

AQUALINK *Water Systems*

A Nonprofit Corporation

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008

About Aqualink...

Aqualink Water Systems is a nonprofit (501C 3) organization that was formed almost 20 years ago. It is a group of geologists, engineers, water quality specialists and other interested individuals who work in Mexico to provide a source of safe drinking water to various groups and communities. Aqualink's mission statement is:

To provide community development assistance to villages in Baja California Mexico, with primary emphasis on potable water systems.

The group began their work in an outlying community of Tijuana Mexico called Flores Magon. At the time, in 1982, the community did not have a local source of drinking water and Aqualink stepped in to develop a local source of groundwater for the community to use. Although the community now has imported water, the community still uses the well as an additional source of water.

Since that time the organization has worked with many different villages, communities and groups to evaluate and develop sources of safe drinking water. A primary focus recently has been working with indigenous communities in Baja Mexico.

John Peterson, Board Member



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Aqualink Board of Directors

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Website: <http://www.aqualink.org>

Agua ♦ Water ♦ 'Ehaa

Outgoing President's Message

by Kathleen Coates Hedberg



Kathleen Coates Hedberg

Another few years have passed, and what has Aqualink been doing?

Our big project for the last several years was a USEPA Border 2012 project to evaluate indigenous water systems along the US-Mexico border in Mexico. With our partner CUNA and the assistance of the **Pala Band of Mission Indians**, USEPA accepted and funded our proposal through the Pala folks. Thanks to **Mike Wilken** for being well-connected, and the hard work of our partners and members. This project raised awareness of the plight of seven indigenous communities in Mexico to the US and Mexican governments.

Aqualink contributed a substantial portion of the project report, including a summary of the water systems, analysis of water quality data, identification of water system deficiencies, recommendations for water system improvement, and cost estimates. This report was well received by USEPA and prompted the Mexican government to provide over \$900,000 for water system improvements and the USEPA to contribute over \$100,000. Major improvements including wells and distribution systems are currently being constructed in several communities, including **Santa Catarina, San Antonio Necua, and San Jose de la Zorra**. It seems the Mexican government, local water agencies, and CESPE are increasing their help to these remote villages. These communities are long overdue for major improvements.

Aqualink is pleased to “link” together the right groups to get the work done!

Looking back at several communities that we have assisted, both Granjas Esperanza and Flores Magon now receive piped-in city water. Remote villages are now getting the attention of the Mexican government, and local water systems are willing to help out. Which leads us to ask the question: Is there still a need for Aqualink? I say yes! We need to keep our lines open. Clean, reliable water supplies will become more precious as demand increases. As things come up, we will act. But if you are looking for the old Aqualink, the one that used to go down monthly (Kaare Kjos--20 years ago), well, those times have passed. That is a great thing because it shows that progress is being made in Mexico. We will continue to assist those who ask us for help.

We enjoy sharing our expertise to improve drinking water for all.



Flores Magon Revisited-A Project Completed

by Steve Harrison, Aqualink President



Steve Harrison

Aqualink's relationship with the community of Flores Magon on the outskirts of Tijuana near the Tijuana City dump, came full circle earlier this year. On Saturday, January 8, 2006, a group of us drove down to the community to meet with some old friends and to retrieve a pump and appurtenances for use elsewhere. We met with **Tomas Maldonado** and other members of the community at Tomas' house. For myself and some other newer members of Aqualink, this was a new experience. For the Aqualink oldtimers it was a day for renewing old relationships and remembering old times. The pump we were there to remove was coming off the very first well ever installed by the group of American volunteers that became Aqualink. It was no longer needed by this community.

With a little effort, the hardware was dismantled. Everything of importance was salvaged. The pump, valves, and other appurtenances were handed over to Javier of **CUNA** for possible use at **San Antonio Necua**. When the work was done we headed back to Tomas' house for food, beer, good conversation, and some picture taking.

Left to right:

Kathleen Hedberg

Tomas Maldonado

Irma Kjos

Kaare Kjos

*Residents
of Flores Magon*



News From a Sister Organization

ANNUAL SDAG FIELD TRIP - ANOTHER HUGE SUCCESS

2007 Annual Field Trip "From Water to Wine" Coastal Development and Groundwater in the Ensenada and Guadalupe Valley areas, Baja California, Mexico. Oct. 13-14, 2007. **Sarah Gray** organized one of the best field trips yet. We traveled together in a luxurious motor coach along the rugged coast Scenic Road to Ensenada.

We observed a landslide and marveled that a two-billion dollar residential development and hotel is now beginning construction on an ancient landslide--not a good idea. **Dr. Thomas Kretzschmar** gave us a tour of the CICESE offices, then the Guadalupe Valley. River gravel mining down to the water table has decreased groundwater quality as total dissolved solids (TDS) increased from evaporation. Without significant recharge this year, overdraft from pumping wells that supply 40% of the city of Ensenada may deplete the aquifer storage of the Guadalupe Valley within a year.



We enjoyed wine tasting, then the hospitality, stories, and traditional dancing at our camp at San Antonio Necua, a Kumiai village. The hike the next day to the hot springs in Agua Caliente creek was one of those hidden treasures. We didn't have time to explore the solution caves above the waterfall. We'll leave that for another time. Thomas gave a lecture over lunch at the vineyard terrace at L.A. Cetto winery. The Lindsays came home with two Afghans. The puppies had their papers and crossed the border without incident.

David Bloom, Past President 2007

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**Aqualink is a 501 (C) (3)
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Printing Courtesy of Sunbelt Publications

