ACWA NEWS
VOL. 52 | 04 Apr. 19, 2024



(l-r) ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila, California State Senator Anglique Ashby and ACWA Deputy Executive Director Cindy Tuck pose for a photo during ACWA's 2024 Legislative Symposium, where Senator Ashby was a featured speaker.

ACWA Hosts 2024 Legislative Symposium

ACWA's 2024 Legislative Symposium explored the latest in groundwater and water efficiency from a legislative and regulatory perspective while hosting one of the newer state senators about water-related priorities in California's capital.

The April 10 event attracted about 150 attendees to the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center, with Rancho Water and Eastern Municipal Water District as sponsors. The following summaries outline a few highlights, which opened with welcoming remarks from ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila and concluded with a networking reception.

SGMA Implementation

Panelists: (Moderator) Lauren Layne, Chair, ACWA State Legislative Committee; Pablo Garza, Chief Consultant, Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee; Paul Gosselin, Deputy Director of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Office, Department of Water Resources; Kristin Sicke, General Manager, Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District.

Key Issues(s): A panel discussion focused on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act wrapping up its first decade this year as SGMA remains the focus of recent legislation. Sicke presented a case study on her district's approach to SGMA implementation as part of a broader panel discussion on critical issues and legislative priorities related to groundwater management.

Gosselin quote: "Every deadline that local agencies had in SGMA was met, which was phenomenal. … I think the

SYMPOSIUM continued on page 5

SPOTLIGHT

Members Share Thoughts on SGMA at 10-Year Milestone

Aaron Fukuda keeps wondering when he'll see Porsches and Ferraris driving past his office in rural Tulare County. But so far, it's the same stream of old beat-up Ford F-150s driven by farmers and their workers.

The people driving those trucks keep the Tulare Irrigation District (TID) General Manager awake at night. They are family farmers and people who depend on Central Valley agriculture for a living, as opposed to the wealthy captains of the agri-business industry so often depicted in news media. And while those people certainly exist, they are not the ones most directly impacted by SGMA, pronounced sigma, which has long since become verbal shorthand for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Marking its 10th year this September, the landmark trifecta of legislation signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2014 is today moving from planning into implementation. SGMA answers a crisis that everyone agrees demanded a solution. That solution is locally based, a central principle strongly advocated by ACWA at SGMA's inception, and one that remains a driving force behind bringing California's groundwater into sustainability by 2040.

SPOTLIGHT continued on page 6

2 ED Column: Local Control Remains Key to SGMA's Success
5 ACWA Members Urged to Engage State Water Board on Bay-Delta
9 EPA Announces National PFAS Regulation

ACWA Association of California Water Agencies

ACWA News is a publication of the Association of California Water Agencies

Periodicals postage paid at Sacramento, CA.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes and subscription requests to ACWA News,
980 9th Street, Suite 1000
Sacramento, CA
95814-3514

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN
DAVE EGGERTON

Local Control Remains Key to SGMA's Success as Act Notches 10th Year



Signed into law during a severe drought, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act turns 10 this year during a much wetter period. In a way, that perfectly illustrates why SGMA was necessary and what it will take to achieve its goals.

Since 2014, I've seen SGMA as a water agency General Manager and now as this association's Executive Director, leading a team of highly skilled advocates working on your behalf in Sacramento. SGMA and groundwater sustainability counts among our top priorities.

ACWA supported SGMA's creation contingent on making local control its central tenet. And we're continuing to emphasize the need to empower local agencies. We need to ensure they have the time and resources to implement effective and realistic plans that achieve sustainability, but not at the cost of wiping out local economies. That's easier said than done; however, seeing the incredible investments made by Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, GSAs, over the past few years offer cause for hope.

Our colleagues in state government, in the Department of Water Resources, have invested a tremendous amount of energy on both a financial and personal scale into building relationships with GSAs. Through collaboration, so much has been accomplished and continues to be accomplished, with innovative on-farm recharge projects, plans to store more water above-and- below ground, as well restore conveyance capacity. All of this depends heavily on momentum, a force dependent on mutual trust, shared interests and aligned perspectives.

Given the immensity of SGMA's task, problems along the way are a given. It took us more than 100 years to get to a point where dry wells, overdrafted basins and canal-cracking land subsidence demanded action.

In the meantime, ACWA's advocacy continues its focus on empowering agencies at the local level. It is why we submitted a comment letter late last year articulating why the State Water Resources Control Board must take a more logical approach to using probationary control of agencies as a backstop.

For example, the letter calls for developing a process by which a basin could submit a revised GSP that addresses deficiencies before a probationary hearing. Even more importantly, the letter called for a focus on implementing SGMA as written without expanding its scope to include other Board priorities. Most years also see a few bills introduced in the Legislature that seek to tinker with SGMA in various ways. In other words, give SGMA an opportunity to work as originally intended.

The growing wet and dry extremes of climate change serve as a warning that we must act now to empower our local water managers in implementing SGMA. We must move forward in aligning our investments and regulatory environment to realize projects that capture more water from high-flow events for the benefit of communities currently relying on overdrafted groundwater basins.

As SGMA closes out its first decade, ACWA is committed to helping empower our member agencies to act, and succeed, locally.

ACWA Board Extends Quench California Funding, Selects Venues for 2026 Conferences

The ACWA Board of Directors approved further funding for the association's statewide public education campaign, Quench California, during its April 5 meeting while also welcoming two new public agency members.

Board members also received updates on advocacy, including ACWA's efforts in support of a possible climate resilience and water bond on the November ballot. They also approved venues for ACWA's spring and fall conferences during 2026.

QuenchCA Funding

Board members approved the expenditure of $140,000 to continue the award-winning public education campaign through the end of 2024. Launched in 2022, QuenchCA highlights infrastructure projects throughout California and makes available communication toolkits for ACWA members to engage customers on several levels, such as through social media materials.

It expanded in 2023 through a partnership opportunity that provides member agencies with customized digital ads targeted to their customers. The agency pays for the ad placement while a public relations firm, hired by ACWA to help lead the campaign, develops digital ads and strategies that will help meet the agency's individual outreach goals.

New Members

The Board welcomed two new association members: the Bear Valley Water District in Region 3 and the Kern Water Bank Groundwater Sustainability Agency in Region 7. The new additions bring the number of ACWA members to 473.

Advocacy Update

Legislative advocacy staff delivered an update on the association's engagement on the state budget and a possible climate resilience bond on the November ballot.

ACWA staff continue to advocate in support of maintaining as much water infrastructure funding in the state budget as possible, as the state faces a significant deficit estimated between $39 billion and $73 billion.

Gov. Gavin Newsom will release an updated version of his proposed state budget – the May Revise – that will reflect new financial numbers. ACWA advocacy, while acknowledging the seriousness of the deficit, also notes that deferring necessary spending on water infrastructure projects will translate into their costing more in the future, as well as pose a risk to public safety, especially concerning dam safety.

At the same time, ACWA is advocating in favor of a climate resilience bond on the 2024 November ballot that could include significant funding for water infrastructure.

2026 Conference Venues

Board members received an analysis comparing venues and costs for ACWA conferences during 2026. They approved Sacramento for the 2026 Spring Conference & Expo and Anaheim for the 2026 Fall Conference & Expo.

The next ACWA Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for June 7.

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EXPLORING THE WATER WORLD ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA

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Last month ACWA released a new toolkit as part of its statewide public education campaign, Quench California. The campaign aims to educate the public about the importance of investing in water infrastructure throughout California to ensure a safe and reliable water supply. The toolkit contains new social media graphics and customizable posts sized for Facebook, X and Instagram, and also includes some posts translated into Spanish.

Here are some examples of how ACWA members are using the new toolkit items:

- On Instagram, Upper San Gabriel Valley MWD (@upperdistrict) customized the World Water Day graphic, adding its logo and some additional wording.
- Zone 7 Water Agency used the National Water Week graphic on Facebook.

To download the social media graphics and customizable posts, and the rest of the toolkit, visit **www.acwa.com/resources**.





CAPITOL CORNER

ACWA-Sponsored Proposition 218 Reform Bill Moving in Legislature

ACWA advocates are engaging on several issues in the California Legislature and with the Newsom Administration, including the state budget and on the possibility of a climate resilience bond on the November ballot.

Below are summaries and updates on two of multiple bills on which ACWA staff is engaged.

Proposition 218 Reform

Sponsored by ACWA and introduced by Assemblymember Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City), AB 2257 would aid public agencies in defending against Proposition 218 lawsuits by requiring litigants to participate and raise specific objections during the public administrative process. It would also limit the administrative record to evidence presented to the agency during the ratemaking process. ACWA is leading a coalition to support the legislation.

A rise in Proposition 218 litigation is making it increasingly difficult to ensure agencies can pass fair and reasonable rates to cover the costs of operations and investments. Oftentimes, these suits are filed without litigants first having raised alleged violations with the public agency during the public notice-and-comment process leading up to the adoption of rates.

If passed, AB 2257 would bolster the financial stability of public water and sewer agencies by creating a robust public process that facilitates dialogue, transparency, and the opportunity to resolve issues and avoid costly litigation. This bill is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Local Government Committee on May 1.

Groundwater

In early March, the Department of Water Resources released a report that summarizes various approaches local agencies took to comply with two Executive Orders and provides analysis in addition to policy recommendations that could be used to develop future solutions to align land use planning, well permitting, and groundwater management and use.

On March 21, Assemblymember Steve Bennett (D-Ventura) amended a spot bill, AB 2079, to include many of the recommendations in the report. The major provisions of AB 2079 include: requiring public disclosures to increase collaboration and transparency; setting minimum standards for local enforcement agencies to permit new wells; exempting certain types of wells and procedures; and imposing a ban on approval of applications for all wells not intended for domestic and public water supply purposes in certain regions of the state.

ACWA has adopted an oppose-unless-amended position on the bill and it is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on April 23.

EPA Announces National Regulation for PFAS MCL

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced a new national maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 4.0 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants and a standard of 10 ppt for three other chemicals — PFNA, PFHxs, and HFPO-DA (commonly referred to as GenXChemicals). In addition, EPA will utilize a hazard index to regulate mixtures of PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DC and PFBS.

This enforceable rule requires public water systems to monitor for these PFAS, notify the public of the levels of these PFAS and reduce the levels of these PFAS in drinking water if they exceed the MCL. Utilities will have five years to come into compliance with the rule.

ACWA previously supported EPA's efforts to address PFAS contamination and protect public health through setting drinking water standards that are based on sound science and robust analysis. Unfortunately, the MCL is not feasible because the anticipated costs of complying are not adequately captured under EPA's cost assessment.

ACWA member agencies affected by PFAS include the Orange County Water District (OCWD), which swiftly responded to the EPA's announcement with a news release. The news release also put into perspective how parts per trillion is an extremely minute measurement, detectable only recently with advanced lab equipment. One ppt is equivalent to a drop of water in 20 Olympic-size pools or one second in 30,000 years.

"Despite bearing no responsibility for the release of PFAS into the environment, we are doing everything we can to remove them from groundwater supplies," stated OCWD President Cathy Green, who also serves as ACWA President, in the district's news release. "We've already achieved significant milestones—from launching the nation's largest PFAS Treatment Pilot Project to being the first public agency in California certified to detect PFOA and PFOS to investing millions in building PFAS treatment plants," she added.





Left: Attendees listen to perspectives, updates and analysis on leading policy issues affecting California water during the 2024 ACWA Legislative Symposium on April 10. **Right:** Paul Gosselin speaks during the Symposium's panel discussion on SGMA, which included (l-r) Kristin Sicke, Pablo Garza and Lauren Layne.

SYMPOSIUM continued from page 1

commitment is there, and I'm really excited about it."

Garza quote: "This is a 30-year plus program, and I think it's good that we're not trying to rewrite it as we go along. … I don't think we'll go another decade without some changes to SMGA. That's just my prediction."

Water Use Efficiency

Panelists: (Moderator) Chelsea Haines, Regulatory Relations Manager, ACWA; Eric Oppenheimer, Executive Director, State Water Resources Control Board; Sonja Petek, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

Key Issues(s): The State Water Board is in the final stages of implementing the Making Conservation a California Way of Life regulation. The Legislative Analyst's Office and Public Policy Institute of California raised significant questions about the original version of the proposed regulations, which was revised following extensive public comment, including ACWA member advocacy.

Oppenheimer quote: "Again, the idea was to give more time, provide more flexibility, and instead of trying to achieve a lot of savings up front, a lot of savings would essentially be achieved more in the later years of the regulation."

Petek quote: "In some ways, they (original and revised proposed regulations) really are getting the state to the same place at the end of the day, but maybe doing it in a way that will ease the administrative burden and give suppliers a bit more time to get there."

A Fireside Chat with Senator Angelique Ashby

Moderated by Kris Anderson, Senior Legislative Advocate, ACWA.

Anderson discussed a variety of legislative issues with Senator Angelique Ashby (D-Sacramento), who shared her perspectives on how the state's budget deficit will impact water issues in the Capitol. Ashby, a former ACWA Board of Directors member, was first elected in 2022 following a 12-year term on the Sacramento City Council. She serves as Senate Assistant Majority Leader and on 10 committees, including Senate Appropriations, Judiciary and Joint Rules.

Ashby quote: "Let's see how the state Legislature and governor do when they have to reduce their priorities. Let's see what happens to water and water projects as we look at that budget. I will predict that things around public safety, so flood control, levees, access to water, I think those things will continue to be funded.

"I think that some of the things that are focused on the environment may be more difficult to hold onto. … It will be interesting to see how those priorities rank in a deficit situation as opposed to a surplus situation, and your advocacy and your voices will be incredibly important in that process." ♦

ACWA Members Encouraged to Engage with State Water Board on Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes

The State Water Resources Control Board is hosting an April 24-26 workshop in support of proposed Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Agreements). Formerly known as Voluntary Agreements, ACWA supports their implementation as the best pathway for updating and implementing the Sacramento/Delta portions of the Bay-Delta Plan.

ACWA distributed an Outreach Alert on April 8 encouraging members to attend the workshop and urge adoption of the proposed Agreements and their associated benefits for water supply reliability, the environment, communities, agriculture and more. Input received during the workshop will inform the proposed Bay-Delta Plan amendments, including a program of implementation and the final Staff Report for the Sacramento/Delta Update to the Bay-Delta Plan. ♦



SPOTLIGHT continued from page 1

Providing the backbone behind SGMA, water agencies throughout the state formed Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), which have drafted 94 Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs).

Meanwhile, the state government has boosted local funding by providing more than $500 million through the Department of Water Resources, or DWR. The funding is driving state assistance on multiple levels, ranging from technical help and data collection to language translation services, among many areas. The State Water Resources Control Board is serving as the final judge for GSPs' deemed inadequate through a probationary hearing process that could lead to state intervention into local groundwater management.

It's been a massive undertaking, and the hardest part may be yet to come. Addressing the severe overdrafting of groundwater basins could come at the cost of taking an estimated 500,000 to one million acres of farmland out of production, at an enormous economic and personal cost in terms of agricultural production, not to mention livelihoods. ACWA member agencies have risen to the task with determination and innovation.

Three ACWA member agency leaders recently shared their perspectives on SGMA at 10 years, their work to achieve its goals as well as concerns about its impacts.

Central Valley

TID operates within the Mid Kaweah Groundwater Sub Basin GSA along with the cities of Visalia and Tulare. Its area has experienced some success with rising groundwater levels during wet years paired with an expected slowing of subsidence, according to Fukuda, who sees surface water storage and conveyance as key to answering SGMA's challenge. To that end, TID is pursuing its 200-acre McKay Point Reservoir and 250-acre Seaborn Reservoir projects to optimize surface water storage for groundwater recharge and flood control. But even more essential is building momentum through collaboration with communities and growers, with the latter greatly increasing their participation in the ongoing allocation program and on-farm recharge during wet years.

However, casting a shadow over this progress is the SGMA process itself. TID's subbasin faces a probationary hearing before the State Water Board in November, which could result in the state's assuming direct control over SGMA implementation. This came after DWR found the district's GSPs inadequate, and TID is now on the third redraft of its GSP, an expensive and time-consuming process that Fukuda said threatens to sap the momentum behind his ongoing work to implement SGMA.

"If you're going into SGMA to achieve perfection, you're going to fail. SGMA is about momentum and moving the needle forward in the right direction," Fukuda said. "We shall see if the State Water Board will allow for our continued momentum or halt our momentum," Fukuda noted in response to the potential probationary process playing out in front of the Board.

The uncertainty has manifested itself in many ways, including a decline in property values, which along with the prospect

Opposite page: Workers prepare rebar lattice work before a cement pour at Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency's College Lake Water Supply project. The project is an example of ACWA member agencies' work to diversify water supplies to help take pressure off local groundwater basins. *Photo courtesy of Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency*

Right: Then-Gov. Jerry Brown signs into law the three-bill package that became SGMA in 2014, with past ACWA Executive Director Timothy Quinn looking on from far right. ACWA supported the legislation based on the principle that it would allow local control over addressing groundwater issues. *Photo courtesy of DWR*



of paying penalty fees could translate into economic hardship for the district's communities. And that has Fukuda worried about what that could mean for smaller-scale growers, such as generational family farmers struggling to make ends meet — the people driving the pickups past Fukuda's office.

"I've got to get my community through this, there's so much at stake," Fukuda said.

Tri-County Water Authority Executive Director Deanna Jackson shared similar concerns. Her district was scheduled for a probationary hearing this month. In the bigger picture, no one disagrees with the need for SGMA, but it's the process that is driving uncertainty.

"Growers want farming to be sustainable, they don't want to deplete groundwater aquifers. But SGMA has set up a situation where you have 'haves and have nots'," Jackson said, also noting the heavy potential impacts on family farms and growers' ability to pass their operations onto the next generation.

"That is where the goodwill ends, and I think you're going to see a lot more pushback, probably in the next year or two," Jackson said. "I don't have a crystal ball, but let's just say it's becoming very real in our area, very quick."

SGMA as Validation

At the other end of the spectrum, but also serving an agricultural community, The Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) operates through a DWR-approved alternative plan, the only one in the state for a critically overdrafted basin. Facing seawater intrusion and overdraft, the agency has invested decades of work into bringing its groundwater into sustainability by 2040. But the journey hasn't been easy.

The agency was among the first to require metering on agricultural wells in the 1990s. Back then, growers were less than enthusiastic about fees, especially ones operating in other areas of the state without them, said PVWMA General Manager Brian Lockwood.

"We had a lot of obstacles in front of us," Lockwood said. "We didn't have a great deal of support from the community prior to SGMA, and now we do."

Part of the work behind earning community support involved an early start, including the formation of a committee to evaluate the state of their basin in 2010. The agency is also working on its College Lake Water Supply project, which will diversify its supply and take pressure off its aquifer.

"SGMA really helped us. It was sort of validation of all our previous work," Lockwood said. "We could go out to the community and say, 'This work we've done together has really paid off.'"

Looking Ahead

For all its unprecedented challenges, SGMA is on schedule. DWR marked a major milestone in January when it completed the review process for GSPs covering high and medium priority groundwater basins. But the consensus remains that the hardest part may lie ahead. Paul Gosselin, Deputy Director of DWR's Sustainable Groundwater Management Office, noted that California is the last U.S. state to regulate groundwater.

"I suspect the next three to five years are going to be rocky as these implementation steps start to take hold," Gosselin said. "However, I remain absolutely confident in the commitment of our local agencies and partners. I think what we'll find is that California will be the one with the best approach out of all." ♦

San Diego-Area Advanced Water Purification Program Marks Significant Progress


Photo courtesy of Padre Dam MWD

The East County Advanced Water Purification Program (East County AWP) has made significant progress since breaking ground on construction nearly two years ago, according to a news release from Padre Dam Municipal Water District.

The program will create a local, clean, safe and drought-proof drinking water supply using state-of-the-art technology to purify East San Diego County's recycled water, producing up to 30% of East County's drinking water supply once it goes online in 2026. That translates into 11.5 million gallons of purified water per day with the capability to serve an estimated 400,000 people.

The East County AWP is a collaborative partnership between Padre Dam Municipal Water District, the City of El Cajon, County of San Diego and Helix Water District. The overall cost for the work currently in construction is approximately $950 million. The program is partnering with the City of San Diego to create a 17-mile pipeline for regional brine and wastewater.

Project construction involves several elements including building the water treatment facilities and 30 miles of wastewater and purified water pipelines. The heart of the program is located just north of Santee Lakes. Here, the treatment facilities are being built and more than 60% of the concrete work is complete. More than 32,000 cubic yards of concrete has been poured for building slabs, process tanks and basins – enough concrete to fill more than nine Olympic-sized pools.

After water is purified at the East County AWP Facility, it will travel 10 miles to Lake Jennings taking approximately 2.3 hours to arrive at the lake and flowing at a rate of six feet per second. This purified water pipeline is more than 30% complete with work underway in Santee and Lakeside. Three miles of open cut installation of wastewater pipelines are also under construction and are nearly 60% complete.

In addition to creating a local source of drinking water, the East County AWP will create its own power. By harnessing the gas created while treating wastewater, the program is expected to create three megawatts of clean energy each year, which will reduce the facility's fossil fuel needs, improve energy resiliency and cut costs. This is anticipated to provide approximately 60% of the energy needs for operating the treatment facilities on site.

The program's water purification cycle will begin with wastewater from homes and businesses. From there, it will travel to a water recycling facility and treated to create recycled water. This recycled water will then head to the East County AWP to be purified by undergoing four water purification steps. Next, this purified water will be piped to Lake Jennings, then treated at the R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant. Finally, the clean, safe, high-quality drinking water will be distributed to customers in East San Diego County.

In addition to creating a reliable and sustainable drinking water source which will reduce dependence on imported water, the program will significantly decrease ocean discharge of wastewater to the Pacific Ocean. The program is estimated to create 2,500 jobs in the region.

Vehicle Wrap Contest Highlights Water Education in Central Valley

With more than 150 submissions, South San Joaquin Irrigation District's (SSJID) "Watering the Roots of Our Community" art contest showcased local students' commitment to water conservation.

Aubree B., a fourth grader in Mr. Hofman's class at Colony Oak Elementary School, took the grand prize and Aubree's artwork will be turned into a vehicle wrap for SSJID service truck tailgates. The creative piece, a colorful depiction of farmland, mountains and canals, will decorate the trucks through October, spreading the message of water throughout the region.

"Our trucks are seen everywhere in our service area, 24 hours a day, seven days a week," General Manager Peter Rietkerk stated in a news release. "The Vehicle Wrap Art Contest promotes the critical role water plays here in San Joaquin County and reminds the community how this resource supports the roots of our lives."

SSJID's annual Vehicle Wrap Art Contest allows students to learn more about the importance of water and how precious it is to surrounding farms, cities and businesses. The contest was open to first- through fifth-grade students in Manteca, Ripon and Escalon unified school districts. In addition to a grand prize winner, district staff voted for six more contest winners.



Image courtesy of SSJID

THIS MONTH IN ACWA HISTORY

10 years ago

Legislation aimed at achieving sustainable management of the state's groundwater basins advanced, clearing the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on a 9-5 vote. The author, Assemblymember Roger Dickinson (D-Sacramento), stated that he was pleased to have incorporated recommendations made by ACWA and called it a watershed moment.

20 years ago

As a California Water Awareness Campaign co-sponsor, ACWA and association member Contra Costa Water District joined the state's Flex Your Power energy efficiency statewide effort through a water-and-energy-saving washer and dryer giveaway benefiting the Bay Area Crisis Nursery in Concord.

30 years ago

California's water situation continued its slow decline in April with precipitation in the Sacramento Basin falling below normal for the seventh month in a row. The Sacramento Basin runoff median forecast on April 1 was 8.5 million acre-feet, compared to 8.1 million acre-feet in 1976.



Gubernatorial candidate Houston I. Flournoy, center, chats with ACWA Executive Director John P. Fraser, left, and ACWA President Lyle W. Martin, right, prior to his keynote address at the 1974 Opening Conference Luncheon.

40 years ago

Renowned tax cutter Howard Jarvis participated in a debate over his "Save Prop. 13" initiative at the 1984 ACWA Spring Conference in San Diego. Opposing him in the debate, Californians for Efficient Government Chair William Winslow said the initiative would not remedy equity problems caused by Proposition 13 and called the latest initiative "an ill-considered approach for funding" developed by people with a dislike for local government.

50 years ago

Houston I. Flournoy, then State Controller and a leading candidate for the Republican nomination for California governor, delivered a keynote address during the 1974 ACWA Spring Legislative Conference at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. "In a world that is propagating crises as though they were rabbits, California has no water crisis. … That's no accident, no natural provision. That's good planning," Flournoy told attendees.

Celebrate Water Awareness Month in May

Member Toolkit Includes Logo, Customizable Talking Points, Social Posts and More

Download toolkit at **acwa.com/resources**

Water AWARENESS MONTH

Agency Calculates Watershed Value at $1.6 Trillion

The El Dorado Water Agency (EDWA) recently released a report on the valuation of ecosystem goods and services in the upper American River watershed (UARW). The report found that the working landscapes and natural lands within the watershed are an incredibly valuable asset worth more than $1.6 trillion over a 100-year period. This valuation proves the importance of a healthy watershed and provides opportunities to bring more investments to managing landscapes to keep them healthy.

The watershed's working landscapes include agricultural lands, forests, ranchlands and natural lands such as conservation lands, shrublands, wetlands, greenspace, open water, rivers, and lakes. The working and natural lands are natural capital assets that produce valuable ecosystem goods and services including food, water, clean air, hydroelectric power, beauty, drought and fire risk reduction, habitat, recreation, and more.

"All of the lands within the upper American River watershed provide critical environmental, community, and economic benefits," Rebecca Guo, EDWA General Manager stated in a news release. "Understanding the value that these ecosystem goods and services provide to people will help inform watershed management and investment decisions."

When looking at land cover types (forest, shrublands, grassland, agriculture, open water, wetlands, and developed/ open space) within the watershed and the associated goods and services each provides, the annual economic value of the upper American River watershed is $14.9 billion a year. Each land cover type provides different ecosystem goods and services and plays an important role to society and the environment. In this watershed, forests provide the highest per acre benefit and also cover the largest land acreage. Yet, this forested landscape is highly susceptible to natural disasters such as wildfires that take decades to recover from.

EDWA also conducted an analysis specifically evaluating the economic value of outdoor recreation in the UARW. This study found that outdoor recreation generates $607 million in economic output from visitor spending and $660 million in non-market benefits beyond direct spending. The watershed is enjoyed by both local residents and tourists throughout the globe; in 2022 there were approximately 7 million recreation visits to the UARW.

"Investing in the upper American River watershed's outdoor spaces is important not just to preserve its natural beauty, but every dollar invested in recreational lands supports good health for people of all abilities, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds, and stimulates and strengthens our regional



Photo courtesy of El Dorado Water Agency

economy," El Dorado County Supervisor and EDWA Board Chair Lori Parlin stated in a news release.

In the past, natural assets have not been valued in a way that can be easily compared to traditional economic analyses for investment decisions. As a result, there has been underinvestment in maintaining the health of working and natural lands. Understanding the economic value of the watershed will help local, state, and federal agencies, Tribes, non-profits, businesses, and interested parties better coordinate, prioritize, and justify investments in watershed projects as well as develop sustainable water management practices while meeting the needs of adjacent communities.

To learn more, please visit El Dorado Water Agency's website at **www.edwateragency.org**.



Marion Champion

Mission Springs Water District Names Champion AGM

Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) recently named **Marion Champion** as Assistant General Manager.

MSWD General Manager **Brian Macy** made the appointment within context of the district's newly unveiled strategic plan. Champion will play a critical role in helping oversee the plan's execution and driving initiatives to advance MSWD's goals.

The plan outlines a comprehensive roadmap for enhancing operations and service delivery across seven key areas: Customer Communications, Water Supply, System Reliability, Financial Management, Technology and Processes, Environmental Sustainability, and Workforce Excellence.

Macy recently vacated the Assistant General Manager role and assumed the MSWD General Manager position last August.



Lance Tennis

OBITUARY

Western Canal Mourns Founding Board Member

Lance Tennis, a founding member of the Western Canal Water District Board of Directors, passed away on Feb. 29. He was 82.

Tennis also served as a leader within the rice farming and water community in Northern California. In addition to helping found the Western Canal Water District during the early 1980s, Tennis was active within the Butte County Farm Bureau, Northern California Water Association, Rice Growers Association of California, Butte County Rice Growers Association and the California Rice Research Board.

"Lance Tennis was a force in California's water and agricultural policy arena," said Western Canal Water District Vice President **Eric Larrabee**. "His absence will leave a void in all who benefited from his advice, wisdom and influence."



Ron Duncan



Melanie Mow Schumacher

RETIREMENT

Duncan Retiring from Soquel Creek Water District

Soquel Creek Water District General Manager **Ron Duncan** has announced plans to retire after 20 years with the district. His last day will be Sept. 30.

The district's Board of Directors unanimously selected **Melanie Mow Schumacher** to replace Duncan. She is currently the district's Special Projects-Communications Manager/Assistant General Manager and will assume duties as General Manager Oct. 1.

Duncan joined the district in 2003 as its Water Conservation Coordinator and was then promoted to Conservation Manager before becoming General Manager in 2016. His leadership enabled the development of Pure Water Soquel, which when completed will provide a supplemental water supply, replenish the groundwater basin and prevent seawater contamination of the sole source of water for the district.

Schumacher started at the district in 1995 as a junior engineer. She received a civil engineering degree from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and has a master's degree in public administration from Golden Gate University in San Francisco.



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- State Water Board Holds Workshop on Revised Draft Regulation for Water Use Efficiency – Mar. 20
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24 – 26
CENTRAL VALLEY TOUR 2024
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7 – 9
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15
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JUNE 2024
5 – 6
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27
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