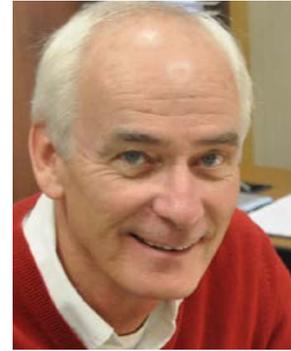


# THE HERON

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Winter 2018



## Chris DeGabriele Hired as Interim General Manager

The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Board of Directors has announced that it has retained an interim General Manager to oversee District operations. The interim General Manager, Chris DeGabriele, comes to the District with decades of professional experience, most recently having served for 22 years as the general manager at the North Marin Water District in Novato. He began work at the District on December 14, 2017.

**“DeGabriele comes with extensive experience, skill, and background.”**

Russ Greenfield, President of the District Board of Directors, stated, “With his extensive experience, skill, and background, the Board is thrilled to have Mr. DeGabriele join us to manage the District on an interim basis, as we move forward to recruit a permanent general manager.” The District expects to complete the hiring process of a new permanent general manager by summer 2018.

## LGVSD Starting Strong in 2018

To our Customers:

Over the last nine months, the LGVSD Board of Directors has been working to address employee concerns and complaints regarding the District’s management. Our goal was to take the necessary steps toward clearly identifying the issues and problems, rebuilding workplace respect and trust, and ensuring our operations continue to be conducted in the most effective and efficient manner possible for the benefit of our ratepayers.

A list of complaints were presented by District staff to the Board in April 2017. These items were discussed during closed sessions from May through November. A management consulting firm, FutureSense, was hired to assess the situation and provide a third-party perspective. FutureSense’s report was submitted at a public meeting in October.

The Board’s investigation found no evidence of malfeasance, misappropriation of public funds, or breach of fiduciary duty. However, there were significant findings concerning employee management, and potential or feared retaliation against employees, by the former general manager.

As a result, the Board accepted the former general manager’s notice of retirement. The District has now hired Chris DeGabriele as the interim General Manager and will be proceeding in early 2018 with a search for a new permanent General Manager.

It is now time to move forward with the Board’s commitment to ensuring a healthy, safe, supportive, and respectful workplace. To accomplish this we have requested proposals from FutureSense and the Regional Government Services (RGS) organization for implementation of the Report’s recommendations. The Board will be providing employees with additional human resources services, reviewing policies, and implementing improved communications procedures. An extensive list of new goals and “lessons learned” from this process has been developed, and several ad hoc committees have been created to engage more directly in matters such as plant operations, communications, planning, and procedures. Our goals will be further evaluated and reviewed in the annual Strategic Planning Process conducted in early 2018.

Through these actions, the Board is striving to ensure that this kind of situation does not reoccur. It is a clear priority for the District to provide a positive, encouraging workplace environment. I want to assure our customers that the professionalism and skill of the District’s workforce has not been compromised, and all of us remain committed to excellence in providing the wide range of District services to our community.

Sincerely,

*Russ Greenfield*

Russ Greenfield  
President, Board of Directors  
Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District

Turn to “Chris DeGabriele” on page 2



MSEL students answer questions about microbeads at Venetia Valley Elementary.

## Microbeads Study Under Way

### Terra Linda High School students to study microbeads and their impacts on water and natural resources.

During the 2017 fall semester, LGVSD laboratory staff have been working with a group of freshmen students from Terra Linda High School in their Marin School of Environmental Leadership (MSEL) program.



Their project is focused on microbeads, found in many personal care products such as toothpaste,

and the harmful impacts these have on water and wildlife. The Microbeads Project helps MSEL students gain a deeper understanding of toxins that can be found in many products used in daily life—some they themselves may be using—as they research this topic. Students from

the 2018 winter semester will further develop the educational campaign that last semester's students initiated. Additionally, this group will work to learn more about the impacts these toxins and microbeads have on the ecosystem in the Bay Area.

This project group will work with LGVSD to develop educational materials that highlight the numerous toxins found in personal care products, and their environmental impacts. The materials will be distributed to the public and to other schools in the area. Additionally, students will conduct pre- and post-surveys to assess how well educated they are on this subject before and after the group's presentation.

By the end of the semester the students, with the help of LGVSD, are expected to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the toxins readily found in personal care products;
- Understand how to limit toxins and microbeads from entering waterways;
- Determine what are the “worst offenders”, i.e. which toxins have the most detrimental effects on the natural world (especially water in the Bay Area) and how often are they used in products;
- Teach individuals about the impact these products have on the Bay and how individuals can be a part of the solution;
- Learn about resources available to analyze personal care products and detergents, and how to identify products when purchasing;
- Enhance the database of more environmentally-friendly and local products;
- Educate local residents and peers through the development of a website or campaign.

LGVSD's permit requires participation in public education—we are happy to work with these students on this important topic that affects all of us.

If you would like additional information about the MSEL program, please visit their website at [www.thesel.org](http://www.thesel.org).

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### “Chris DeGabriele” continued...

“The professionalism of the District is well-known, and the Board and staff are committed to the highest standards in providing service to the community,” said Mr. DeGabriele. “I look forward to working with them while they engage in a search for a permanent manager.”

The position became available upon the recent retirement announcement of the District's former general manager, Mark R. Williams.

**“The District is renewing its commitment to ensuring a healthy, safe, supportive, and respectful workplace.”**

The Board had been working for a number of months to address employee concerns, with the goal of identifying issues, rebuilding workplace respect and trust, and ensuring

District operations continue to be conducted in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

With an interim general manager in place, and a plan for recruiting and hiring a permanent replacement, the District is renewing its commitment to ensuring a healthy, safe, supportive, and respectful workplace.

# Lower Miller Creek Channel Maintenance Project Complete

The Lower Miller Creek Channel Maintenance project was completed at the end of December. Approximately 2,655 feet of Lower Miller Creek located adjacent to the LGVSD Treatment Plant and upstream of the Reclamation Bridge was dredged. The project removed sediment that was threatening to block the treatment plant outfalls and improved the flood flow conveyance in the Lower Miller Creek channel on LGVSD property.

The dredging was necessary to protect our operations from the progressive accumulation of sediment coming down the creek from upstream erosion, which has reduced discharge efficiencies at LGVSD outfalls. Existing and planned road construction and bridge modifications on adjacent and upstream properties are reducing floodplains and concentrating sediment flows in the creek channel. In addition, over time sea level rise will gradually raise the base level of Miller Creek, which will also decrease the capacity of the creek for outfall discharge. Our work averted a potentially dangerous situation.

LGVSD recognizes that Miller Creek

supports a population of federally protected Steelhead trout. Plus, adjacent wetland and marsh areas support other state and federally listed special status species. Hence, one of the project objectives was to minimize the extent and frequency of channel excavation/maintenance that may adversely impact habitats in the channel, while maximizing the extent and value of adjacent wetland. All needed permits and approvals for this project from state and local agencies were obtained. The levee banks have now been planted with a mix of native plants species to provide additional habitat and slope stabilization.

The project began in September 2016, but was forced to stop due to unforeseen storm events in late October 2016. The construction period for in-water activities is limited to September 1 to October 31 per permitting requirements. Approximately 70% of the earthwork was completed prior to the shut down. The remaining 30% was dredged this fall. The 60-day time frame only applies to in-water construction. Fencing, revegetation, irrigation system installation, and other various improvements are not limited to the 60-day period.

# Current Status of Treatment Plant Upgrade Project

For several years the District has been planning a major upgrade to its aging wastewater system to meet increasingly stringent wastewater treatment requirements. The existing facilities have continually operated since 1955 and were upgraded from time to time, however major equipment needs to be replaced and modernization is necessary. The District also entered into an agreement with Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) to expand the District's existing Recycled Water Treatment Facility (RWTF) to serve MMWD's customers. This agreement enables MMWD to decommission its existing plant which is located on the District's property. The MMWD plant, operated since 1989, also needs upgrades and the District needs the property where it is now situated for the wastewater treatment plant upgrade. MMWD is funding the majority of the cost for the RWTF expansion and will reimburse the District for operating costs in the future.

***“The administration building update has been postponed so that funds may be used for critical wastewater treatment upgrades.”***

The District's existing administration building, originally built in 1955 and expanded in 1992, was also slated for improvements at this time. However, in April 2017 the District issued \$41 million in bonds to fund the upgrade project but the construction bids are in excess of available funds. Thus, at this time, the administration building update has been postponed so that the available funds may be used for the critical wastewater treatment project. The Board and staff are now evaluating other cost-saving options for the project.



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**Board of Directors**

Megan Clark  
Rabi Elias  
Russell R. Greenfield  
Craig K. Murray  
Judy Schriebman

**Board Meetings are**

held at 4:30 PM on  
the second and fourth  
Thursday of each month

ECRWSS – Postal Customer

**District Administration**

Chris DeGabriele, Interim General Manager



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## Biogas Energy Recovery System: Another Step Towards Energy Independence

The District has finished installation and start-up of its Biogas Energy Recovery System (BERS) and is transitioning to full-scale operation. The District was required to retire its co-generation equipment after 25 years of continuous use in order to meet new California carbon emissions standards that improve air quality.

The project uses affordable technologies to clean up and use biogas generated at our wastewater treatment plant to fuel District vehicles. The District purchased a heavy duty maintenance truck in 2016 which is fueled by compressed natural gas produced by the BERS facility.

The new equipment was purchased and installed with the assistance of two grants awarded by the California Energy Commission. The first \$1 million grant was for design and construction to replace existing co-generation equipment. The second \$250,000 award was part of the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Technology "Natural Gas Fueling Infrastructure" program.

The process of anaerobic digestion at the District's wastewater treatment plant produces biogas, which is typically burned-off. With these grants, the District has developed cost-effective and efficient processes to convert that biogas to biomethane and use that converted gas to generate clean, renewable power. A significant portion of the District's energy already comes from its two photovoltaic solar panel systems.

With the BERS in place, the District will be able to further boost self-generated clean power and advance the District's goals toward energy independence. Less use of standard power grid energy and commercial fuel is a great thing for the environment, and for all of us.