



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

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**STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF MWD CEO DENNIS UNDERWOOD
FROM L.A. AREA CHAMBER EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
RON GASTELUM (FORMER CEO OF THE MWD)**

As one might expect, I hoped that in my recent assumption of a role at the Greater Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce that I would be able to continue working with Dennis Underwood, who succeeded me as Chief Executive Officer of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California where we once worked together. Yesterday, I learned that Dennis passed away and today I share the disappointment and sadness that comes from losing a friend and key leader in the management of California's water and future – our common cause.

When Dennis assumed the reins at Metropolitan, Southern California got a seasoned water expert with an encyclopedic knowledge of water in the West. His knowledge and network was created through his leadership at California's Colorado River Board and later at the United States Bureau of Reclamation that he headed in the 1980s and '90s under President George H. Bush. Given the MWD institutional lineage of our predecessors, Dennis' leadership of MWD was unique and timely for an organization moving in collaborative directions with other California and federal agencies and even other states and Mexico.

One of Dennis' many legacies is a 75-year landmark agreement to share water on the Colorado River with seven states and several other California parties and Native American tribes known as the "Quantification Settlement Agreement." I recall thinking the considerable stacks on his desk would take more than 75 years for anyone other than Dennis to understand, given the complexities of law, but mostly because of the people behind all the documents, all of whom he knew.

I am left – as are my former colleagues at Metropolitan, the business community and many others who knew and trusted in Dennis' leadership -- pondering a future without him. Because of his hard work in the six years he spent crafting complex multi-state agreements at Metropolitan, his decades of work involving everything from the Klamath Basin to the Rio Grande and the young professionals he took under his wing and inspired, we can be confident of a future that Dennis did the hard and mind-boggling work of securing through cooperative ventures in water. Most of all, my wife Susie and I send our thoughts to Dennis' wife and their daughter.

