



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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METROPOLITAN'S EDUCATION PROGRAM RECOGNIZED WITH CALIFORNIA'S HIGHEST ENVIRONMENTAL HONOR

From its groundbreaking grade school curriculum to a program hosting the nation's largest solar-powered boat competition for high school students, Metropolitan Water District's wide-ranging and comprehensive education program has received California's highest environmental honor.

Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger joined the district's education program staff members in accepting the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award on behalf of the agency during ceremonies Tuesday night (Jan. 19) at the California Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Sacramento.

"We're extremely proud to be honored by the state as an environmental leader," Kightlinger said of Metropolitan's first GEELA award. "Within our six-county service area are 5 million students and teachers—each of whom has a vital stake in learning about water and how to manage, protect and conserve it.

"Our education programs not only promote environmental discovery, they are representative of Metropolitan's overall commitment to balancing environmental protection and keeping California's economy strong with innovative water management," Kightlinger said.

Launched as classroom units for fourth- and fifth graders in 1983, Metropolitan's education program has evolved to include curriculum that meets state Common Core and Next Generation Science standards for all grade levels, teacher workshops and field trips as well as other innovative ways of using technology to reach young learners.

Among the more inventive approaches is Metropolitan's Solar Cup™ program, which provides months of intense, hands-on learning about water conservation, solar-energy, engineering and teamwork, culminating in the nation's largest solar boat competition over three days each spring. About 10,000 students have participated in Solar Cup since the inaugural event launched in 2002 with just eight boats.

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Along with Solar Cup, Metropolitan is a co-sponsor of the World Water Forum, an 18-month competitive grant program for students and professors from community colleges and universities throughout the Southland, aimed at addressing regional and global water issues. In addition, the district offers the Diamond Valley Lake Education Program, which provides instruction to students in grades 4-7, and the “Water is Life” Student Art and Calendar Program.

“We’re leading the way to promote knowledge and connections to the environment and our water resources,” said Adrian Hightower, manager of Metropolitan’s education unit.

“Increasingly, we’re using online teaching tools and integrating new technologies that promote collaboration and expand learning experiences. By helping students develop critical thinking skills, we hope to inspire a new generation of thinkers and leaders who will value and protect our water resources,” Hightower said.

Established in 1993, GEELA is awarded to individuals, companies and organizations that use sustainable business practices to conserve energy, reduce waste or prevent pollution while contributing to their local economy. A panel of judges from a number of state resource agencies and departments evaluated and selected winners in the following categories: Environmental Education; Ecosystem and Land Use Stewardship; Climate Change; Zero Emission Vehicle Dealers; Sustainable Practices, Communities or Facilities; and Waste Reduction.

Information on Metropolitan’s education programs is available at mwdh2o.com. For more information on the GEELA program and this year’s award recipients, please visit www.calepa.ca.gov/Awards/GEELA/.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.