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Inland Empire Utilities Agency Staff Earn Multiple Honors at CWEA SARBS Awards Banquet

INLAND EMPIRE, CA – The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA/Agency) was recognized with multiple awards by the California Water Environment Association (CWEA) Santa Ana River Basin Section (SARBS) during its Annual Awards Banquet held on Saturday, March 14. The Agency received Gold and Silver honors across multiple categories recognizing excellence in laboratory science, engineering, operations, and community engagement initiatives that help protect and preserve public health and the environment.

“The SARBS Awards recognize the professionals responsible for safeguarding public health through water and wastewater management,” stated IEUA Board President Steve Elie. “These honors reflect the incredible dedication and expertise of IEUA staff who operate laboratories and treatment facilities, meet rigorous regulatory standards, and continue raising the bar for water stewardship in our region.”

CWEA is committed to empowering, educating, and connecting water professionals dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. SARBS, a local section of CWEA, provides opportunities for wastewater professionals to collaborate and advance industry knowledge through meetings, trainings, and professional development.

During the Awards Banquet, SARBS recognized IEUA with the following honors:

Laboratory Person of the Year - Gold Award was presented to Acting Laboratory Supervisor Twan Nguyen, recognizing excellence in laboratory operations and contributions to advancing water quality monitoring and analysis.

Student and Young Professionals Award - Gold Award was presented to Laboratory Assistant Jack Ben Clark, recognizing emerging professionals who demonstrate leadership and commitment to the water and wastewater industry.

Dr. Jenkins Research Achievement Award - Gold Award was presented to IEUA’s Water Quality Laboratory for the 1,2,3-TCP investigation, recognizing applied research that advances wastewater treatment science and improves treatment processes and plant performance.

Engineering Achievement Award - Gold Award was presented for the Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 1 Headworks Project, recognizing engineering excellence in the design and implementation of infrastructure that strengthens wastewater operations.

Collection System Person of the Year - Silver Award was presented to Collection System Operator II Paul Perez, recognizing outstanding performance in wastewater collection system operations, reliability, and leadership.

Operator of the Year - Silver Award was presented to Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator V Oscar Martin. The award recognizes an operator who demonstrates exceptional skill, dedication, and leadership in wastewater treatment plant operations.

Community Engagement and Outreach Project of the Year (Large) - Silver Award was presented for IEUA's staff- developed Wastewater Treatment Plant Model, an educational tool designed to help community members understand how wastewater treatment protects public health and the environment.

Additionally, Golden Manhole recipients, Acting Director of Finance and former Manager of Facilities & Water System Programs Lucia Diaz and Collection System Supervisor Edward Makowski, were recognized.

As section-level honorees, all Gold award nominations will advance to the statewide competition through CWEA where winners will be announced at the CWEA Annual Conference in April.

"We greatly appreciate the educational opportunities and continued collaboration provided by CWEA and our local chapter, SARBS," continued Elie. "I would also like to thank our staff for their dedication to operating safely, efficiently, and innovatively in all that we do."

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The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA/Agency) is an innovative, forward-thinking Agency serving 242-square miles in western San Bernardino County. The Agency is committed to supporting the needs of its service area and safeguarding public health through its significant investments in developing a diversified water supply portfolio, developing reliable municipal/industrial wastewater collection and treatment services, and other related utility services in a regionally planned and cost-effective manner. IEUA's mission ensures long-term success for the region and its customer agencies which include Chino, Chino Hills, Cucamonga Valley Water District, Fontana, Fontana Water Company, Montclair, Monte Vista Water District, Ontario, San Antonio Water Company, Upland, and West Valley Water District.