

Holiday trespassers raise alarm, bemusement at percolation ponds

By DAVID JAMES HEISS
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Some playful antics in Beaumont have raised alarm surrounding the ponds owned by the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency along Brookside Avenue.

The first mystery appeared to be a trespasser on an inner tube, drink in hand, patiently relaxing with a fishing pole.

He appeared just after St. Patrick's Day, and was safe from being in a pinch, as he donned a green neck gaiter.

His beverage of choice appeared to be a can of Budweiser.

As employees would discover, it was simply a dummy that had been launched into their recharge pond.

He was dubbed "Recharge Rick," and was fished out and presented during a workshop to the water agency's board of directors last month, which admittedly drew some amusement, as well as concern.

After Jesus appeared on Easter to be standing in the middle of the pond holding a fishing rod and a box of potentially converted wine,



Photos by Matt Howard

"Recharge Rick" and a likeness of Jesus have appeared in recent weeks at the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency's recharge ponds.

General Manager Lance Eckhart felt that the pranksters should be addressed.

"Appreciate the creativity," Eckhart said, "but we can't condone trespassing on agency property."

Security consists of a locked fence that surrounds the facility, and there is no lifeguard on duty.

The waters where a mock-up of Jesus appeared is roughly 4 feet deep, according to Eckhart.

"Some directors found it amusing, some had concerns," Eckhart says, but points out that the pranksters have been "bringing attention to our State Water Project

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recharge efforts” of conveying water from 500 miles north to be made available in the Pass area.

“We’re always happy to bring awareness to agency activity, and we’re happy people are taking notice” of the organization’s efforts, Eckhart says.

SGPWA Division 5

Director Larry Smith was in attendance at the March 20 workshop when “Recharge Rick” was presented before the board.

“Recharge ponds are expensive to build and maintain, for us to provide safe drinking water. It’s a very sensitive area,” Smith says. “The prank was cute, but at

the end of the day, this is sacred ground” and needs to be respected and taken seriously, he says.

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