City of San Luis Obispo
Utilities Department

Intern Program
The City of San Luis Obispo

- 47,500 Residents
- County Seat and Largest City in SLO County
- Home of Cal Poly SLO and Regional Airport
- Main Hub of Employment in the County
- Population Swells to 80,000 + during the Workday
Wastewater

- The City Treats the Wastewater for Cal Poly and the Airport - 3.5 MGD
- The City’s Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) Discharges into San Luis Obispo Creek
- The City has Been Treating Wastewater since 1924
- By the 1980’s We Started Having Regulatory Issues
Wastewater

- 1990 New Permit
- Upgrade Completed in 1994 to Meet Stringent Discharge Requirements
- Freshwater/Coldwater/MUN Trout Stream
- Habitat Flow Requirements
- Community Scrutiny
- Significant Additional Regulatory and Operational Requirements = A Lot More Work
Wastewater

San Luis Obispo Creek

Pacific Lamprey

Steelhead Trout
How do you meet the new workload?

- Needed Additional Resources in the Water Quality Laboratory Desperately
- Locally Limited Options for Student or Graduates in the Water Field
- Did Not Have Funding for Additional Staff or Paid Internships
- Unpaid Internship - Why not?
- There was interest
Interns; How Do You Get Them?

- Started Unpaid Internship Program in 1995 in the Lab
- But How do you Find Interns?

Tours
College Faculty and Staff
Word of Mouth
Websites
And Anything Else
What We Do With Them When They Decide to Give it a Try?

- Explain the Field
  - Value of Water
  - Critical to the Protection Environmental and Human Health
  - Transportable Career
  - Job Security
  - Good Pay and Promotion Opportunities
What We Do With Them When They Decide to Give it a Try?

- It's an Interview Process
- First – Goals and Aspirations
- Second
  - Resume
  - Time Commitment
  - Expectations
- Work Towards Certification
What We Do With Them When They Decide to Give it a Try?

- Uniform and Treated as Part of the Staff
- Job Shadowing
  - Intern Shadows Staff
  - Staff Shadows Intern
- Intern Demonstrates Responsibilities Consistent with Job
- Frequent Review and Feedback
San Luis Obispo County

“Center of Everything in the Middle of Nowhere”

Small Candidate Pool for Operators, Technicians and Analysts

Housing costs comparable to the Bay Area and Southern California

Salaries lower than B.A. or So Cal

Hard to Attract Candidates (and their significant others) From Other Areas

The City Struggled Finding Qualified Staff
How the City Benefits

- Provides a Ready and Qualified Candidate Pool Full Time or Part Time
- Saves H.R Time and Resources
- Provides Real World Experience for Residents and Students
How the Intern Benefits

- Certifications
- Marketability
- Experience
- Exposure
- Work Experience
- Confidence
- A Career
Community Benefits

- Uninterrupted Service
- Staffing Shortages
- Training Water Professionals
  - Locally
  - Statewide
- Appreciation of Water Quality Profession
Community Benefits

- Meets the City’s Triple Bottom Line
- Sustainable
The City Program Success Stories
Success Stories

- Over 150 Successful Internships

Numerous Engineering Firms and Private Businesses

- San Jose
- Central Contra Costa
- Santa Barbara
- Otay Water
- Morro Bay, Cambria, Paso Robles, Atascadero, Nipomo, Guadalupe, City and County of San Luis Obispo
Success Stories

- The City Has a Waiting List for Unpaid Interns for the WRRF and the Lab
- Community Connection
- Connection with Cal Poly and Cuesta College
- Existing Staff Development
- Sustainable
- Has helped the City Address the “Silver Tsunami”
Things to Consider for Your Program

- Do You Have the Time?
- Do you have the Staff?
- "Campus" Facility Layout Lends Itself To Internships
- Support
- Budget
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Questions?