

Project Number

WRF-04-008

USBR AGREEMENT: #00-FC-81-0248

Understanding Mental Models of Water: Origins, Quality, Contamination, Naturalness, and Risk

Principal Investigator:

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Cash Contributors (in addition to the Bureau of Reclamation):

State Water Resources Control Board (CA)

City of Phoenix Water Services Department

Clean Water Services (OR)

Objective:

- To provide a solid foundation with respect to how individuals regard potable water, water treatment, history of water, water naturalness, and water quality.
- To identify and explain a three-to-five year research program evaluating the human response to water reclamation and reuse from the perspective of social psychology, a field of research focused how social factors influence individual choice and behavior.
- To implement this research program to the extent possible and report on initial findings.

Summary:

Project goals were presented and justified regarding the importance of studying human attitudes toward are reactions to water reclamation and reuse (WRR). This includes improving communications and policy processes that enable WRR projects to receive fair public scrutiny, building/retaining water agency credibility, and keeping WRR project costs to a minimum.

Four projects were identified as fundamental to improving agency-public communications over WRR. Of the four, the first, a nation-wide survey of fundamental human reactions to water reuse, was completed, with results presented.

The remainder of the research program includes:

- undertaking experiments and surveys on the impact of direct experience with WRR on WRR acceptance;
- understanding opposition and opponents to WRR; and
- evaluating the connection between explanations of WRR technology and public acceptance.