



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 3, 2021**

**CONTACT: MARIA DADGAR
(602) 258-4822**

National Tribal Water Program Selects 2021 Water/Wastewater Operator of the Year

Phoenix, Arizona (December 3, 2021) – The National Tribal Water Systems Program at the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) announced Mr. Jerry Henscheid, Utility Manager of the Omaha Tribal Utility Authority located near Macy, Nebraska, as the 2021 Tribal Water/Wastewater Operator of the Year. ITCA presents the Tribal Operator of the Year recognition award annually to a water/wastewater operator who has demonstrated exemplary work ethic, and community involvement while contributing to the high level of water quality within their water/wastewater systems.

Mr. Henscheid has worked for the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska for over 17 years where he started as Tribal Utility Operator and is currently the Utility Director and lead Operator. Jerry has transformed their utility program into a leader in both quality and consistency. Through his leadership, the utility has been diligent in identifying and repairing water system leaks (both in the distribution system and in residential homes), which reduced their daily average water demand by one half. Jerry has helped the utility establish a budget (including a reserve account), cleaned up the utility's waste transfer stations, ensured completion of routine water sampling, installed residential water meters, created composite utility maps, and made many more system wide improvements.

“Jerry is a role model throughout the community, a quality he demonstrates through hard work and dedication to the utility department and community. Jerry regularly helps community elders and others in need. On garbage collection day, he will go into their homes to collect their garbage as taking out is difficult for them. At times, he has out of generosity and wanting this to be right, fixed individual water leaks at no cost,” said Mr. Jon Ireland, Tribal Utility Consultant with Indian Health Service. “Mr. Henscheid demonstrates the spirit of service by continuously working to ensure the community members have high quality drinking water available at their homes.”

Mr. Henscheid was honored at the 2021 ITCA Tribal Operator of the Year Award Ceremony held on September 23, 2021, during the National Tribal Operator Workgroup Virtual Meeting. ITCA received nominations for the 2021 Tribal Operator of the Year Award for operators working on tribal water/wastewater systems from all across Indian Country. Mr. Henscheid was one of six nominees recognized for professional service and dedication to maintaining safe drinking water and effective wastewater management on behalf of their tribal communities.

The following six nominees for the 2021 Tribal Operator of the Year were recognized by ITCA at the National Tribal Operator Workgroup Virtual Meeting.

- Barbara Coulter, Utilities Director
Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Tesuque Utilities Department
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Ak-Chin Indian Community
Cocopah Indian Tribe
Colorado River Indian Tribes
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
Gila River Indian Community
Havasupai Tribe
Hopi Tribe
Hualapai Tribe
Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians
Pascua Yaqui Tribe
Pueblo of Zuni
Quechan Tribe
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
San Carlos Apache Tribe
San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe
Tohono O'odham Nation
Tonto Apache Tribe
White Mountain Apache Tribe
Yavapai-Apache Nation
Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

- Cody Downs, Sanitary Technician / Water Operator
Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, Public Works
Fallon, Nevada
- Tim Fontenot, Utility Operations Manager
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Fort Mojave Tribal Utilities Authority
Mojave Valley, Arizona
- Jerry Henscheid, Utility Manager / Lead Operator
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Omaha Tribal Utilities
Macy, Nebraska
- Leonard Pitts, Utility Director / Lead Operator
Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Washoe Tribe Utility Authority
Gardnerville, Nevada
- Neil Yazzie, Operations Manager
Hopi Tribe, Village of Moenkopi
Tuba City, Arizona

“The services that tribal water utilities provide are the foundations upon which tribal communities can function and prosper,” said Maria Dadgar, Executive Director for the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. “The ITCA Tribal Water Systems Department works nationally with hundreds of tribal water and wastewater system operators across Indian Country every year that directly protect the public health and environment of their communities.”

“The daily work performed by these public health professionals, who are often on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, is admirable,” stated Brian Bennon, ITCA Tribal Water Systems Department Director. “We believe that exceptional operators, who make outstanding contributions to their communities, should receive recognition for their dedication.”

ITCA created the Tribal Water/Wastewater Operator of the Year recognition award project in 2013, to honor the hard work of tribal water utility professionals and to showcase their important role in protecting public health. To date, a combined total of 62 nominations were received for operators from 42 different tribal nations located across six regions and 11 states. The Tribal Operator of the Year is a peer recognition award. In a given year, a new panel of tribal utility personnel volunteers are chosen to review the nominations of that year and to select the awardee. Mr. Henscheid is the 9th Operator to receive this award.

Over the past 25 years, the ITCA National Tribal Water Systems Programs have provided technical assistance, training, and professional credentialing (certification or licensure) services for utility personnel working on lands of federally-recognized tribes. ITCA is the largest American Indian organization offering USEPA-approved tribal operator certification services.

For more information about ITCA or the National Tribal Water Systems Programs, please visit our website at www.itcaonline.com, email TWSinfo@itcaonline.com or call (602) 258-4822.

-END-