



Q&A with Anselmo Collins, Sr. Assistant General Manager for Water System

By Jessica Johnson



Anselmo Collins, LADWP Senior Assistant General Manager - Water System in his office. Photo by Art Mochizuki

Following 28 years of experience in Water Operations, Water Engineering and Technical Services, Supply Chain Services and within Project and Construction Management, Anselmo Collins assumed the role of the Senior Assistant General Manager of the Water System in August 2021.

The Panamian-American steps into the role of overseeing almost 2,500 employees in the Water System as LADWP pushes forth developing local water supplies for L.A. and responding to a statewide drought.

Collins is the 18th steward of our water system and the second immigrant; LADWP's first Chief Engineer William Mulholland was the first, having been born in Ireland. It's an honor that he doesn't take it lightly.

Intake recently sat down with Collins, known by many as "AC," to get to know him better.

Intake: How would you describe your leadership style?

AC: I consider my leadership style to be democratic. I strive to make sure my decisions are backed by input from staff, and that there are plenty of opportunities for them to contribute. That way, I know that at the end of the day, my decision has already had buy-in and I am leading a group that knows that I listened to them. This also helps develop staff's critical thinking, and builds unity and morale. You can't lead if no one follows you and you do not have your team's interests at heart.

Intake: What are the biggest challenges for LADWP's water system?

AC: We continue to develop our local water supply. With the threat of climate change, it is now more important than ever to diversify our water portfolio. Operation NEXT is a huge project with big implications.

(Editor's Note: LADWP is making significant investments within Los Angeles city limits to reduce dependence on imported, purchased water and reduce overall consumption. In an effort to diversify supplies, we introduced [Operation NEXT](#), developed in partnership with LA Sanitation and Environment, that will allow Los Angeles to recycle 100% of available treated wastewater for beneficial reuse by 2035.)

As my predecessor Rich Harasick liked to say, Operation NEXT is our next "Mulholland Moment." We need to ensure we manage the project properly, engage the right people and make it cost effective for our customers.

Internally, the greatest challenge today continues to be the uncertainty with COVID-19. We have to continue keeping our employees safe, while creatively keeping staff motivated and engaged as we continue to telework.

Intake: What is your view on diversity in the workplace?

AC: I am a huge supporter of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. As a public agency working for the City of L.A., we recognize the importance of looking like the communities we serve. Inclusion is very important, and diversifying all parts of the Department is a good first step to get there.

Intake: When you aren't managing water, what are some of your favorite things to do?

AC: I attempt the game of golf and enjoy nature. I also enjoy wine tasting and a good Malbec.

Intake: You're stepping into the shoes of LADWP's first Chief Engineer William Mulholland, overseeing one of the largest water systems in the nation. What do you think helped prepare you for this role?

AC: What best prepared me was taking on nontraditional jobs, having well-rounded experiences and getting involved with associations to learn from peers in other utilities. I worked in six divisions, and the one I benefitted from the most was Supply Chain Services. I wasn't the technical expert in that group,

but it is where I really learned how to manage and lead. In every situation, I try to take the opportunity to learn from the role and leave it better than I found it. I want to make sure I dedicate my time and energy to working hard in that position instead of focusing on what could be the next one.

Intake: What would you tell your 18-year-old self today?

AC: At 18, I was living in Panama graduating high school, and I honestly did not expect to end up as the head of one of the largest water systems in the world. Looking back, I would say to young Anselmo: don't limit yourself, work hard to achieve your goals and find a mentor to help guide you along the way.

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[LADWP and the Community of Bishop Recognize Clarence Martin for Decades of Service As He Steps Down as Aqueduct Manager](#)

By Jessica Johnson

After almost 32 years with LADWP, Clarence Martin is stepping down as Aqueduct Manager. Deputy Aqueduct Manager Adam Perez will be taking over, come July 1.

Martin has lived in Bishop for 27 of his 32 years with the Department, building a legacy of service to the community as a volunteer umpire for Bishop Little League, a youth sports coach and as a longtime member of the Lions Club.

"I have always appreciated and respected Clarence's desire and ability to put aside differences in order to work on things that are a mutual benefit to the City of Los Angeles and Inyo County. It has allowed us to accomplish a variety of important projects for the community," said Clint Quilter, Inyo County Administrative Officer who has worked with Martin for six years.

Having previously worked in the water resources and real estate groups at LADWP, Martin was well-equipped to take on the position of Aqueduct Manager. In fact, according to Martin, it truly was his dream job and he set a course to improve relationships, reestablish trust and help LADWP move in a more positive direction.

One of his goals was to advance LADWP's policy of divesting of in-town property located in Inyo County. Martin encouraged LADWP's Board of Water and Power Commissioners to amend the policy so that properties would be offered to businesses themselves without a public auction.

"This change really helped build a better working relationship between the department and Inyo County and in the end, can help local businesses thrive. I think the policy is moving in a more amicable direction," Martin said about the divestment policy efforts back in March 2019.

"Throughout his tenure with LADWP, Clarence always strived to strike the balance at being a good ambassador for the Department and a friend to the Owens Valley," said Anselmo Collins, Director of Water Operations for LADWP. "People tend to call him the honorary Mayor of Bishop. He is a man with a lot of pride and integrity and it has been a pleasure having him head up the Aqueduct section, as he is not just a great engineer, but a great person with a big heart."



Clarence addresses Bishop residents at joint press event with City of Bishop representatives in 2019. Photo by LADWP photographer, Chris Corsmeier

Over the last several months, Martin and the rest of LADWP's Aqueduct team have ensured a seamless transition for his successor. Perez has over 20 years of experience in civil and geotechnical engineering, overseeing project management of capital improvement projects that include planning, design and

working directly with communities to communicate project timelines and objectives. Perez lives in Bishop with his family and is an avid outdoorsman and a fly fisherman.

“I am grateful and honored to have had the opportunity to learn from Clarence on the importance of the Aqueduct Manager position, and how best to manage the balance between water delivery to the City of Los Angeles and community relationships. Clarence is a true leader who was dedicated to his work for LADWP and always took the extra step to support the local communities here,” said Perez.

Martin will formally hand over the reins to Perez on June 30th, but will stay on for a period of time to finish up various special projects for the Water Operations Division and ensure a smooth transition before officially retiring in early fall.