



**MEETING 2 - January 23, 2019**  
**9:30 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M. – WALNUT CREEK**  
**SUMMARY**

Fifty-six people participated (19 in-person and 37 online) in the second quarterly meeting of the WaterReuse California Communications Collaborative Group (Group). Following a welcome and introductions by Eleanor Torres, Orange County Water District and Chair of the Group, Eleanor reminded everyone about the purpose of the Group: to provide a forum for communications and public affairs professionals to collaborate on potable reuse communication and learn from each other about successes and ways to address challenges. Meeting materials are available on [watereuse.org](http://watereuse.org) in the California section.

**The Good, The Bad, the Ugly (AKA Recent Media)** – A summary of recent media dealing with potable reuse or other relevant recycled water articles was presented by Rupam Soni, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. The media examples were focused on videos and were presented this time under “The unique, The humorous and The serious” categories. The examples included a brewery in Boise using recycled water to make beer and cider, an interview by Sarah Silverman with Gavin Newsom where he educates her on the “toilet to tap” project at OCWD and the CNN piece on drinking sewage water due to drought in El Paso. Some participants were aware of these articles and had shared them on their own social media channels. Eleanor shared how OCWD responded quickly after learning about the Sarah Silverman interview and sent her bottles of their water, which they explained was “certified pre-owned water.” The group discussed which approach works best for media related to potable reuse. Some participants felt that humor is most effective in getting the message about reuse across to people. One participant shared information about a recent article on the UC Davis Policy Institute blog on improving the public perception of water reuse (<https://policyinstitute.ucdavis.edu/improving-public-perception-of-water-reuse/>) as a good resource for the group.

**Focus Topic One: *Alternatives to Toilet to Tap or Just Accept It?***

As Mark Millan was unable to attend the meeting in person due to recent surgery, Mark participated via phone and Patricia Tennyson, Katz & Associates, presented in his place. She shared some of the potable reuse history in California with the group including the early seawater barrier projects and the shift towards a higher percentage of recycled water being included in those projects to the start of OCWD’s Groundwater Replenishment project in 2008, and now the focus on direct potable reuse in various

places. While a lot of progress has been made, the fact that projects can still be referred to as “toilet to tap” is very frustrating for communications professionals and their management and board members.

Meeting participants had submitted some suggestions for alternative phrases to “toilet to tap” and additional ideas were shared at the meeting. These phrases were shared:

- Toilet to treatment to tap
- Keeping water local
- Reusing/recycling our water resources
- Toilet to treatment to tap (T3)
- Used water to new water
- New Water (Singapore’s project)
- Tastes Like Water Because it is water
- Pure Water
- Used water to new water
- One Water
- Purified water
- Toilet to Purification to Tap (what is in the middle matters most!)
- Toilet to treatment to treatment to tap
- Purified drinking water
- Sustainable water

The group discussed various phrases to replace “toilet to tap”, but there was consensus that it isn’t possible to get rid of the phrase, especially when interacting with the media. The group agreed the goal was to find strategies for how to respond and re-direct the discussion with the media or public when the term comes up. Suggestions and comments from the discussion included the following:

- Some people would like the term to go away and never be used again, but that is not possible. It is our job to offer up an alternative when that term comes up and hope that it will likely be included in the discussion.
- It was pointed out that all the terms that are used on current projects mentioned include some derivative of “pure”.
- It may not be possible to replace toilet to tap term, but you can use it to try to educate the media.
- If you give the media something else that is better, they may use both. We must not panic when we hear “toilet to tap.” Let’s find ways to be more clever. One suggestion is to use the “right water for the right use”, to emphasize that using drinking water to irrigate lawns is not the best practice. Another suggestion is to use “new water again”.
- Our goal is to not repeat “toilet to tap” in our communication and also to come up with a phrase we agree on and start using it as we explain what this water really is. The popularity of “toilet to tap” term may diminish over time if we stop using it.
- As a response to describe what this water really is, one participant liked “toilet to triple treatment to tap”.
- Drinkable water is less preferable to drinking water.

- We cannot control the media, but there is a good opportunity to educate a reporter who uses the inaccurate phrase/term.
- Eleanor noted that “toilet to tap” did not come up in an interview, but then it would be printed in the article. So, the GWRS team now brings it up so they can make the clarification about what the water actually is and believe this has helped their stories.
- It was suggested that what potable reuse does is shorten the water cycle.
- It is important to focus on the audience: if it is more technical or academic, you can go more into the details.
- There is some more flexibility with the terminology beyond the legal requirements.
- Toilet to tap is a throw-away term of reference. We need a signature term for this type of new water (i.e. Kleenex for tissue or xerox for paper).
- One participant shared that toilet to tap is only true if you remove the advanced treatment and purification process.

As a result of this discussion, the group determined that developing some options and framing for how to respond and redirect the discussion with stakeholders or the media if “toilet to tap” does come up would be useful. Some participants shared some additional strategies from their experiences as follows:

- When “toilet to tap” comes up in media, it is the lead into typically a positive story. If it is negative story these days, it is probably from a blogger or individual.
- Eleanor also shared that OCWD has a graphic/visual with the wastewater sources printed on giveaway bags and it is a good tool to use when talking to people about the process.
- It may be best to respond by first expanding beyond the toilet to say that it is all the sources of wastewater that are being treated, which can lead into the use of some of the purification terms.
- Ben Glickstein shared that EBMUD recently changed the signage to “Not for Drinking” from “DO NOT DRINK” for non-potable irrigation water, but it could create additional challenges moving forward.
- ACTION: The group needs to figure out how to get agreement on phrases to use for various projects.

### **Preview of Upcoming Terminology Session at 2019 WRA CA Section Conference**

Rebecca Ruben, Soquel Water District, presented a preview of working group session that will take place during the Public Outreach Tract for the CCG Workshop on Terminology at the WateReuse Conference on Monday afternoon, March 18, 2019. The goal of the discussion is to review, get feedback and finalize an updated terminology document, so it can be sent to WateReuse this fall for approval. It will go to ACWA and CASA for approval after that. Patsy confirmed that the updated document will be shared with group before the next meeting (June/July) for the Group to review. This session at the conference will be an in-person meeting only – there will not be an on-line link or telephone call-in number.

### **Recent and Upcoming Legislation**

The purpose of this agenda item is to raise awareness about what WateReuse CA is doing with regard to legislation and make sure communication professionals are aware of what is happening legislatively or regulatorily because that can often have an impact on communication. Jennifer West (Managing Director, WateReuse CA) provided an update of current legislative and regulatory activities:

- Initial versions of legislation have been drafted for the Board approval this Friday. Legislation dealing with terminology, deleting references to indirect and direct potable reuse (AB574) and minor revisions to “treated drinking water augmentation” definition. Assemblymen Quirk (a potable reuse advocate) is carrying this bill.
- Title 17 hasn’t been updated since 1997. Use of swivel ell or change over device for its update in Title 17.
- No budget for water board to staff raw water augmentation regulation which is due in 2023. There are concerns that we may not make the deadline without additional staffing (cost would be \$500,000 for two people). Possible sources of funding could be wastewater discharge fee and drinking water fees, but they are unpopular.
- Revisit of Ocean/Bay wastewater discharge Ban and restriction. New bill similar to 2016 bill from Senator Hertzberg – discharged wastewater would need to be recycled (all of it) is coming soon. Mission of the bill is to increase recycled water in the state. She has been working closely with CASA on this bill. Board from WaterReuse will decide on position once language has been reviewed.
- ACTION: Jennifer West also said there is a [map](#) of potable reuse projects (existing and planned) in California. She will share it with the group to review and requested that everyone provide feedback on missing or incorrect information or data points on amounts of water recycling each project will produce.

#### **Roundtable – Project Updates and Challenges:**

- Rebecca Rubin from Soquel Creek Water District highlighted in December 2018 their Board certified the Pure Water Soquel EIR and approved the project to move forward. During the meeting, 20-25 people spoke in favor of the project. That is a testament to how critical the outreach and communication were to achieving this milestone. She explained that the media headlines are now focused on the environmental benefits related to the project to stop seawater intrusion and lessen the discharges to the Bay, which feels like a big victory.
- Sue Stephenson from Dublin San Ramon Services District said Tri valley completed technical feasibility study in 2018. There is a meeting this afternoon to keep going forward with the project.
- Kristen Yasukawa from Santa Clara Valley Water District shared that her team is looking into infrastructure for bottling 1,500 bottles from the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center. She also mentioned in February 2019 they will launch a new marketing campaign in four languages with interviews from 15 different influencers in the community speaking on potable reuse and encouraging people to take a tour of the facility.
- Ben Glickstein from EBMUD mentioned that the Recycled Water Master Plan Update project, which included some direction on potable reuse, has been completed. The key recommendations are to stay the course with using 20MGD of non-potable reuse since the plan evaluated the cost analysis of potable reuse projects and determined that none make sense right now. There was a recommendation from EBMUD Board to revisit the options for potable reuse in 5 years instead of the ten recommended in the plan. The final report is available on the website.
- Piret Harmon from Scotts Valley shared that a recently completed Feasibility Study showed that injection at the groundwater basin would be beneficial, but the cost is high. ESA is starting an EIR to evaluate it further (a 16-month process).

- Suzanne Gautier from the SFPUC shared that the priorities in San Francisco are unique but include the development of stormwater and rainwater systems in new, large developments throughout the city. Also, soon the public will be able to taste test water from the SFPUC headquarters as a result of a research project taking place now.
- Rachel Gaudoin from Monterey One Water shared that Pure Water Monterey project will move to testing later this year, and construction is now 70 percent complete.

**Discuss Possible Focus Topic(s) for Next Meeting**

- Case studies from reuse projects presented to the group
- Best practices in messaging regarding responses to use of Toilet to Tap

**Future Meetings:** The Group will meet quarterly. The next meeting will be on Monday, March 18, 2019 at the WateReuse Conference in Garden Grove. The focus will be on the terminology document. The next group meeting will take place in June/July timeframe after the conference work session.