



June 1, 2021

Board of Directors
Southern California Metropolitan Water District
via Board Secretary (BoardExecutiveSecretary@mwdh2o.com)

RE: Congratulations on Selection of General Manager of MWD

The undersigned environmental, social justice, and Tribal* organizations write to congratulate the Southern California Metropolitan Water District (MWD) Board of Directors on your selection of Mr. Adel Hagekhalil as the next general manager of the agency. This is the right choice during this time to heal the organization and prepare our region in the face of persistent drought and changing climate. We look forward to partnering with you and the new GM on creating a healthy, safe and collaborative work environment at MWD.

In his 32 years of public service in the management of water, environmental and infrastructure initiatives, Mr. Adel Hagekhalil has proven to be a visionary and inclusive leader. He led the award winning LA integrated water resources plan and the 2040 One Water LA plan. His stakeholder-driven integrated water planning led the way to the implementation of the ongoing large water recycling projects and the stormwater capture efforts in the City of Los Angeles. He helped lead several successful water measures, including groundbreaking Measure W and Prop O stormwater measures that were overwhelmingly approved by voters in LA County and the City of Los Angeles, respectively. He led the resolution of the litigation over sewer system overflows, overseeing the creation of a world-class sewer system and reducing sewer overflows by more than 90% in the City. He has also led many climate adaptation efforts including integrating shade, shelter, equity and stormwater capture into active transportation projects. And he has done this while engaging and building trust with nonprofit groups and local communities.

With the serious allegations of a hostile and discriminatory work environment at MWD that have recently come to light, it is imperative to bring aboard a leader that is willing to tackle these issues head-on. On this front, we are moved by the support from Local 721 of the Service Employees International Union, which represents over 10,000 City of LA workers (including the workers in the City's Bureaus of Sanitation and Streets Services), who called Hagekhalil an "exemplary leader" who has "worked to build a culture of inclusion, respect, and fairness", as well as AFSCME Local 1902, which represents the water professionals of the Southern California Water Districts, who have said that they

are “thrilled” with Mr. Hagekhalil’s selection. With these votes of confidence from the very people he has been working with, and will be working with now, we are confident that Mr. Hagekhalil will follow through on his pledge to a better working environment at MWD. And we will hold Mr. Hagekhalil to that pledge, and to the same standards that we have held Mr. Kightlinger and other MWD staff - there is no room anywhere for misconduct or discrimination at the workplace.

Mr. Hagekhalil’s visionary and consensus-based leadership is well recognized by the community, environmental advocates, local, state and federal officials and industry professionals. He made “one water”, green infrastructure, stormwater capture national initiatives and models. For this, Adel’s accomplishments have been recognized by Heal the Bay, LA Waterkeeper, Sierra Club, and Climate Resolve, to name a few.

We are encouraged and excited about the future of MWD under Mr. Hagekhalil’s leadership, and we expect to be submitting subsequent letters leading up to the June 8 MWD board meeting that will indicate how broad support is for this critical selection.

**Correction: In the letter we sent you on Friday, we did not include the word “Tribal” but we have added it to this letter because there are Tribal organizations involved. Additionally, Andrea Leon-Grossmann was listed as the Director of Climate Action, but she is the Climate Action Director of Azul.*

Sincerely Yours,

Craig W. Cadwallader, Policy Coordinator
Surfrider Foundation South Bay Chapter

Kyle Roerink, Executive Director
Great Basin Water Network

Gary Wockner, Executive Director
Save the Colorado

Anna Christensen
Puvunga Wetlands Protectors

Dave Hamilton, President
Residents for Responsible Desalination (R4RD)

Leslie Mintz Tamminen, Legal Director
7th Generation Advisors