

THE PIPELINE

News from the Ventura County Public Works Agency

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FROM THE Director's Desk

Jeff Pratt,
Public Works
Agency Director



Dear Friends,

In this issue of Pipeline we focus on honoring our hard-working, conscientious employees – at all levels. We would also like to welcome our two new directors: Michaela Brown, in Water & Sanitation, and J. Tabin Cosio in Central Services. Get to know these two new directors in the following pages. Both bring an impressive background and are great assets to our Agency.

Our directors and managerial staff are important to us, but none more so than the Operations and Maintenance workers. Follow our two part series, On the Job with O&M. Learn more about the hard working VCPWA team members getting out there every day, rain or shine, keeping equipment working properly, cleaning up roadsides and waterways, and making sure our community has safe drinking water and efficiently working sanitary sewer systems.

Also be sure to save the date for our upcoming VCPWA Picnic, October 8th at Soule Park in Ojai!!

Have a wonderful summer!

All the best,

Jeff Pratt, Director

Welcome...

Michaela Brown

On June 20, 2016, Michaela Brown began her new position as Director of the Ventura County Public Works Agency Water and Sanitation Department. With over 25 years of in-depth engineering experience throughout the U.S. and abroad, Brown brings much more than her impressive resume – we can also count on her excellence in customer service, diplomacy, and community outreach.

“We are delighted to have found a consummate professional to lead our VCPWA team at Water and Sanitation during such a critical time in our state’s history,” said Jeff Pratt, Director of the VCPWA. “Michaela Brown brings experience and expertise that are critical in helping VCPWA work through the many challenges and issues related to water, waste water and solid waste in California, and Ventura County in particular.”

Here are a few fun facts to help you get to know Michaela Brown!

- She served as the Director of Facilities Planning for the U.S. Navy base that supports the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.
- For over 20 years, she served in the Navy’s Civil Engineer Corps.
- She has a B.A. in Civil Engineering from the University of Virginia, A M.S. in Civil Engineering from Texas A&M, and a Master’s of International Policy and Practice from George Washington University.
- She will soon be joined in Ventura County by her husband, Kevin, and 11-year-old daughter, Bridget.

VCPWA is fortunate to have such an accomplished person in the position of Director, and we look forward to many years as beneficiaries of her expertise. Congratulations, and welcome!



Introducing J. Tabin Cosio

New Director of VCPWA Central Services

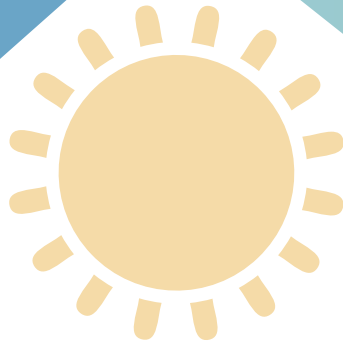


We would like to extend a warm welcome to J. Tabin Cosio, who was appointed as the new Director of PWA Central Services as of June 6, 2016. He brings considerable experience in working with public service agencies, including the City of Oxnard, where he served as Director of Human Resources. He has also held positions as Senior Internal Auditor for the County Auditor-Controller and Budget Analyst for the Public Works Department of Oxnard. This experience, along with several other professional positions he has held, makes him uniquely qualified to lead PWA Central Services toward further excellence.

We asked Mr. Cosio a few questions so we can all get to know him better.

Q: How will your diverse professional background assist you in your new role as Central Services Director?

The breadth and depth of the scope of work Central Services provides for VCPWA is what attracted me to the position. I have a strong foundation in human resources, labor relations, health/safety, and budget/finance. Those skills cover much of the work being done by the organization. Also, I am curious by nature and it's important to me to know why something is being done more so than how something is being done. So, I am not afraid to ask questions,



lots of questions. I've come to learn and appreciate that my way of accomplishing a project may not necessarily be the only or best way, but if I know why we're doing something, then I don't have to get caught up in the details of the technical process. So, my primary responsibility is to understand our purpose as a Central Services Department, then use my professional experience to guide our organization in that direction.

Q: What are you most looking forward in your new position?

Well, my bailiwick is human resources, safety, and finance so I will always be naturally drawn to these areas because that's where I believe I can make immediate contributions. But, I am really looking forward to delving into public real estate issues such as right of way, easements, franchises, leases, and real property acquisitions. I am fortunate in that there is in place a highly qualified and experienced real estate team that tackles these issues for the entire County. This provides me with a valuable learning resource and time to learn this highly complex area of county government.

Q: Lean Six Sigma has proven to be an effective strategy to bring significant cost avoidance benefits for VCPWA. In your eyes, how can the Agency continue to find more ways to run efficiently?

That's a good question and also a tough task for us as leaders. The County is fortunate to have a robust Service Excellence Program that has been in place for a few years

now. I truly believe that identifying ways to improve or identify efficiencies is based on knowing what our purpose is as a service delivery entity. If we know our purpose, we can then identify our core functions and eliminate waste. Identifying more ways to run efficiently will be a collaborative effort between the leaders of the organization and the technical workers who know the processes and procedures.

Q: Right away, we can see you are a people person. How will these traits help you bridge all the departments and inspire increased communications?

Ironically, the soft skills, such as communication and collaboration, are the most difficult skills to acquire. The important thing is to consider interests beyond your own and not entrench yourself in your positions. Have good data points and supporting evidence, but learn how to apply those to the problem and be prepared to consider and understand other perspectives and be flexible. Most of the problems we deal with at the senior management level are adaptive problems. That is, problems for which there is not an easily identifiable solution and which frequently require reframing our perspectives and/or a significant change in the way of doing business. Therefore, the people in charge of developing the solutions to these adaptive problems should also be adaptive in their approach in order to be successful. That is what I intend to do within VCPWA.

*"There is a lot of daily
behind the scene
maintenance going on to
keep the public safe when
they drink their water."*

– Raul Ruiz

*"We went to Simi Valley & picked
up about 30 shopping carts. If we
don't pick them up right away,
they get into the dirt and are hard
to take out. "*

– Frank Ceja

*"I love working outdoors and
working with the plants. Helping
them grow, and in five years
become a habit & close out a site.*

Then start a new job."

– Mona Woolwine

*"Our crew is so well rounded,
we can adjust on the fly. The
better we can work together
the easier it is going to be to
get the job done."*

– Manuel Romero

At VCPWA, we deeply appreciate all of our employees! Without our hard-working Operation and Maintenance workers, our agency would not be able to function smoothly and effectively. These are the folks who keep everything clean, maintained, and in good repair.

Each department has a different focus – Transportation has road, tree, sign and construction crews who keep County roads maintained, Water and Sanitation works from the Moorpark facility to ensure a safe water supply, and effectively operating sanitary sewer systems and Watershed keeps our waterways clean from weeds, fallen trees, and trash. These are just a few of the jobs done by our operations and maintenance crews!

In this two part series, we'd like to bring you some insight about what these workers do in a typical day on the job. They were eager to share their experiences.

Continued on next page

Part 1

On the job with **O&M**

A day on the job with...

Raul Ruiz – Senior Wastewater Service Worker, Water and Sanitation Moorpark Water Reclamation Facility



Duties:

- Orders chemicals and maintains chemical injection components and pumps
- In charge of SCADA, a computer system that monitors and controls chemicals and water levels
- Weekly checks at all sites
- Monthly scheduled maintenance

What he loves about his job:

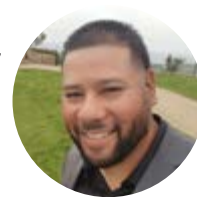
"I love the challenge of having all the systems I oversee operating as efficiently as possible at all times. Sometimes things come up, there may be some kind of mechanical failure, and I love the challenge of getting them running correctly."

What he wants you to know:

"When we do our daily checks, we don't just check it, if there is something wrong, we fix it. Every day that I come to work, I have an outline of special projects that I work on myself. That may not be significant to someone else, but I work hard to get it done."

"Safety is always emphasized on the job. Workers undergo constant training, education and review. There is a lot going on behind the scenes to keep the public safe when they drink their water!"

Manuel Romero – Equipment Operator, Transportation Department



Duties (as part of a crew):

- Paving and shoulder maintenance
- Ditch cleaning, beach cleaning
- Bridge cleaning and maintenance
- Trash pickup in the Oxnard Plains area
- Tree trimming
- Road striping

What he loves about his job:

"I really love the camaraderie we have as a crew. We have about 20 crew members, and every single one of them gets along with the next person. I really appreciate every day that I get to go to work."

What he wants you to know:

"Safety is paramount because we work on roadsides, next to traffic. We have to figure out the traffic patterns and certain times of day when traffic is heavy, so we can get the job done and still be safe. Pre-planning is extremely important before tackling big projects. The team will take the time to review logistics on the whiteboard and map everything out before the start of the job."

Frank Ceja – Maintenance Worker 4/IV, Watershed Protection District



Duties:

- Lead worker assigned to the Labor Crew in Moorpark
- Performs our annual fire abatement requirements
- Keeps the watersheds free and clear of unwanted growth as well as trash and debris
- Operates a variety of power tools to include chain saws, weed machines and wood chippers to preserve the integrity of Watershed facilities.

What he loves about his job:

"I love coming to work and I love working with the crew; there are a lot of nice people here."

What he wants you to know:

"I was very excited to be nominated and to receive the VCPWA Employee of the Year Award. I've been here for 15 years and look forward to inspiring my crew. It's very important to work as a crew to abate weeds and clean up fallen trees because if it rains, the water might overflow and cause flooding or drains might get clogged, so it's very important that we keep everything cleared out."

Mona Woolwine – Restoration Technician, Watershed Protection District



Duties:

- Check email for job information
- Work with student worker on projects
- Fill dust mitigation water truck with 2,000 gallons of water
- Care for plants and trees at Saticoy Nursery
- Work site inspections, watering, weeding, spraying
- Restoration reports, photo logs, phone calls and meetings

What she loves about her job:

"I love working outdoors and working with the plants. Helping them grow, and in five years become a habit and close out a site. Then start a new job."

What she wants you to know:

"An interesting part of my work at the Saticoy Nursery is instructing student workers how to transplant plants from 2 inch pots to 1 gallon pots and how to keep them healthy and alive. In the fall we gather acorns, place them in cold storage, float them in water, and place them in flats with soil to root them. Once a tree emerges we transplant it into a 1 gallon pot. We use these trees on job sites and give them away to other organization for planting."

Save the DATE!

Coney Island Picnic in the Park!

On October 8th we will be holding the annual Public Works Picnic at Soule Park in Ojai! VCPWA employees are encouraged to bring their families for a day filled with food, music, games, prizes and fun!

