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Orange County Water District Assistant General Manager Named Recycled Water Advocate of the Year

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (March 26, 2018) – Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) Assistant General Manager Michael (Mike) Wehner was named Recycled Water Advocate of the Year by the WateReuse California Board and the 2018 California Annual Conference Awards Sub-Committee members. WateReuse awards recognize excellence and leadership in water recycling and are presented annually during the conference awards luncheon. Having more than 40 years of experience and leadership in recycled water quality, Mike has made significant contributions to the industry and is well-deserving of this notable award.

Mike’s knowledge of potable reuse water quality is unparalleled. He was crucial to the success of OCWD’s world-renowned recycling projects, Water Factory 21 and its successor the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), which is the world’s largest potable reuse project of its kind. Mike helped establish the professional standard for scientific rigor and transparency that have instilled public confidence in potable reuse in Orange County and beyond.

“We have been privileged to work alongside Mike for the past 27 years,” said OCWD President Denis Bilodeau. “He played a critical role in helping OCWD build its recycled water program, which is a global model for water reliability. We are grateful to Mike for all that he has done for OCWD and for the industry at large. He not only is a brilliant and respected professional, but he is a humble, kind and hardworking man. We applaud him for helping shape OCWD’s tradition of innovation,” he added.

At OCWD, Mike leads applied research, scientific investigations, water quality monitoring, and regulatory compliance in support of the OCWD’s recycled water and groundwater management programs. He led stakeholder advisory groups organized by the Division of Drinking Water and its predecessors to incrementally update Draft Groundwater Recharge Reuse Project regulations, leading to the adoption of final regulations in 2014. On behalf of OCWD, Mike has provided hundreds of interviews, tours and presentations to stakeholders to educate them about water reuse and the GWRS.

Mike is regularly sought out to assist other utilities with the implementation of potable reuse projects. He has served on long-term advisory panels for the City of San Diego, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Monterey One Water, Thames Water in the United Kingdom, and the Singapore Public Utilities Board. He has served on numerous boards and committees overseeing applied research for recycled water including the WateReuse Research Foundation’s Research Advisory Committee, Water Research Foundation’s Tailored Collaboration Review Committee and the National Water Research Institute Board of Directors.

Prior to his service at the District Mike oversaw the regulation of non-potable reuse systems as the Water Quality Program Chief at the Environmental Health Department of the County of Orange, ensuring sensible requirements while protecting local public health.
OCWD ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER NAMED RECYCLED WATER ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Throughout Mike’s career he has helped advance water reuse on a global scale. This award demonstrates the industry’s appreciation of Mike’s service and contributions.

About Orange County Water District (OCWD)

The Orange County Water District is committed to enhancing Orange County’s groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities rely on the groundwater basin, managed by OCWD, to provide 75 percent of their water demands: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster and Yorba Linda.

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