

The Water Buffalos



Road Warriors: Water and Wastewater pros kick-start 'Buffalos' motorcycle gang

by Jennifer Finley | BC WATER NEWS

Once recognized as the fiercest beasts roaming the wild open wetlands in Asia, the water buffalos earned their reputation as aggressive warriors able to travel long distances and known for their dangerous stampedes. Still stampeding, the modern day Water Buffalo now earns respect roaming the winding miles of U.S. blacktop on the back of a Harley Road King, or a Vintage Indian Chief or maybe even a Yamaha Road Star. You will see them or hear them coming. These Water Buffalos are bikers - but not just any bikers - they are a special herd of of motorcycle riding water and wastewater professionals from Arizona. Yes, they are still hunting for water, but these days the search for supply is typically sought through legislation and/or state regulations.

The Arizona Water Buffalos formed in 2004 when Harold Thomas Jr., Water Resources Practice Leader in Brown and Caldwell's Phoenix office, joined a handful of other water and wastewater industry leaders on a ride to a water conference. The gang had such a great time that they decided to form an official club and eventually settled on the name The Water Buffalos. Each year, they reunite to ride to the Annual Tri-State Seminar (Arizona, California, and Nevada), which features sessions on water, wastewater, and security issues.

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Joining The Herd

To become a Water Buffalo, you must work in the water and wastewater industry, ride a motorcycle, preferably smoke a cigar and complete at least one ride with the group. The cost? Paying your dues means sharing the road and some really good times—no fees required. The benefits include a lifelong membership, hopefully some lifelong friendships and, of course, the much-sought Water Buffalo State Chapter patch. "The patch is a sacred thing," says Thomas. "It's an original design and registered to preserve the membership status of the club." Donated by Brown and Caldwell and designed by BC Senior Media Specialist **Francisco Loureiro**, the patch is stitched on a standard denim vest.

As water and wastewater professionals, the members enjoy more than just social outings. The goal is to develop a nationwide network of water officials who want to build relationships while enjoying the unique bonding that takes place during any ride. "When it comes to doing business, a typical lunch lasts about an hour," explains Thomas. "A bike trip can take over six hours, and it's a great way to really get to know someone that you also share a working relationship with." From Telemetry Specialists, to General Managers, to Superintendents, you'll find them all on their bikes. "What better way to create solidarity among water and wastewater professionals than to enjoy a shared passion of riding and attending water related meetings and conferences," says Mark Stratton, General Manager for the Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District. The club is growing and recruiting. The bikers are still working on developing their own individual nicknames. As the anecdotes from each ride become legends, the nicknames surely will soon follow.



From the Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District are **Frank Gallego**, Telemetry Specialist; **Jim Doyle**, MWD Board Member & Pima County Ina WWTP Superintendent; **Mark Stratton**, General Manager; and **Chris Hill**, Deputy General Manager, and **Harold Thomas**, BC's Arizona Water Resources Practice Leader.

Ride With Purpose

This year the Arizona Water Buffalos are joining in a unique nationwide ride to raise funds and awareness for the international nonprofit organization **Water For People** (WFP). In June 2006, riders from various locations across the U.S. and Canada will head to San Antonio, Texas, for the AWWA National Conference. This is an exciting opportunity for bikers to participate in a unique fundraising event. Each biker is asked to raise a minimum of \$1.00 per-mile-traveled to be donated to WFP. Some riders may average well over 1,000 miles, which hopefully will result in a substantial financial contribution. The Arizona Water Buffalos are also planning a stop in El Paso on the way back from San Antonio. Rumor has it that the club may be adding Tony Lamas boots to their riding wear.

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WFP has been designated by the **American Water Works Association** (AWWA) as its charity of choice. WFP was established in 1991 by a handful of North American water professionals from the AWWA, followed by the creation of WFP-Canada in 1995. The organization is committed to bringing safe, sufficient drinking water to communities across the world. Please sign up for the trip by visiting the **Ride With Purpose website**.

Down The Road

The "Water Buffalo" has a long and colorful history with clubs, such as the *Ancient and Honorable Order of the Water Buffaloes* with members from the Water Law Section of the Colorado Bar Assn. who have made special contributions to the area of water rights; the *Royal Order of the Water Buffaloes*, whose members were from the Stone Age fraternal lodge on The Flinstones (Remember the the Grand Pooh-Bah?); as well as the modern day social lodge in California called the *Loyal Order of the Water Buffaloes*.



So many Water Buffalos, such little time. If you would like to join the Arizona Water Buffalos, or if you are interested in starting your own state chapter, please contact Brown and Caldwell's Harold Thomas Jr. at (602) 567-3920 or email at HThomas@brwncald.com.
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"The Arizona Chapter of the Water Buffalos headed to Nevada for the Tri-State Seminar. The picture captures the Water Buffalos making plans at Hoover Dam to extract more Colorado River water for Arizona."