

Justin Ehrenwerth Named President and CEO of The Water Institute of the Gulf

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Executive Director to Start at the Institute January 30

Dec 21, 2016 – BATON ROUGE, La. (December 21, 2016) – The Water Institute of the Gulf announced Wednesday that Justin Ehrenwerth will take the helm as president and CEO starting Jan. 30.

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Currently the executive director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, formed in the wake of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Ehrenwerth is experienced in developing solutions to the challenges that face Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. With a proven track record in making effective science-based public policy decisions, Ehrenwerth is a perfect match to help expand the Institute's reach and capacity as it enters its sixth year.

“As exciting as it has been to lead the Institute through its birth, it's just as exciting to see someone with Justin's talent and experience continue that growth,” said Chip Groat, founding and current Institute president and CEO. “Justin's familiarity with Washington D.C. as well as his relationships across the Gulf will serve the Institute well.”

Ehrenwerth received a bachelor's degree at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, a master's degree from the University of Oxford and a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. After working at the office of General Counsel in the U.S. Department of Commerce, he served as assistant counsel to the President where he took the lead on Deepwater Horizon litigation for the White House working with the Department of Justice. He subsequently became chief of staff to the U.S. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary where he oversaw issues of management, policy and strategic planning for a federal agency with an annual budget of approximately \$10 billion and 47,000 employees.

In 2013, Ehrenwerth became the founding executive director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, an organization charged with administering billions of dollars of Deepwater Horizon civil penalties through the RESTORE Act. He and his wife, Dana Dupré, originally from Opelousas, have called Louisiana home since 2013.

“While much of our focus to date has been, and will continue to be, on coastal Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico, the Institute is undertaking work with a worldwide application and that's how we conducted this search. It just so happened that the best person for the job was right in our backyard,” said Kevin Reilly Jr., chairman of the Institute's board of directors. “Justin will bring a new energy and vision to the Water Institute and we are excited about our future under his leadership.”

The Institute's work uses applied research to help coastal communities and

economies become more resilient to threats including natural disasters, subsidence, storms and rising sea levels. Working with numerical modeling, real-time forecasting, risk management assessment and field work, staff at the Institute strive to provide decision makers and communities the information they need to prepare for a changing coastal landscape and related economic challenges in Louisiana and around the world.

“The ability to be a part of an organization on the frontline of coastal and water resource applied research at a time when communities around the globe are facing unprecedented threats is a challenge I couldn't resist,” Ehrenwerth said. “The knowledge base at the Institute, and the ability to harness and support the great work going on within the academic and private sectors, will help launch the Institute even further as the go-to resource for coastal communities everywhere.”

The Institute's work in Vietnam's Mekong River Delta, Latin America and the Pacific islands, to name a few, are just the starting points for taking what has been learned in coastal Louisiana and applying that knowledge globally.

Ehrenwerth will arrive as the new home for the Institute takes shape along the Mississippi River, joining the LSU Center for River Studies and state Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority at the Water Campus. The Institute's three-story structure at the historic Baton Rouge city dock, scheduled for completion at the end of 2017, will include office space and a large conference area to allow the Institute to host academic conventions, research conferences and public meetings.

“I would like to congratulate The Water Institute on selecting Justin Ehrenwerth as its next president and CEO,” said Johnny Bradberry, chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. “I have worked closely with Justin through the RESTORE Council and think he is a fantastic choice to lead the Institute into the future. He understands the challenges we face in coastal Louisiana and the need to move forward with a sense of urgency using sound science to implement protection and restoration projects.”

Ehrenwerth will take over from Groat who helped shape the Institute from its formation in late 2011 with just a handful of employees to the 40-plus staff from around the world who work at the Institute today. After a career that spans almost 50 years including teaching, addressing coastal issues during his time at the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, as executive director of American Geological Institute and as director of the U.S. Geological Survey, Groat said his retirement at the end of April won't mean the end of his work. He said he plans to stay involved part time in Louisiana issues with a focus on better management of water resources.

About The Water Institute of the Gulf

The Water Institute of the Gulf is a not-for-profit, independent research institute dedicated to advancing the understanding of coastal, deltaic, river and water resource systems, both within the Gulf Coast and around the world. This mission supports the practical application of innovative science and engineering, providing solutions that benefit society. For more information, visit www.thewaterinstitute.org.

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