratulations to Senior Operator Ryan Love who recently passed his Grade 5 certification test and has been promoted to lead operator. Ryan is a 25 year old Hesperia native who graduated from Sultana High School. Before coming to VVWRA, he worked for 2 1/2 years as an EMT while attending VVC. After researching careers in wastewater, Ryan came by VVWRA for a tour led by Gilbert Perez. He was impressed with what he saw. Ryan promptly applied for an opening as an operator in training. He was hired a year and a half ago and recently earned his Grade 5 certification. Way to go Ryan!



### Grade 1 Cert!



Congratulations to Salvador Carlos who earned his Grade 1 certification!



Wes Bardsley Electrical Instrumentation Tech 2

New face @ VVWRA

subscribe to the **Johnny Wastewater** YouTube channel

Follow **VVWRA** on Social Media

facebook.com/vvwastewater









# Hesperia & AV Subregionals Update



Hesperia subregional



Apple Valley subregional

Construction is well underway at the site for the Hesperia water reclamation plant (WRP). Workers have been excavating, pouring concrete and installing piping. Similar work is just getting underway at the site of the Apple Valley WRP at Brewster Park. South of the park crews are installing new WAS pipelines, that will take solid waste and extra wastewater away from the subregional and out to the main VVWRA plant in Victorville. Both WRP sites are scheduled to be completed by mid-2017.

## Getting out the word!



VVWRA continues to reach out to the public and those in our industry to talk about our successes and challenges. General Manager Logan Olds (l) spoke the the Apple Valley Chamber of Commerce in May about the Subregional being built at Brewster Park. While Director of Operations Gilbert Perez (r) talked about Food Waste to Digestion at a CWEA/SARBS training seminar in Anaheim in June.



VVWRA is proud to support the Don't Trash Our Desert campaign. Don't Trash Our Desert is a coalition of private citizens and public agencies that have come together to help promote a unified public awareness campaign aimed at keeping our desert clean of litter, illegal dumping and other debris. The idea is that increased awareness will spark a larger movement to keep our community clean. You can learn more about DTOD and how you can help at [donttrashourdesert.com](http://donttrashourdesert.com) or like them on [Facebook.com/donttrashourdesert](https://www.facebook.com/donttrashourdesert).

## New look for Johnny!

VVWRA mascot Johnny Wastewater recently celebrated his 37th birthday and what better way to mark the occasion than with a complete makeover! "We asked a professional artist to give Johnny a new, fresh look. Everyone seems to like him", said VVWRA Public Information Officer David Wylie. Johnny is designed to be a positive representation of the hard working men and women here at VVWRA. He has proved to be very popular amongst our customers and the community at large. Johnny has hundreds of followers on his Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/vvwra](https://www.facebook.com/vvwra)) and has become a regular part of VVWRA's branding.



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## Ask Johnny Wastewater?



**Q.** Hi Johnny! How can recycled water help during the drought?  
--Bill, Hesperia

**A.** Great question Bill! It's important to remember that there is no such thing as "new" water. All water has been reused over and over again throughout history. VVWRA speeds up the natural cleaning process by producing 12 million gallons of recycled water per day at its Victorville plant. VVWRA plans to produce another 2 million gallons per day when the Hesperia and Apple Valley water reclamation facilities are completed in 2017. This is non-potable water that can be used for a number of things like watering parks and golf courses, farming, construction and power generation. Those are things that would normally use our precious drinking water. So, in the short term, recycled water, saves our drinking water supply. In the long term, some of the recycled water is allowed to percolate into the ground to replenish our local downstream aquifers. The water is further purified by Mother Nature before it is used again.

Send questions to [info@vwvra.com](mailto:info@vwvra.com)

## Live Fire Safety Training

Safety is always a top priority at VVWRA. With that in mind, VVWRA employees recently took part in "live fire" safety training. Each employee attended a seminar that reviewed the various classifications of fires. Those include Class A: ordinary combustibles;



Class B: flammable liquids and gases; Class C: live electrical equipment; Class D: combustible metals and Class K: cooking media, such as oils and fats. After the class, employees had the opportunity to put out a "live fire" using a fire extinguisher. VVWRA employees undergo safety training and participate in safety drills throughout the year.

## Old Rock Building a Bit of a Mystery

Hidden away on the very remote, north side of the VVWRA property, there is an unusual stone building. It's bigger than it looks in the photo. It's about 14 feet by 12 1/2 feet and stands more than 12 feet tall. The stones are fitted together tightly with very little mortar. The roof has wooden rafters with a water tank on top. The building was here before VVWRA took over the land and no one is quite sure what it was used for. There have long been rumors that it was a stop for the Pony Express. But local historians say the Pony Express never came through this area. However, various trails did work their way along the Mojave River Basin bringing settlers to the region many years ago. Historians says it may have been a watering station for travellers or for ranchers, but no one seems to know for sure. Still, this unique building is an interesting glimpse into the regions history.



## Don't Flush!



*There are a number of items you shouldn't flush down the toilet and topping that list is prescription drugs! Treatment plants like VVWRA are not designed to filter prescription and over-the-counter drugs. If flushed, the drugs can cause environmental damage, so it's important to dispose of these things properly. Drugs can be taken to local household hazardous waste disposal sites. Occasionally, local agencies host "drop off" events. We also ask that you don't flush wipes, even those that say they are flushable. They can clog pipelines and cause damage to our equipment.*

