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Left: Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a special May 8 appearance during the 2024 ACWA Spring Conference & Expo.
Center: Attendees listen to a Main Stage presentation during the conference, which attracted more than 1,600 people to Sacramento.
Right: California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot delivers the conference's Welcome Keynote.

ACWA Marks Successful 2024 Spring Conference & Expo in Sacramento

More than 1,600 people attending the ACWA 2024 Spring Conference & Expo in Sacramento May 7-9 enjoyed three days packed with programming on California water issues, with highlights including a speech by Gov. Gavin Newsom along with keynote addresses, award presentations and a sold-out Exhibit Hall.

By the numbers, the latest ACWA conference featured 25 educational sessions, 13 committee and task force meetings, 10 membership meetings, 86 Exhibit Hall booths along with myriad opportunities for professional network building.

The summaries below highlight just a few of the programs held during spring conference.

Water Talk

Title: "Fluid Intelligence: Shaping the Future of Water with Data and AI"

Speaker: Amber Ivey, Principal, Ivey Collective LLC

Key issue(s): Ivey provided tips for promoting data-driven decision making and discussed challenges to data sharing, the importance of the narratives that data can unfold and getting started with artificial intelligence (AI).

Ivey quote: "In order to do AI in the right way, you have to have good data infrastructure, you have to have a data governance plan and data management and you also have to know how to use your data before you leap forward into the world of AI."

CONFERENCE continued on page 5

Governor Addresses ACWA Spring Conference

Speaking at the 2024 ACWA Spring Conference & Expo in Sacramento, Gov. Gavin Newsom addressed climate change adaptation while expressing strong support for local control of water resources.

Newsom joins a long list of California governors who have spoken at ACWA conferences throughout the association's history, including past Gov. Jerry Brown. Gov. Newsom's address highlighted several areas of interest to ACWA member agencies. Water has remained a leading issue during Newsom's second term in office, and he made that abundantly clear during his 15-minute address.

GOVERNOR continued on page 3

2 ED Column: ACWA Calls on Members to Join Coalition in Support of Climate Resilience Bond
4 Capitol Corner Provides Update on Legislative Issues Affecting Members
9 Keynote Addresses Recognize ACWA Member Agency Work

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN
DAVE EGGERTON

Engage Legislators Now on Climate Resilience Bond



Creating a climate-resilient California is one of our state's highest priorities. And what is more important to achieving this goal than improving our ability to manage water in response to exceptionally dry and wet times?

California's water managers are well aware of how to answer this challenge and blunt the impact of weather whiplash. What they need is significant funding at the state level to help them get the job done. Fortunately, a climate resilience bond currently taking shape in the state Legislature could fulfill some of that need, but only if it is focused in large part on water infrastructure needs across the state. To that end, we need ACWA members from all ACWA regions to reach out to their state senators and assembly members.

ACWA is urging the Legislature to include $5.75 billion in water infrastructure funding in an $8.5 billion bond. ACWA's recommended categories include:

- Dam safety
- Recycling and desalination
- Safe drinking water and clean water
- Ground water management and aquifer recharge
- Flood protection
- Regional water conveyance
- Regional watershed resilience
- Surface water storage
- State Water Project improvements
- Water conservation and water use efficiency

ACWA also supports funding for wildfire protection as part of forest health improvement.

ACWA members should talk with Legislators now about the need for water infrastructure funding assistance to prepare for wet and dry times. Information about the ACWA funding priorities is available on the ACWA website at acwa.com/bond. From the same webpage, your agency can also join the ACWA-led coalition which is supporting funding for water infrastructure that is critically needed for climate resilience.

It makes sense for the State to invest in water now. Water projects are expensive, and the cost will not be going down. Some categories, such as dam safety and flood protection, will avoid future costs and protect public safety. Other categories will help make sure there is a reliable water supply in dry times.

Obviously, the governor will play a key role in whether the climate resilience bond makes it to the ballot, but the focus now is on the work at the Legislature. I urge ACWA member agencies to act as soon as they can in reaching out to Legislators. Time is of the essence here, both in terms of the Legislature's timeline as they prepare a bond for the November 2024 ballot, and as we continue to rely on a water system that was not designed for weather whiplash.

Information about the ACWA funding priorities is available on the ACWA website at acwa.com/bond.

ACWA Receives Award for Annual Year in Review Publication

The California Association of Public Information Officials (CAPIO) recently honored ACWA with a prestigious Epic Award, the top prize in the annual publication category, for its "2022 Year in Review."

CAPIO's EPIC awards program recognizes the most creative and effective efforts in the areas of communication and marketing campaigns, newsletter production, photography, special events, writing, website development and video production. ACWA's annual year in review publication outlines the association's activity during the previous year, including advocacy wins, service highlights, events and metrics.

The annual reports, including "2022 Year in Review," are available online at **www.acwa.com/resources** under Publications.

The EPIC Awards honor work that transcends innovation and craft – work that made a lasting impact by providing an equal chance of winning to all entrants, regardless of company or agency size and project budget.



GOVERNOR continued from page 1

California Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot introduced Newsom during Crowfoot's May 8 keynote speech, which also focused on the critical role of California water management in an era defined by climate extremes.

After receiving a standing ovation, Newsom opened his address by noting dramatic swings between record-breaking climatic shifts and how his administration has responded by giving local water agencies flexibility in taking action, one of several points applauded by conference attendees.

"You are the experts, you understand it intimately," Newsom said, stating his support for "a framework of bottom up, not top down — localism to be determinative as it relates to managing our water policy in the state of California."

He acknowledged ACWA member agencies' work on stormwater capture, water recycling and groundwater replenishment, all while facing challenges with conveyance, above- and below-ground storage and implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Newsom emphasized his support for the Delta Conveyance Project as key to climate adaptation and also stressed his administration's continued work on permitting reform, touching on the process behind building Sites Reservoir as an example.



"If you can't build an off-stream storage facility, my gosh, how do we do things better, how do we move things in a more efficient and effective manner? How do we get out of our own way?" he asked.

Newsom cited "tremendous progress" made on advancing the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes, by praising work toward the agreements' creation of greater habitat restoration and more flexibility in water management in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta.

Making a point he's repeated throughout his term, Newsom called for moving beyond "binaries" and relentless litigation as a feature in California water policy.

"The courts can't be the determining factor. Weeks become months, years, decades," Newsom said.

Newsom closed his address by underscoring his support for local water management.

"Each and every one of you have unique challenges, a unique set of opportunities, and one size yes, and by definition, doesn't fit all," Newsom said, adding "You need that flexibility, and we need to partner with you, with an understanding of the regional characteristics and dynamics that you confront every single day."

CAPITOL CORNER

ACWA-Sponsored Bill to Reform Rate-Setting Process Advances in Legislature

ACWA state legislative advocacy remains focused on several key priorities affecting member agencies. Below are summaries and updates on five of the multiple bills on which ACWA staff is engaged.

Rate Setting Process

Sponsored by ACWA, AB 2257, would aid public agencies defending against Proposition 218 lawsuits. It advanced off the Assembly floor May 16 and is heading to the Senate.

Introduced by Assemblymember Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City), the bill would require litigants to participate and raise specific objections during the public administrative process before challenging rates or assessments in court. It would also limit the administrative record to evidence presented to an 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 public agencies can pass reasonable rates to cover the costs of operations and investments. These suits are often filed without litigants first having raised alleged violations with an agency during the public process on adopting rates.

Headwaters Health

SB 1159, by Senator Bill Dodd (D-Napa), would direct the state to consider exempting certain roadside wildfire risk reduction projects from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The bill is headed to the Senate floor for consideration.

Likewise, AB 2276, by Assemblymember Jim Wood (D-Healdsburg), would extend and increase the utility of timber harvest plan exemptions, making it more economically feasible to complete wildfire mitigation projects that provide for healthier and more resilient forests. AB 2276 passed the Assembly and is awaiting assignment in the Senate.

Groundwater

The Department of Water Resources released a report in March that summarized various approaches local agencies took to comply with related Executive Orders, along with analysis on 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. ACWA adopted an oppose-unless-amended position due to concerns that the bill would place a moratorium on any new groundwater wells for agricultural or industrial usage throughout much of the state. Well-permitting agencies would be prohibited from approving applications for specified wells in basins that have experienced more than half a foot of subsidence since 2015 or if the well is within a quarter-mile of a domestic well. The bill does exempt certain wells, including wells for public water supply, drinking water wells, wells that are part of a conjunctive use or water banking program, and wells used for groundwater remediation.

As of May 16, AB 2079 is pending on the Assembly floor.

Water Policy

AB 2614, which proposed several concerning amendments relating to tribal water uses to the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 16.

While the bill was intended to ensure that tribal beneficial uses and the voices of California tribal communities were considered in the development of water quality plans, the bill went far beyond this stated intent. ACWA adopted an oppose-unless-amended position based on significant concerns over how the bill would impact water supply reliability throughout the state. The bill would have imposed sweeping directives on the State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards and created significant uncertainty for water providers throughout the state.

AB 2614 would have required that all water quality control plans throughout the state be amended to incorporate protections for tribal water uses. This process would be exempted from CEQA, preventing an assessment of potential impacts and stakeholder input.

ACWA IN ACTION

ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton, left, visits with Firebaugh Canal Water District Director and ACWA Region 6 Board member Darcy Villere at J&J Ramos Farms Inc. during a recent trip to the Central Valley. Eggerton and ACWA staff maintain regular contact with association members through personal visits to stay updated on issues affecting the ACWA community on a regional and statewide level.







Left: Amber Ivey delivers the Main Stage Water Talk address on data and artificial intelligence. **Right:** A Policy Forum focuses on how climate change affects Bay-Delta water issues with panelists including (l-r) Randy Fiorini Consulting and past ACWA President; Pat Hume, Sacramento County Supervisor; Adán Ortega, Board Chair, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; and Jennifer Pierre, General Manager, State Water Contractors, who moderated the discussion.

CONFERENCE continued from page 1

Rate Study How-To's

Title: "How to Conduct a Rate Study While Avoiding Common Pitfalls and Maintaining Best Practices"

Panelists: (Moderator) Dan Gumpert, Controller, ACWA; Sanjay Gaur, President, Water Resources Economics, LLC; Marwan Khalifa, Chief Financial Officer, Mesa Water; Jonathan Wunderlich, Director of Finance & Administration, Alameda County Water District

Key issue(s): The panelists discussed how to conduct a successful water rate study and select the best consultant to help with the process, in order to ensure the study meets legal requirements of Proposition 218 and recommends rates to effectively fund operating and capital needs. They also discussed the need for public education to get buy-in from customers and boards of directors.

Wunderlich quote: "You want to find the most qualified and capable rate consultant. If you go strictly by price … you're likely to get a consultant who … will not be able to do a very good job for you and then in the long run, you're going to spend even more money dealing with legal challenges or needing to hire another consultant to clean up the work that they did."

Khalifa quote: "Communicating the message early and often is also key. Being able to communicate (proposed changes) early enough so customers know that it's coming, and it's not a surprise at the rate hearing, is important."

Leadership

Title: Leadership Crisis: Real Talk, Tough Questions

Panelists: (Moderator) Joone Lopez, General Manager, Moulton Niguel Water District; Dan Denham, General Manager, San Diego County Water Authority; Adel Hagekhalil, General Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; Michelle Reimers, General Manager, Turlock Irrigation District

Key issue(s): As the nation faces workforce challenges, the California water industry struggles to attract the best and the brightest talent, as well as shape a leadership that is reflective and responsive to the needs of the changing public expectations. Panelists had a frank discussion where they assessed the landscape of talent and leadership in water and shared what they think about the future of water.

Reimers quote: "I'd challenge boards to look beyond resumes and look at the people. Unless you have a leader doing the right things for the right reason, you won't effect change."

Lopez quote: "Why do we have a leadership crisis? When it comes to leading, a lot of people don't think they can do it or don't know how to do it."

Regional Issue Forum

Title: How to Play Nice in the Sandbox: Lessons in Sharing from Region 1

Panelists: (Moderator) Tamara Alaniz, General Manager, Brooktrails Township Community Services District; Carmel Brown, Financial Assistance Branch Manager, Department of Water Resources; Karen Gaffney, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Communications, North Coast Resource Partnership; Leaf Hillman, Co-Chair, North Coast Resource Partnership and Karuk Tribe member

Key issue(s): Local autonomy is a cornerstone for the North Coast Resource Partnership, an innovative and successful partnership that includes Northern California tribes, seven counties and other partners. Panelists shared their experiences and successes in building resilient water management practices for the future through the partnership and discussed the future outlook of Integrated Regional Water Management Planning.

Hillman quote: "To play nice in the sandbox you need to be open to hear what people are saying. Really listen. Have respectful conversations."

Bay-Delta and Climate Change

Title: A Delta County Supervisor, a Water District Board Chair, and a Farmer – A Conversation about How Climate Change is Affecting Bay-Delta Water Issues

CONFERENCE continued on page 6

Selected audio recordings of conference programs will be available to registrants, or for purchase through www.acwa.com.

CONFERENCE continued from page 5

Panelists: (Moderator) Jennifer Pierre, General Manager, State Water Contractors; Randy Fiorini, Fiorini Consulting; Pat Hume, County Supervisor, Sacramento County; Adán Ortega, Board Chair, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Key issue(s): Bay-Delta water issues are complicated. This panel led an open dialogue between three leaders from different parts of the state to discuss how climate change is impacting long-standing issues affecting water supplies, flood control and farming.

Hume quote: "Climate change is about uncertainty and the only thing we know for sure is it's going to get wilder with drought and extreme weather events."

Fiorini quote: "The Delta Plan is viable and informative. Parts of it have been implemented but we have many more to go. In 11 years in the Delta this is what I learned – the Delta is complicated. It's difficult to get things done; it's difficult to achieve success."

Future Forward

Title: "Are California Water Managers Ready for the Future?"

Panelists: (Moderator) Dave Pedersen, General Manager, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District; Heather Dyer, Chief Executive Officer/General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Craig Miller, General Manager, Western Municipal Water District; Michelle Reimers, General Manager, Turlock Irrigation District; Willie Whittlesey, General Manager, Yuba Water Agency.



A Policy Forum examines the future of water management with panelists including (l-r) Heather Dyer, Chief Executive Officer/General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Craig Miller, General Manager, Western Municipal Water District; Michelle Reimers, General Manager, Turlock Irrigation District; Willie Whittlesey, General Manager, Yuba Water Agency and Dave Pedersen, General Manager, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, who moderated the discussion.

Key issue(s): As California continues to face complex challenges related to water scarcity, climate change, and population growth, it is imperative to build alignment among water leaders on the trajectory of California's water management.

Dyer quote: "It really is going to be about the ability to be adaptive and manage at any given year … we absolutely need more storage whether its below ground or above ground. We will have likely the same amount of water it's just going to fall in different patterns."

Whittlesey quote: "The great thing that I'm seeing is a different way of doing things in California. I'm finding myself in conversations [with regulators] I've never thought would happen. They're fluid and open and they're innovative."

Water Industry Trend

Title: "Harmony in Hydrology: The Need for Water Managers to Embrace Nature-Based Solutions"

Panelists: (Moderators) Joel Metzger, General Manager, Utica Water & Power and Megan Nicholas-Harper, Senior Manager Water Resources, Manulife Investment Management; Clesi Bennett, Senior Environmental Scientist, California Natural Resources Agency; Nick Wobbrock, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Blue Forest Conservation; Sarah Woolf, President, Water Wise

CONFERENCE continued on page 7

COMMENTS ON CONFERENCE



MAYA HALCOMB
Management Analyst
Calleguas Municipal Water District

"I was so impressed with the diversity of panel topics and diversity of opinions across the water industry that were represented."



CHANDRA CHILMAKURI
Assistant General Manager for Water Policy
State Water Contractors

"I liked the thoughtful comments from Secretary Crowfoot and Governor Newsom. Also, the Bay-Delta program because it highlighted the real work that is going on to combat the mistrust."

CONFERENCE continued from page 6

Key issue(s): Nature-based solutions will better manage the increasing volatility of California's water supply. These holistic approaches not only safeguard water resources but also contribute to biodiversity, economic stability, climate resiliency and community well-being. Panelists discussed successes and barriers to implementing these solutions.

Bennett quote: "A big (barrier) is lack of data and information and needing to be better utilizing both on-the-ground data collection but also remotely sensed airborne, spaceborne data. Building – this is not the sexy part of the work – I.T. systems that really help us understand what the benefits of nature-based solutions could be to cultivate buy-in but also to adaptively manage our projects on infrastructure overtime."

Woolf quote: "These [SGMA] programs take time to develop just in trust alone, just in being able to do these things together with new partners takes time. There is complete commitment by the ag community to get to sustainability but the tension of do it now versus the timeline that they've put before all of us is what's going to possibly break it, so we need continued direction from our agencies, feedback back and forth of what is working … but also a little bit of grace in how we get there."



Panelists share views on the Delta Conveyance Project during a discussion that included (l-r) Bob Tincher, Deputy General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District; Thad Bettner, Executive Director, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors; and Carrie Buckman, Environmental Program Manager for Delta Conveyance, Department of Water Resources.

Water Use Efficiency

Title: "The Home Stretch of Making Conservation a California Way of Life"

Panelists: (Moderator) Tia Fleming, Co-Executive Director, California Water Efficiency Partnership; Maureen Erbeznik, Founder, Maureen Erbeznik & Associates; Chelsea Haines, Regulatory Relations Manager, ACWA; Nichole Morgan, Board Member, State Water Resources Control Board

Key issue(s): In 2018, the legislature established the state goal of Making Conservation a California Way of Life. This panel explored the regulatory effort that is currently taking place and discussed the process and what is needed to be successful from policy concept to implementation.

Erbeznik quote: "All this data and all these requirements will really drive innovation [and] this will create a workforce. Exciting, exciting time but a lot ahead of us."

Morgan quote: "We want everyone in compliance. You do not go into enforcement until it is a last resort so as this data evolves this policy can evolve. That gives us a way to work with everyone to make sure we go down the road towards compliance and not enforcement."

Bay-Delta

Title: "Delta Focus: Conveyance Project Updates"

Panelists: (Moderator) Stephen Pang, State Relations Advocate, ACWA; Thad Bettner, Executive Director, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors; Carrie Buckman, Environmental Program Manager for Delta Conveyance, Department of Water Resources; Bob

CONFERENCE continued on page 10



ELIZABETH LEEPER
Senior Deputy General Counsel
El Dorado Irrigation District

"I always enjoy going to the ACWA conferences because it is a great opportunity to meet with our fellow water professionals and just share information."



REAGAN BALLO
VP, Government Banking Officer
Five Star Bank

"There is a lot of value in having everyone in one setting – everyone is here, everyone is together. I've seen a half dozen clients just today in the Exhibit Hall, or in a breakout session, so to have everyone come together just a couple times a year is a huge value."







ACWA 2024 Spring Conference & Expo

1. Jurupa Community Services District Board Members and staff pose at the ACWA Conference selfie spot.
2. Gov. Gavin Newsom pauses for a photo with ACWA President Cathy Green.
3. ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton welcomes attendees to ACWA's Spring Conference.
4. Exhibitors from the Special District Leadership Foundation get festive for the In Living Color Reception at the Exhibit Hall on Wednesday.
5. Representatives from Jacobs attend the Wednesday Reception, which was sponsored by the company.
6. ACWA conferences always provide a great way to catch up with friends and colleagues.
7. Conference attendees network between sessions.
8. Kristin Bloomer and Victoria Llort from Desert Water Agency enjoy Exhibit Hall festivities.
9. Lucky prize winners in the Exhibit Hall included David Drake, a Board Member from Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District.
10. ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila addresses attendees from the Main Stage.















Keynotes Highlight ACWA Member Agency Dedication and Work

ACWA hosted California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot and President and CEO of the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Tani Cantil-Sakauye as keynote speakers during the ACWA 2024 Spring Conference & Expo, providing attendees exclusive perspectives on water from both the top level of state government and the state's premier policy think tank.

Secretary Crowfoot

Delivering the Welcome Keynote on May 8, Crowfoot spoke to an array of priority issues for ACWA members while acknowledging their dedication and work. From catastrophic wildfires to droughts and floods, as well as a global pandemic, Californians were able to take the delivery of clean water for granted because of the work of state water agencies, Crowfoot said in thanking ACWA members.

"Water is life, water is health, water is prosperity, water built California and continues to build California and that's thanks to the water agencies across ACWA," Crowfoot said.

However, serious challenges remain. California will lose 10% percent of its water supply due to climate change by 2045, Crowfoot said, listing a wide range of actions undertaken by the administration of Gov. Gavin Newsom, from developing the Water Resilience Portfolio, which many ACWA member agencies helped shape, to establishing a weekly water cabinet that continues meeting today.

Crowfoot underscored historic funding being put to work by water agencies on stormwater capture, groundwater recharge, water recycling and desalination before stressing the necessity of "ensuring that our backbone infrastructure remains strong and resilient."

Crowfoot also called out ACWA's support for the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes, formerly Voluntary Agreements, currently being considered by the State Water Resources Board for inclusion in its Bay-Delta Plan Update. He encapsulated how the Agreements can work by restoring flows, expanding critical habitat and improving scientific monitoring.

"And then, adaptively managing our system so that we can utilize that habitat and that flow dynamically to actually manage for the conditions, so that people and nature are actually thriving together," Crowfoot added.

Crowfoot ended with a call for continued partnership with water agencies, describing the past two and a half years of the Newsom Administration as "the era of getting hard things done."

"We are not sitting on our hands as a result of the last couple of years of, thankfully, strong rain and snow," Crowfoot said. "We're driving forward, and we need your partnership."

PPIC President Cantil-Sakauye

Cantil-Sakauye, who served as California Chief Justice between 2011 and 2022 before joining the PPIC, delivered a May 9 keynote that illustrated the organization's history, purpose and value to California. The organization serves as a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank working to improve public policy through independent research, which has made it a highly influential voice within the California water space.

"ACWA has been a huge contributor to helping us rethink what does the next 10 to 15 years of water in California look like? And what should we be doing as a research center to further inform and improve public policy?" Cantil-Sakauye said.





Top: California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot delivers the Welcome Keynote address. **Bottom:** President and CEO of the Public Policy Institute of California Tani Cantil-Sakauye speaks to conference attendees during Thursday's keynote address.

The PPIC is often asked to testify in the Legislature and water is among eight topics that span education, criminal justice and the economy, among a few areas. The organization is funded through grants and donations.

"We let the data speak for itself," Cantil-Sakauye said.

Over the years, that data has traced a ripple effect between research areas, revealing connectivity between issues. For example, Cantil-Sakauye linked how economic impacts from Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implementation could carry over into lack of access to higher education and society's ability to upskill workers for the emerging green economy.

Cantil-Sakauye also highlighted ACWA's work by applauding the association's advocacy on Proposition 218.





Left: Panelists share updates and insights into the latest developments in the implementation of SGMA during a discussion that included (l-r) Lauren Layne, Shareholder at Baker, Manock & Jensen; Deanna Jackson, Executive Director, Tri-County Water Authority; Christopher Guillen, Shareholder, Brownstein; and Jeanne Zolezzi, Partner at Herum, Crabtree, Suntag, who moderated the panel. **Right:** A Policy Forum features a retrospective on extreme climate swings during 2023, with panelists including (l-r): Brian Johnson, Secretary, Central Valley Flood Protection Board; Eric Oppenheimer, Executive Director, State Water Resources Control Board; Karla Nemeth, Director, Department of Water Resources; and moderator Kristin Peer, Managing Shareholder, Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan.

CONFERENCE continued from page 7

Tincher, Deputy General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District

Key issue(s): Panelists discussed the Delta Conveyance Project within context of the Delta Reform Act, and the fact that two-thirds of the state's water originates in the Sierra Nevada and is delivered to more than 27 million Californians and about 750,000 acres of farmland, making it critical to the health of communities and the state's economy.

Bettner quote: "We need to manage the system holistically for water supply, but we need to manage the supply holistically for the fishery as well. And if we're not doing that, then we will start losing water supply when we start seeing fishery populations crash, like we're seeing now."

Buckman quote: "I think this year is a really good demonstration of the cost of doing nothing. … If we'd had the Delta Conveyance Project in place this year, we would have captured 909,000 acre-feet, the size of Folsom Lake."

SGMA

Title: "An Uncertain Certainty: Navigating the Uncharted Water of SGMA, Financing Implementation, and State Intervention"

Panelists: (Moderator) Jeanne Zolezzi, Partner at Herum, Crabtree, Suntag; Christopher Guillen, Shareholder, Brownstein; Deanna Jackson, Executive Director, Tri-County Water Authority; Lauren Layne, Shareholder at Baker, Manock & Jensen

Key issue(s): This discussion delved into the complex realm of funding strategies for Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and associated challenges with SGMA, which aims to achieve groundwater sustainability within 20 years. Overall, the conversation covered SGMA funding mechanisms, innovative funding solutions and litigation, as well as the implications of subbasins placed on probation and who is responsible for SGMA fees and penalties.

Layne quote: "I can tell you, that they're very busy right now. GSAs are working on revising their groundwater sustainability plans, either to hopefully avoid probationary hearings, or to their updates, and they're trying to figure out funding. … They're trying to figure out how to fund these mandates that they have to impose."

Jackson quote: "I still think the 20-year timeline is an aggressive timeline for (SGMA), but anything less than that is likely going to fail."

Solution Spotlight

Title: "Farming the Ocean for Fresh Water"

Presenters: Dave Pederson, General Manager, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVWWD); Timothy Quinn, Past ACWA Executive Director and OceanWell Water Policy Strategist

Key issue(s): In 2023, LVMWD and the Natural OceanWell Company entered into a public/private partnership to pilot test a new approach to desalination that uses hydrostatic pressure near the ocean floor to drive the reverse osmosis (RO) process. During this Region 8 Solution Spotlight, attendees learned how this pioneering concept could connect LVMWD, entirely dependent on imported water, to a sustainable and reliable supply right from its ocean backyard.

Pederson quote: "This is not new technology. This is a new application of existing technology, and that distinction is important."

Quinn quote: "At 400 meters down, the natural hydrostatic pressure of the ocean is about 800 pounds per square inch, which happens to be exactly the amount of pressure you need to push saltwater through an RO membrane. … And it's free."

Climate Extremes

Title: "Reviewing the Weather Whiplash of 2023"

Panelists: (Moderator) Kristin Peer, Managing Shareholder, Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan; Karla Nemeth, Director, Department of Water Resources; Eric Oppenheimer, Executive Director, State Water Resources Control Board; Brian Johnson, Secretary, Central Valley Flood Protection Board

CONFERENCE continued on page 11

CONFERENCE continued from page 10

Key issue(s): With Gov. Gavin Newsom's emergency proclamations for both drought and flood in place simultaneously, Water Year 2023 provided extreme examples of the challenges that come with managing water resources in California. This panel brought together experts to discuss the state's response, the challenges of managing for both drought and flood, and lessons learned for the future.

Nemeth quote: "The thing that I find mind blowing is, we got super lucky. We did have fatalities due to flooding; however, we also got really lucky in that not only were the storms cold, but we had that long, cool spring, so we didn't have the angst about very rapid snowmelt, which can happen, and we had spikes in temperatures in March just the previous year."

Johnson quote: "There's a short-term, less interesting question of how you set priorities, because we all know that some years are better than others budget wise. But the real question is, 'can you afford not to invest in flood safety?'"

Agriculture

Title: "Water Industry Trend — Is Ag Doing its Part?"



(l-r) Dave Pederson, General Manager, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, and Timothy Quinn, Past ACWA Executive Director and OceanWell Water Policy Strategist, detail an innovative approach to desalination that would employ hydrostatic pressure near the sea floor to power the reverse osmosis process.

Panelists: (Moderator) Thad Bettner, Executive Director, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors; Jason Phillips, CEO, Friant Water Authority; Joanna Smith Hoff, Deputy General Counsel, Imperial Irrigation District; Chris White, Executive Director, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority

Key issue(s): Wide-ranging, broad legislation is often inadequate to address challenges faced by different regions and communities in California. Local irrigation and water districts are typically better positioned to address these needs and tailor solutions accordingly. This program explored how water suppliers are working with agricultural customers, regulatory agencies and environmental groups to solve local problems for California's water supply security.

Phillips quote: "When we look at the next 100 years, when we have to have no overdraft, what's the landscape going to look like in the San Joaquin Valley? I don't think we need to ask ourselves if ag is doing its part — ag is going to do its part. I think the thing we need to get our head around, as a state, is how do we want that to unfold?"

Smith Hoff quote: "I think clearly ag is doing its part. We can go through all the conservation that's occurring throughout the agricultural industry, California, throughout the nation. I think at the end of the day, it's going to be partnerships, and that partnership requires that ag be at the table."

COMMENTS ON CONFERENCE



PAUL ORTEGA
President
Desert Water Agency

"The Harmony in Hydrology program was outstanding, bringing together a great mix of some key thinkers and leaders on this innovative, and yet surprisingly intuitive topic. It was also a great example of leadership development that comes with ACWA's participation with the Water Education Foundation's Water Leaders program, which both moderators attended and out of which this panel was conceived."



JAMES MORALES JR.
President
East Valley Water District

"You get so many water professionals in the same place. You see one general manager right there, you can turn around, there's another one, and you get to have these amazing conversations. Having all these people in the same room, the knowledge is so concentrated, and I find this is very advantageous."

Support Voiced for Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes During State Water Board Workshop

ACWA staff and members addressed the State Water Resources Control Board April 25 in support of the Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Agreements) during the second of a three-day public workshop. The workshop was organized to provide a more detailed overview of the Agreements and an opportunity for State Water Board members to ask questions.

Formerly known as Voluntary Agreements, ACWA supports the Agreements as the best available approach within the Bay-Delta watershed for water supply reliability, the environment, communities, agriculture and more.

This approach represents a comprehensive, multi-year solution that brings together dozens of water agencies with the state and federal governments to pool resources and take concrete actions to provide targeted river flows and expand habitat in the Bay-Delta watershed. Real-time scientific monitoring and collaborative decision making would guide implementation of the Agreements.

The State Water Board is expected to decide by next year on whether to include the Agreements in the Sacramento/Delta update to the Bay-Delta Plan. The other option is a regulatory approach strictly focused on imposing a percentage of unimpaired flows on rivers within the Sacramento River and Delta watershed.

ACWA State Relations Advocate Stephen Pang joined several representatives from ACWA member agencies and other organizations speaking in support of the Agreements, through individual comments or as participants in presentations.

"ACWA supports the Agreements because they represent the most holistic and comprehensive solution for managing the Delta. They align with the state's Water Resilience Portfolio, they align with the coequal goals, they would restore habitat and help native species recover, and at the same time they would provide water supply reliability for 27 million people and 3 million acres of farmland," Pang testified. "If I could leave you with one takeaway from my comments, it would be that the Agreements provide the most benefits, with the fewest impacts to the beneficial uses of water." ♦

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EXPLORING THE WATER WORLD ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA

Last month, ACWA released a new toolkit for Water Awareness Month, which kicked off May 1. The toolkit provided member agencies an opportunity to highlight agency efforts, programs and investments made to continue delivering safe and affordable water to the communities they serve. It also served as a great opportunity to continue asking customers to use water wisely and share information on the Making Conservation a California Way of Life Regulation that is expected to be adopted this summer.

The toolkit included a new Water Awareness Month logo and social media graphics along with sample posts. Some water agencies used the provided graphics, while others added the Water Awareness Month logo to their own graphics and posts. Here are some examples of how the toolkit was used.

The toolkit is available for ACWA members at **www.acwa.com/resources**, and be sure to follow us on Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram @ACWAWater.









THIS MONTH IN ACWA HISTORY

10 years ago

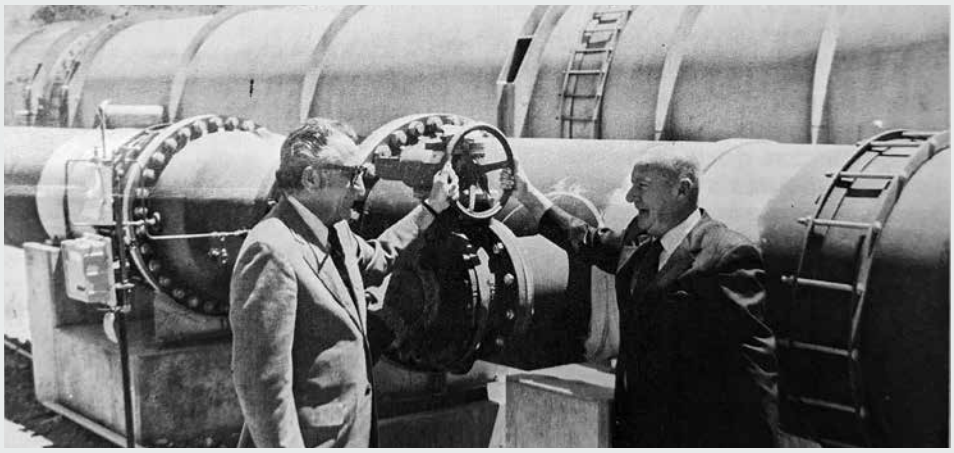
The State Water Resources Control Board announced it would order junior water-rights holders in the Sacramento, Upper Russian River and San Joaquin river watersheds to immediately cease water diversions as part of a drought emergency plan.

20 years ago

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced an agreement with local governments, including ACWA member agencies, where special districts shifted an additional $350 million to the state to help resolve its budget crisis. The agreement hinged on the state's commitment to restore the revenue and place an initiative on that year's ballot to constitutionally protect local governments against any future property tax shifts.

30 years ago

ACWA hosted its Spring Conference in San Diego. Themed "Taking Charge of Change," the conference featured discussions on water supply cutbacks, mounting environmental regulations and watershed management and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta as California faced another critically dry year.



Southern California water agency leaders celebrate the opening of a connection to the State Water Project in this May 1974 photograph.

40 years ago

U.S. Rep. Abraham (Chick) Kazen Jr. (D-Texas) lost re-election, prompting ACWA Washington Counsel Robert P. Will to warn that California water people must become more politically involved. Kazan was known as extremely knowledgeable about water issues. He added that most of the senior Democrats on the Interior Committee are easterners who have little or no interest in Western water concerns.

50 years ago

Jack A. Beaver, General Manager of the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District (SGVMWD) and Ernest Lee, General Manager of the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District ceremoniously opened a valve to let State Project water flow into the first reach of SGVMWD's distribution system, which would eventually terminate in the San Gabriel River, over 36 miles from the connection at the Devil Canyon Powerplant forebay.

State Water Board Adopts Rulemaking for Chromium-6 MCL

The State Water Resources Control Board on April 17 adopted a new maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 parts per billion (ppb) for Hexavalent Chromium (Chromium-6) in drinking water.

The regulation applies to all water suppliers, including small public water systems (PWS). It is expected that the regulation will take effect by October and water suppliers will be required to comply with the regulation in accordance with the following specified timelines:

- PWS with 10,000 or more connections will be required to comply within two years after the MCL takes effect;
- PWS with 1,000-9,999 connections will be required to comply within three years after the MCL takes effect; and
- PWS with less than 1,000 connections will be required to comply within four years after the MCL takes effect.

ACWA and its coalition partners have engaged with the State Water Board and its staff on this process for several years, including through public comments at the April hearing.

ACWA staff shared appreciation for the added compliance timeline flexibility and encouraged the State Water Board to continue to look at financial and technical support — as well as consider unique circumstances — for water systems in disadvantaged communities and low-income communities that are working toward compliance but will be challenged to do so within the time provided.







Top: Placer County Water Agency General Manager Andy Fecko receives the 2024 Excellence in Water Leadership Award. **Middle:** (l-r) East Valley Water District Vice Chairman Ronald L. Coats, President James Morales Jr. and General Manager/CEO Michael Moore pose with the 2024 Clair A. Hill Water Agency Award for Excellence, recognizing the district's new Sterling Natural Resource Center. **Bottom:** ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton with SCV Water Senior Public Affairs Specialist Laura Gallegos following her being named the fifth annual recipient of the John P. Fraser Water Leaders Fellowship.

ACWA Awards and Scholarships Recognize Excellence and Leadership

ACWA presented several awards and $21,000 in scholarships to outstanding recipients during its 2024 Spring Conference & Expo May 7-9 in Sacramento.

Excellence in Water Leadership

ACWA presented its 2024 Excellence in Water Leadership Award to Placer County Water Agency General Manager Andy Fecko.

Fecko has demonstrated remarkable collaboration throughout his career that has resulted in important wildland fire mitigation projects such as the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project – a public/private forest health partnership. His depth of knowledge and experience with the federal and state environmental processes, stewardship agreements, and engagement with environmental groups is unparalleled. Fecko also serves on the Federal Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission that delivered a comprehensive report to Congress with policy recommendations to address nearly every aspect of the wildfire crisis.

Clair Hill Award

The Clair A. Hill Water Agency Award for Excellence was presented to East Valley Water District for its Sterling Natural Resource Center. The 20-acre state-of-the-art wastewater treatment and community facility integrates advanced wastewater treatment technologies, on-site renewable energy generation, new community green spaces and facility aesthetics that enhance the neighborhood.

The annual award program recognizes outstanding achievements by public water agencies. For more information about ACWA's awards, visit **www.acwa.com/awards**.

ACWA Scholarships

The $3,500 ACWA Scholarship was awarded to Brayden Smith, an environmental studies student at San Jose State University.

Clair Hill Scholarship

The $5,000 Clair A. Hill Scholarship, sponsored by Jacobs, was awarded to Josephine Wrinkle, a marine biologist student at California State University, Monterey Bay.

Diversity Scholarship

The Arthur L. Littleworth Best Best & Krieger Diversity Scholarship, sponsored by BB&K, was awarded to Emmie Fiel, a soon to be civil engineering student at Santa Clara University.

Jerry Gladbach Scholarship

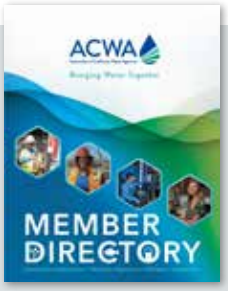
The $2,500 Edward G. "Jerry" Gladbach Scholarship, sponsored by SCV Water, was awarded to Krisha Pedraza, an environmental studies student at California State University, San Marcos.

ACWA Fellowship

ACWA presented its fifth annual John P. Fraser Water Leaders Fellowship to SCV Water Senior Public Affairs Specialist Laura Gallegos.

For more information about ACWA's scholarships, please visit **www.acwa.com/scholarships**.

Scan code to view the ACWA Member Directory





Luz Gómez

EBMUD Selects New Board Member

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) Board of Directors has appointed **Luz Gómez** to represent the seat vacated by **John Coleman**, a past ACWA President, who resigned earlier this year to work as Manager of Natural Resources for the Calaveras County Water District.

The Board unanimously appointed Gómez, tipping the seven-member board to a majority female membership for the first time in EBMUD's 100-year history. She will serve until the November general election, at which time voters will elect a permanent replacement for the term that ends on Dec. 31, 2026.

Gómez is chair of the Contra Costa County Sustainability Commission with more than 20 years of experience in public health, air quality, lead poisoning prevention and community engagement.



Jeff Sutton

GCID Names Sutton GM

Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) has named **Jeff Sutton** as its new General Manager. Sutton, an attorney, brings more than 25 years of experience in California water to the job and offers a local perspective as a fifth-generation Colusa County native.

Sutton will take over management of the largest agricultural irrigation district in the Sacramento Valley. He comes to GCID from the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority and previously worked as the Executive Director of the Family Water Alliance. Sutton has also participated in the development of the Sites Reservoir Project, serving as a Director on the Sites Reservoir Joint Powers Authority Board for the last decade, and as Vice-Chairman for the past five years.

He earned a law degree from the University of San Diego School of Law and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California at Berkeley.



Robert Grantham

SMWD selects Grantham as GM

The Board of Directors of the Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) recently appointed **Robert S. Grantham** as its next General Manager, effective June 17.

Grantham is a seasoned public servant and water leader, having most recently served as the General Manager of the Rancho California Water District. He previously served as SMWD's Assistant General Manager.

Grantham is a graduate of Franklin & Marshall College. He succeeds Interim General Manager **Donald H. Bunts**, who has served Santa Margarita as Deputy General Manager and Chief Engineer.



Eric Owens

West Basin Names Owens AGM

The West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin) recently named **Eric Owens** as its new Assistant General Manager.

Owens comes to West Basin from the Water Replenishment District, where he served as Manager of Engineering and Operations. He previously worked for West Basin for five years as Technical Resource Manager. His career spans over 24 years in municipal and private-sector water resources, specializing in membrane technology and advanced water treatment.

Owens holds a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley, and is also a registered professional engineer. Before attending UC Berkeley, Owens served as a Cavalry Scout in the United States Army.

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- OC's Largest Recycled Water Reservoir Nears Capacity – Apr. 29
- ACWA Presents Leadership Award to PCWA General Manager Andy Fecko – May 8
- Four California College Students Awarded ACWA Scholarships – May 9
- Governor Addresses ACWA Spring Conference Attendees – May 13
- Santa Margarita Water District Selects Robert Grantham as New General Manager – May 8

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit **www.acwa.com/events** for complete listing and registration

JUNE 2024
5 – 6

2024 SGMA IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP & SUMMIT

GRA and ACWA | Sacramento

This annual event allows GSAs and communities of interest to meet and foster progress on SGMA implementation while collaborating with ACWA members along with implementers and GRA technical experts.

JUNE 2024
18

WEF 3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Water Education Foundation | San Francisco

The conference offers the latest scientific, management, legal, and policy advances for sustaining groundwater resources in agricultural regions worldwide, benefiting scientists, policymakers, environmental groups, officials, and consultants.

JUNE 2024
27

ACWA REGION 2 PROGRAM & TOUR

ACWA | Paradise

This comprehensive tour and program will delve into the multifaceted aspects of recovery, focusing on mitigation and fire prevention initiatives spearheaded by the Paradise Irrigation District, as well as the remarkable economic resurgence and the ongoing rebuild of the town of Paradise.

JULY 2024
23

ACWA REGION 3 & 4 PROGRAM & TOUR

ACWA | Roseville

Save the date for the ACWA Region 3 & 4 event featuring the Sacramento Water Bank Project as the program topic. Additional details will be announced as plans progress.

AUGUST 2024
13

ACWA REGION 9 EVENT

ACWA | Temecula

Mark your calendars for the ACWA Region 9 event. Further details will be provided as event planning progresses.

SHARE YOUR EVENT

WITH OTHERS IN THE WATER INDUSTRY BY POSTING ON ACWA'S ONLINE EVENT CALENDAR

1. Go to **www.acwa.com/events**
2. Click the "**Submit Event**" button on the upper left
3. Complete the event form and click "**Submit**"