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Left: ACWA President Cathy Green addresses attendees from the Main Stage at the 2024 Fall Conference & Expo. **Right:** A few of the 1,636 conference attendees enjoy the Exhibit Hall for networking, catching up with colleagues and checking out products and services catering to the water industry.

Water Leaders Gather in Palm Desert for ACWA Fall Conference

The ACWA 2024 Fall Conference & Expo attracted 1,636 public water agency leaders along with industry experts and state decision makers to Palm Desert Dec. 3-5 to hear, learn and comment on the latest developments in California water.

Presentations and panel discussions focused on a variety of leading water issues, ranging from climate change impacts on water supplies to the latest in local groundwater management, developments in Bay-Delta policy and innovations in sustainable agriculture.

Keynote speakers included Austin Ewell III, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the U.S. Department of the Interior who served during the first administration of President Donald Trump and is now Executive Director of the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley.

By the numbers, the latest ACWA conference featured 23 educational sessions, 14 committee and task force meetings, 9 ACWA Region meetings, an ACWA Membership Meeting and 76 Exhibit Hall booths, along with receptions and myriad opportunities for professional network building. Thirty-five sponsors supported the conference.

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

Water Management

Title: "Leveraging Atmospheric River Forecasts in Water Management"

Panelists: (Moderator) Steven LaMar, Vice President, Irvine Ranch Water District; Grant Davis, General Manager, Sonoma County Water Agency; Wes Monier, Chief Hydrologist, Turlock Irrigation District; Marty Ralph, Research Meteorologist, Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes.

Key Issue(s): Atmospheric rivers are critical in providing water throughout California, but too much or too little becomes a water management challenge. Better forecasting of atmospheric rivers is becoming even more important due to our changing climate. More accurate forecasting information can be used by water agencies to build more resilient water management in California.

LaMar quote: "If you do (FIRO) properly, everyone benefits. There really is no downside."

Ralph quote: "The average annual precipitation might be a bit less or might be similar but the change the models are

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Water Blueprint Leader Opens Fall Conference

Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley Executive Director Austin Ewell III delivered the opening keynote address at the ACWA 2024 Fall Conference & Expo, describing the organization's work as "a coalition of the willing" to develop common sense water solutions for the Central Valley.

Ewell's experience includes serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the U.S. Department of the Interior during 2017 and 2018, during the first administration of President-elect Donald Trump. In that role, he oversaw the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Geological Survey, managing agencies with combined budgets exceeding $2 billion. He is also President of the Ewell Group, where he focuses on water and land use matters.

At the Water Blueprint, he leads an effort supported by a number of ACWA member agencies among a coalition of community leaders, businesses, water agencies, local governments and agricultural representatives that came together in 2019.

"Our mission is to serve as the united voice for interest in the San Joaquin Valley, educating and advocating to advance sound water resource policies and projects," Ewell said.

Ewell pointed out that California continues to grapple with severe water supply challenges, yet this year the federal Central Valley Project and the State Water Project delivered only half of their contractual surface water supplies while almost every major reservoir in the state was filled at or near capacity.

"The Blueprint believes there are a number of opportunities to improve implementation of adaptive management and management actions that impact project operations and can provide sensitive solutions," Ewell said.

Ewell also described the Blueprint's current work on creating a United Water Plan, being prepared through a grant from the Bureau in coordination with the California Water Institute at California State University, Fresno that will serve as a roadmap to improve conveyance and recharge infrastructure. This effort has identified a tremendous opportunity to increase wet-year recharge from the Sierra by more than 900,000 acre-feet. Ultimately, the Blueprint plans on presenting the plan to the Bureau, which can use it to support Congressional appropriations.

"Like any challenging effort, solutions for the San Joaquin Valley will take a broad group of individuals and organizations working to succeed," Ewell said, inviting audience members to learn more online at **waterblueprintca.com**.

Ewell was one of two keynote speakers during the conference, which closed Dec. 5 with motivational speaker and best-selling author Debra Fine. Fine shared her experience as a renowned expert in conversation and networking skills, the subject of her widely acclaimed book "The Fine Art of Small Talk: How to Start a Conversation, Keep it Going, Build Networking Skills, and Make a Positive Impression." ♦

Board Wraps Up Year by Hearing Long List of 2024 ACWA Wins

During its last meeting of the year, the ACWA Board of Directors on Nov. 22 received a summary of ACWA's accomplishments during the last year of ACWA's 2020-'24 Strategic Plan, in addition to a briefing by staff on election results.

ACWA staff walked the Board though a 10-page summary that covered successes in each of the Strategic Plan's six elements: advocacy, connections, education, resources, organizational strength and innovation during 2024.

The Board approved a new 2025-'29 Strategic Plan in September. ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila led a task force that crafted the new Strategic Plan, which includes an updated Vision Statement and Mission Statement, core values, four goal pillars and comprehensive supporting strategies and objectives. It will also employ a new system of measuring successful execution of the plan through 51 key performance indicators.

Election Impacts

ACWA Director of Federal Relations Ian Lyle and ACWA Senior Legislative Advocate Julia Hall delivered an overview of the election from a water perspective at the federal and state levels.

This included a review by Lyle of potential appointees by the incoming Trump Administration and a look at newly elected members of Congress, some of whom are familiar to the ACWA community. In Southern California, Representative-elect David Min (D-CA-47), as State Senator, chaired the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. Representative-elect George Whitesides (D-CA-27) delivered a keynote address at the 2022 ACWA Fall Conference & Expo where he shared insights into applying innovative technology toward preventing catastrophic wildfires.

Hall outlined how the election is bringing in another large wave of new legislators, two dozen in the Assembly alone. The Democrats maintained their super majority in both state houses. Hall also reviewed how bonds fared during the election, including the passage of Proposition 4, a $10 billion climate resilience bond that includes $2.91 billion for water-related funding.

Legal Help

Board members approved a request from Coachella Valley Water District to support its appeal in the case of *Coachella Valley Water District v. Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association*. The case stems from a dispute over groundwater pumping fees used to fund replenishment of an aquifer.

The next ACWA Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Jan. 31 next year.

ACWA State Legislative Committee Starts Planning for 2025

ACWA's State Legislative Committee (SLC) held its annual planning meeting at the ACWA Fall Conference & Expo to discuss legislative proposals from member agencies for the upcoming legislative session. This was the first time that the planning meeting was held during an ACWA conference, and the SLC considered three legislative proposals.

The first proposal, submitted by Three Valleys Municipal Water District, would remove the sunset date from AB 2449 from 2022 to permanently extend teleconferencing under the Brown Act. The SLC took a support position, and the California Special Districts Association will be sponsoring this effort.

The second proposal, submitted by Coachella Valley Water District, seeks to protect water systems from the risk of litigation while they implement compliance plans related to maximum contaminant levels for hexavalent chromium. The SLC took a support position on the proposal.

The third proposal, submitted by Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, seeks to increase fine amounts for retail water theft. The SLC formed a working group to consider a legislative approach that balances the water theft challenges member agencies are facing with political feasibility. This proposal will be considered again at the SLC's first meeting in 2025 on Jan. 17.



Role of ACWA Highlighted During SGMA Anniversary Event

ACWA featured prominently during a day-long exploration of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's origins and current direction after its first 10 years. Panel discussions included ACWA Deputy Executive Director Cindy Tuck as well as several leaders from association member agencies.

Hosted by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on Nov. 18, "The Road to Sustainability: SGMA 10-Year Anniversary Event" opened with a keynote address by former California Gov. Jerry Brown, who signed the landmark act into law in 2014. Brown discussed how local groundwater management was a key element of SGMA.

"SGMA, through its democratic process at the local level, has created a mechanism that works through the problems but also brings the community together," Brown said.

As for how SGMA happened, Brown attributed deepening drought conditions at the time for the ultimate impetus behind translating years of growing urgency surrounding California groundwater into legislative action.

"That illustrates the fact that it's important to work on stuff, even though you don't get anywhere for awhile. When the moment comes, you're ready to seize it, which is exactly what you did," Brown told an in-person and virtual audience.

ACWA member agency representatives on panels throughout the day included Trevor Joseph, Manager of Technical Services, Regional Water Authority and Sacramento Groundwater Authority; Aaron Fukuda, General Manager, Tulare Irrigation District; Katarina Campbell, Supervisor of Resources, Westlands Water District; and Brian Lockwood, General Manager, Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency.

Tuck participated in the day's first panel, which focused on the development of the law in 2014 and also included Roger Dickinson, former state



ACWA Deputy Executive Director Cindy Tuck, third from right, joins panelists who discussed SGMA's origins and future during a Nov. 18 event hosted by DWR marking SGMA's tenth anniversary. *Photo courtesy of DWR*

Assemblymember; Lester Snow, former Executive Director of the California Water Foundation; Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture; and Felicia Marcus, former State Water Resources Control Board Chair. The panel was moderated by Paul Gosselin, Deputy Director for Sustainable Groundwater Management at DWR.

Tuck noted that ACWA had worked on groundwater management policy for many years prior and focused in late 2013 and early 2014 on developing a recommendations report to inform the anticipated legislative discussions in 2014. ACWA's Board of Directors approved the recommendations report in late March of 2014, and ACWA released the report, which focused on action at the local level, that April. The California Water Foundation also released a report at about the same time.

An ACWA advocacy team was at the negotiation table that year for countless meetings on bills that led to SGMA. The team's advocacy was guided by the Board-approved ACWA recommendations and extensive work by ACWA's State Legislative Committee. Tuck noted that numerous people inside and outside of ACWA devoted countless hours that year to substantive discussions aimed at developing a law that would be implementable and effective.

Creating SGMA was anything but easy. Snow estimated that about two dozen efforts to regulate groundwater had failed over the preceding 40 years. But the timing with the drought made obvious some painful facts.

"Groundwater is our savings account, and you can't keep covering your costs out of your savings account and not have a day of reckoning," Snow said.

In her comments, Ross emphasized the need to address impacts on smaller family farms.

"There is still much work to be done in that regard, and I hope that we will continue to be as collaborative on the hard situations that are facing those family farms up and down the Valley," Ross said.

Looking at what success would look like in the future, Marcus said it would be the realization that by acting early, California had avoided a "cataclysmic crash," similar to a point made by Dickinson.

"If we had not adopted this legislation, if we had missed this opportunity to make this change in California public policy regarding water, we would be in a much more desperate situation today," Dickinson said.





Left: Research Meteorologist Marty Ralph, center right, with the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes, speaks during a panel discussion on atmospheric river forecasting. **Right:** Panelists reflect on SGMA's first decade and make predictions about its future.

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seeing is that it will come in a few bigger storms and the dry periods between them will be longer and hotter."

Davis quote: "Folks think that this can be done in a cookie cutter approach, and I want to dispel that. Every single reservoir that you're looking at is unique … you can learn from what others have done but essentially there is a body of folks — experts — that need to get called in … and teams of people that have to bring in the science and make sure it's guided."

Water-Energy Nexus

Title: "Balancing the Water-Energy Nexus of Direct Potable Reuse"

Panelists: (Moderator) Ali Chehrehsaz, Chief Executive Officer, TerraVerde Energy, LLC; Stephen Dopudja, Dopudja & Wells Consulting, Inc.; Dennis LaMoreaux, Palmdale Water District

Key Issue(s): Direct Potable Reuse (DPR) will be instrumental for increasing water access moving forward, but challenges associated with the tremendous electricity usage needed for DPR must still be addressed. This program focused on advancing policies that will empower water agencies' decision making and promote an integrated approach toward water and energy reliability in California.

Dopudja quote: "Water is too precious to use only once. DPR is going to be a more reliable source of water instead of importing water."

LaMoreaux quote: "Growth is going to happen. The cost of doing nothing is catastrophic … It solves our problem of finding additional supply that is reliable and local."

Innovation

Title: "Excellence in Innovation: Water Agencies Driving California Into the Future"

Panelists: (Moderator) Edgar Dymally, Chair, ACWA Water Quality Committee; Chris Berch, General Manager, Jurupa Community Services District; Lance Echart, General Manager, San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency; Sonny Miller, Operations Services Manager, Rancho Water; Dean Standing Warrior, Deputy Director of Maintenance Operations, Western Water

Key Issue(s): Water agencies throughout the state continue to implement groundbreaking and unique programs, projects and technologies that bring new solutions to the industry. Agencies on this panel shared how their best-in-class innovations from gap funding and well monitoring devices to water quality and Heli-Hydrant projects help their communities thrive.

Berch quote: "We have a broader responsibility to the community … even as a water provider I think that we have the ability to really make an impact and protect health, life, safety and property in the whole area that we serve, and the Heli-Hydrant is really just an example of that I think."

Dymally quote: "All of the projects are unique and again the other theme that you're hearing is getting support from your management and your board, and that's really critical. If you don't have that, then it's probably not going to move forward."

Communications

Title: "Excellence in Communication Case Studies"

Panelists: (Moderator) Melissa Williams, Public Affairs Manager, Modesto Irrigation District; Jennifer Allen, Director of Public Affairs, Contra Costa Water District; Grace Cardenas, Manager of Strategic Communications, Western Municipal Water District; DeDe Cordell, Communications Manager, Yuba Water Agency; Kevin Strauss, Communications Manager, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency

Key Issue(s): The finalists for ACWA's prestigious Huell Howser Excellence in Communication Award discussed how their award-winning public education campaigns were used to help educate their customers about the essential role water plays in communities, the importance of water conservation and ensuring that their

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





ACWA 2024 Fall Conference & Expo

1. Giant ACWA letters provide a fun spot for a group photo.
2. ACWA President Cathy Green recognizes Gary Arant for his contributions to ACWA. Arant is retiring as General Manager of Valley Water Municipal Water District after 35 years.
3. ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila addresses attendees from the Main Stage.
4. Conference attendees pause for a photo.
5. The ACWA Exhibit Hall provides a great space for networking and relaxing.
6. Thursday morning at conference opens with a Wellness Yoga and Stretch Activity sponsored by Woodard & Curran.
7. Outdoor diners take in Palm Desert's balmy weather during conference.
8. ACWA conference venues such as the JW Marriott Desert Resort and Spa offer abundant spots to meet and network.
9. Tyler Cicero, Senior PV & Energy Storage Analyst with White Pine Renewables, wins a prize in the Exhibit Hall.
10. ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton delivers an address on the health of the association.





















Left: ACWA Excellence in Innovation award finalists discuss pathways that led to breakthrough solutions for their agencies.
Right: ACWA member agency leaders explore strategies toward water resiliency during a Region Issue Forum.

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drinking water meets current quality and aesthetic standards.

Cardenas quote: "Initially we addressed customer concerns as they arose reacting quickly to questions, but at the same time we took a really proactive approach by implementing a broader communication strategy."

Strauss quote: "We wanted to transfer our messaging from drought and water conservation to more of a long-term planning for the future with legislation and regulation on the horizon. So, how we can start working now to meet those conservation targets in the future?"

Groundwater

Title: "A Decade of SGMA: Lessons Learned and What's Next"

Panelists: (Moderator) Soren Nelson, State Relations Advocate, ACWA; Paul Gosselin, Deputy Director, Sustainable Groundwater Management, Department of Water Resources; Kristin Sicke, General Manager, Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District; Lauren Layne, Shareholder at Baker, Manock & Jensen

Key Issue(s): Passed in 2014, SGMA revolutionized California's approach to groundwater management. ACWA played a pivotal role in shaping and ultimately passing this landmark legislation with the aim of preserving local control. Panelists evaluated SGMA's successes, identified areas for improvement and explored what the future holds in groundwater sustainability.

Gosselin quote: "We were the last state in the West to have a statewide groundwater regulatory program. I think, in comparison to any of those states … this one's actually going to work because the structure at the local level is the best way to have this thing work. It can't be done by the state top-down, which most states have."

Sicke quote: "Ideally, in the next two to three years, Healthy Rivers and Landscapes is adopted (into the Bay-Delta Plan Update) and moving forward. There's really no way to for us to be successful without access to our surface water reservoirs, so we really need to make sure that is the path."

Solution Spotlight

Title: "Cloud Seeding as a Potential Pathway Toward Local Water Resiliency"

Presenter: Jeff Mosher, General Manager, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

Key issue(s): Cloud seeding is a promising strategy for enhancing local water supplies. Since 2020, the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) has studied and is now pilot testing ground-based cloud seeding technology. Mosher presented an overview of the pilot program's background and results delivered so far. This includes a preliminary estimate of an increase in precipitation in one area of the study amounting to 16,320 acre-feet.

Mosher quote: "Our focus is putting more snow up in the mountains, so eventually it melts and ends up in the river. That produces a local water supply, and of course it has the potential to reduce our reliance on imported water."

Region Issue Forum

Title: "Securing Water in Dry Times"

Panelists: (Moderator) Sarah Palmer, Director, Zone 7 Water Agency; Aaron Baker, Chief Operating Officer, Valley Water; Maryam Bral, Assistant General Manager and Chief Dam Safety Engineer, United Water Conservation District; Mike McCullough, Director of External Affairs, Monterey One Water

Key Issue(s): Panelists shared their agencies' water resilience efforts, including innovative strategies like recycled water, direct potable reuse, aquifer recharge, and cross-regional collaboration and partnerships. They focused on how they are balancing local needs while planning for an uncertain climate future.

Baker quote: "Securing water in dry times is going to be expensive … but the cost of doing nothing is too great," Baker said with a note that Valley Water's current resilience projects are estimated to cost $5.173 billion.

Bral quote: In sharing the importance of community buy-in, she talked about her agency's public education summits. "They provide a pathway to communicate regulatory, legal and financial challenges related to the water system … and create a space where stakeholders can directly interact with legislators and regulators."

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Finance

Title: "Unlocking Financial Opportunities Under the Federal Infrastructure and Inflation Acts"

Panelists: (Moderator) Robby Hannay, Treasury Manager, East Bay Municipal Utility District; Jonathan Guz, Partner, Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth; Darren Hodge, Managing Director, PFM Financial Advisors LLC

Key Issue(s): Panelists provided an overview of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021) and the Inflation Reduction Act (2022), which provide financial opportunities and incentives for public water agencies. They shared useful information for determining which types of projects qualify for funding, tips for evaluating the costs versus benefits, and how to apply.

Hodge quote: "The first time through the application process it will take a little time … But once you go through it, it's pretty straightforward."

Bay-Delta

Title: "What's Next for the Bay-Delta Plan Update?"

Panelists: (Moderator) Todd Manley, Director of Government Relations, Northern California Water Association; Thad Bettner, Executive Director, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors; Scott Petersen, Water Policy Director, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority; Jennifer Pierre, General Manager, State Water Contractors; Alice Towey, Environmental Affairs Officer, East Bay Municipal Utility District



The "Battle of the Ages" panel has a lively discussion about the challenges and benefits of diverse workforces that span multiple generations.

Key issue(s): Panelists discussed the State Water Resources Control Board's Sacramento/Delta Update to the Bay-Delta Plan. They contrasted potential impacts from two pathways being evaluated — the Board's proposal to impose 55% unimpaired flows and the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program. Strongly supported by ACWA, the HRL Program would balance water supply reliability, environmental protection, and the needs of water users across the state.

Petersen quote: "What (HRL) really does is it provides the opportunity to have a new governance structure, it provides greater supply reliability, it creates a much better pathway towards scientifically based adaptive management, and it creates a really interesting opportunity to have a shift in the paradigm of water management."

Pierre quote: "If you're releasing 55% of water in wetter conditions, then again in dry conditions, you're really not able to build any storage, so it really puts every agency in the state in a very difficult position. … Just as an example, Metropolitan has indicated that under the unimpaired flow of 55%, they would need to build nine Carlsbad-sized desal plants to replace that water. So that's the kind of volume we're talking about."

Workforce Development

Title: "Battle of the Ages"

Panelists: (Moderator) Joone Lopez, General Manager, Moulton Niguel

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COMMENTS ON CONFERENCE



TESFAYE DEMISSIE
Engineering Manager
Mojave Water Agency
Region 9, 1st Conference

"I learned a lot at this conference. It's interesting to hear about other agencies' challenges and what we have in common. The innovation program was really good."



JUDY SHAY
Public Affairs Director
Palmdale Water District
Region 8, 5th Conference

"I love networking and reconnecting with people I don't see regularly. I love coming to all the committee meetings and being able to bring all the great ideas back to my district."

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Water District; Tiffany Baca, Public Affairs Manager, Municipal Water District of Orange County; Dani Berch, Communications Specialist, Orange County Water District; Amber Boone, Acting General Manager, South Orange County Wastewater Authority; Eric Cadaret, Assistant General Manager, Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District; Jose Martinez, General Manager, Otay Water District; Anjanette Shadley, Assistant General Manager, Western Canal Water District; Stephan Tucker, General Manager, Water Replenishment District of Southern California

Key issue(s): Panelists discussed the challenges and benefits of the increasingly diverse workforces at many agencies that span multiple generations. They discussed the best ways to leverage this range in ages for improved collaboration, innovation and productivity.

Shadley quote: "Gen Xers are managing Boomers to Gen Z. Managing the varied personalities, backgrounds, life goals is challenging. As a Gen Xer, I've been motivated by goals and deadlines and to be a value to my employer and to make a contribution. In my experience, Gen Z, like my sons, are motivated by work life balance."

Lopez quote: "Everyone of all ages wants to feel purposeful and valued."

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- Stoel Reeves
- Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District
- Veolia
- Wood Rodgers, Inc.



JOHN BOER IV
Director
Modesto Irrigation District
Region 4, 1st Conference

"For me a highlight was learning how we're trying to fight to hold onto our water and finding out more information on studies that have been going on, like with predatory fish and flows in the Bay-Delta"



BROOKE CAREY
Construction Manager
PSOMAS Walnut Creek Office
Region 5, 1st Conference

"I think my favorite part is getting to meet new people around the industry and getting reminded about how big the industry is and all the different aspects that go into creating water."

ACWA Foundation Names Mealoy Executive Director



The ACWA Foundation's Board of Trustees this month named Lisa Mealoy as its first Executive Director. Mealoy, President of Folsom-based Strategic Resources Advisors, Inc., will oversee strategic and operational responsibilities for the Foundation's programs, fundraising, governance, and implementation of its mission.

The Foundation has also created the Bette Boatmun Emerging Leader Award in honor of the late, former ACWA President and supporter of the Foundation. The new award, announced at ACWA's 2024 Fall Conference & Expo, will honor Boatmun's passion to support up-and-coming leaders by financially supporting professionals who are working to advance an inclusive and equitable workplace in attending a leadership training program.

"Bette left an indelible mark on the California water industry and this award will memorialize her spirit and passion for supporting up-and-coming leaders," said Foundation Vice Chair Jennifer Persike. "Our goal is to raise $25,000 in the first year for this award."

The Foundation has launched a survey to help understand public water agencies' current workforce development efforts and focus future programs and initiatives. Water agencies can complete the short survey online by Jan. 31 by visiting **surveymonkey.com/r/BBHH33K**.

The nonprofit 501(c)3 foundation was created in 2022 by the ACWA Board of Directors, under the leadership of then-ACWA President Pamela Tobin, to advance workforce and leadership development in the water industry.

The ACWA Foundation operates separately and independently from ACWA.

For more information about the Foundation, visit its website at **acwa-foundation.org**.

LIKE, SHARE & FOLLOW

EXPLORING THE WATER WORLD ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to follow along at events that you might not be able to attend in person. At the ACWA Fall Conference & Expo earlier this month in Palm Desert, attendees shared their favorite moments with followers, often using our branded hashtag, #ACWAConf.

If you missed the social media coverage of fall conference, search the hashtag #ACWAConf on X, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. Below is just a peek at some of the social media posts we saw during the conference.







To see more creative efforts on social media by ACWA members, be sure to follow along on **@ACWAWater**







1: Charles Gibson speaks after receiving the John P. Fraser Emissary Award. **2:** Jurupa Community Services District Board Director Lupe R. Nava accepts ACWA's 2024 Excellence in Innovation Award from ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila. **3:** ACWA's 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Randy Record, center, poses with ACWA President Cathy Green and ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila. **4:** (l-r) Three Valleys Municipal Water District Board member Carlos Goytia and General Manager/Chief Engineer Matthew Litchfield accept the 2024 Top Outreach Winner award. **5:** Contra Costa Water District Director of Public Affairs Jennifer Allen accepts the ACWA Excellence in Communication Award on behalf of the district from ACWA President Cathy Green.





ACWA Honors Members for Outstanding Achievements

ACWA presented several awards at its 2024 Fall Conference & Expo Dec. 3-5 in Palm Desert. Awards were given out in five different categories: Emissary, Excellence in Innovation, Lifetime Achievement, Outreach and Huell Howser Excellence in Communication

Emissary Award

The 2024 recipient of the ACWA Emissary Award is previous Santa Margarita Water District Board Director Charles Gibson. He has been actively involved with ACWA's Federal Affairs Committee since 2014 and has served on the ACWA Region 10 Board since 2016. Gibson has also served two terms on the ACWA Board of Directors and ACWA's Agriculture Committee.

Excellence in Innovation Award

The 2024 award recipient is Jurupa Community Services District for its Heli-Hydrant Project. It consists of a 15-foot-wide, nearly 10,000-gallon capacity tank that allows firefighting helicopters to quickly fill onboard tanks with water to fight nearby wildfires. Other finalists for this year's award were Rancho California Water District, San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency and Western Municipal Water District.

Lifetime Achievement Award

The 2024 award recipient is ACWA Past President Randy Record, who has served on the Eastern Municipal Water District Board of Directors for 24 years. Record has been a leading voice in bringing together water users from urban and agricultural backgrounds to find common solutions to California's water challenges.

Outreach Awards

Throughout 2024, ACWA asked its member agencies to take action on many key issues, such as rates, the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program and water use efficiency. This outreach helps advance the association's legislative and regulatory agenda. The 2024 winners are:

- Region 1: City of Santa Rosa
- Region 2: Bella Vista Water District
- Region 3: Georgetown Divide Public Utility District
- Region 4: San Juan Water District
- Region 5: Contra Costa Water District
- Region 6: McMullin Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency
- Region 7: Rosamond Community Services District
- Region 8: Three Valleys Water District
- Region 9: Cucamonga Valley Water District
- Region 10 (tie): Mesa Water District and Valley Center Municipal Water District

The 2024 Top Outreach Winner is Three Valleys Municipal Water District.

Huell Howser Excellence in Communication

The 2024 recipient is Contra Costa Water District for its creative and impactful MadeWithCCWD campaign that shined a light on the essential role of water in the community by leveraging community partnerships, targeted advertising and wise investment of rate dollars to ensure a reliable and high-quality water service. Other finalists for this year's award were SCV Water, Western Municipal Water District and Yuba Water District.

For more information about ACWA's awards programs, visit **acwa.com/awards.**

EVMWD Expands Capacity in Mills Gravity Line

The Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD) has taken a significant step forward in securing the region's water future by completing the purchase of an additional 6 cubic feet per second (CFS) of permanent capacity in the Mills Gravity Line, a vital water conveyance pipeline. This purchase brings EVMWD's total ownership to 21 CFS, ensuring reliable water delivery to its service area as it continues to grow.

The Mills Gravity Line, owned and operated by Western Municipal Water District (Western Water), is a 14-mile pipeline that delivers imported water from Northern California to portions of Riverside County. This infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the water needs of the region.

"This agreement reflects EVMWD's commitment to securing the water supply infrastructure necessary to support our growing communities," stated Chance Edmonson, EVMWD Board President in a news release. "With our service area currently 35% built out, this investment ensures that we can meet future demands while maintaining the reliability and affordability our customers deserve."

The Mills Gravity Line partnership is the result of a decade of collaborative efforts, driven by the foresight and passion of leaders from both agencies. Former Western Water Board member Don Galleano, who died in June 2021, and current EVMWD Board member Andy Morris were instrumental in laying the groundwork for this agreement.

Mokelumne Salmon Run Breaks Record for Second Year

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) reports the 2024-'25 fall run of Chinook salmon currently underway on the Mokelumne River has set a new record for the second year in a row.

More than 30,000 fish have been counted to date with hundreds more arriving daily from the Pacific Ocean to spawn. This is the largest salmon return on the Mokelumne since record keeping began in 1940, surpassing the record-setting 2023-'24 total count of 28,698 Chinook with several weeks still left to go in this spawning season.

"I'm proud of EBMUD's decades-long dedication to sustaining the health of the Mokelumne River habitat and investing in fish hatchery operations," stated EBMUD Board President Lesa McIntosh in a news relesae. "This historic salmon run is a testament to our science-driven management, cooperative relationships with neighbors on the river, and our collaboration with local, state and federal partners to enhance spawning grounds, operate our hatchery effectively, and protect vital natural resources."

The Mokelumne River is the primary drinking water source for over 1.4 million EBMUD customers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. EBMUD manages river flows, enhances habitat, and funds the Mokelumne River Hatchery, which is operated in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

The science-driven hatchery management program by EBMUD and CDFW includes operations that support ocean fisheries and natural spawning in the river. Long-term strategies and actions that affect the fishery include:

- Habitat enhancement to improve natural river spawning and rearing in partnership with both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Anadromous Fish Restoration Program and the CDFW, and with recent funding provided by the California Department of Water Resources under the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program Early Implementation actions.



- Flow management, including fall pulse flows from EBMUD's Camanche Reservoir into the river to attract returning fish; coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to close the Delta Cross Channel to reduce straying; and management of the Camanche cold water pool to support spawning, incubation, and rearing.
- Hatchery management, including investments in chillers and ultraviolet filters to improve egg survival; collaboration on the release of juvenile fish to improve survival to the ocean; and management of the fish ladder leading into the hatchery to support both hatchery and natural spawners.

THIS MONTH IN ACWA HISTORY

10 years ago

Ginny Groundwater, California, Little Drop, H2Owl and Oscar the Otter stormed the Dec. 3 Opening Breakfast for the 2014 ACWA Fall Conference & Exhibition to highlight creative conservation campaigns by member agencies and promote "ConservaCon" featuring displays by members from throughout the state.



Member agency mascots provide a playful opening to the 2014 ACWA Fall Conference.

20 years ago

Close to 2,000 people attended the ACWA 2004 Fall Conference & Exhibition in Palm Springs, where California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak delivered a keynote address praising ACWA and the water community for their hard work in securing water resources for the state.

30 years ago

The ACWA Board of Directors approved sending a request to the Secretary of the Interior and California Congressional Delegation to support the continuation of the U.S. Geological Survey, which was on a hit list of federal agencies under consideration for elimination. It was noted that the federal agency provides valuable information and technical assistance to ACWA member agencies.

40 years ago

The California Legislature convened for a few days early in the month, wasting no time introducing water-related bills. Those included two from Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, one calling for the creation of a Department of Toxic Management and a second proposing that the state acquire certain high flood-risk islands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta.

50 years ago

President Gerald Ford signed into law the Safe Drinking Water Act, which put the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in charge of setting standards for drinking water quality throughout the nation for all water suppliers.

ACWA Promotes Two Staff to Director Positions

ACWA has promoted Legislative Relations Manager Julia Hall to Director of State Legislative Relations and Regulatory Relations Manager Chelsea Haines to Director of State Regulatory Relations, effective January 2025.

"Julia and Chelsea have proven themselves as exceptionally skilled government relations professionals during the past few years," said ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton. "These promotions recognize their tremendous leadership potential as well as their hard work and accomplishments on behalf of all ACWA member agencies."



Julia Hall

Hall started at ACWA in 2019 as a Senior Legislative Advocate, having previously served in California state government where she held management positions at the Gambling Control Commission and Department of Consumer Affairs. In her new role, Hall will direct legislative activities and advocacy on behalf of member agencies before the California Legislature.

Haines came to ACWA in 2017 from the State Water Resources Control Board, where she served as a Legislative Analyst. Starting as a Regulatory Advocate, she advanced to Senior Regulatory Advocate and then Regulatory Relations Manager. Haines will be responsible for directing regulatory activities, primarily engaging regulatory bodies on behalf of association members.



Chelsea Haines

"I'm excited about these promotions. They are exceptional advocates and managers who will accomplish great work for ACWA's members," said ACWA Deputy Executive Director Cindy Tuck.



Left: Attendees of the Oct. 30 ACWA Region 1 event hosted by Marin Water pause for a group photo during a tour of the Mt. Tamalpais watershed.

Below, top to bottom: Attendees enjoy the beautiful Mt. Tam Watershed, tour Marin Water's San Geronimo Treatment Plant and listen to a presentation.







Region 1 Focuses on Marin Water, Explores Mt. Tam Watershed

By Region 1 Vice Chair Jennifer Burke

On Oct. 30, ACWA Region 1 hosted an exclusive tour of Marin Municipal Water District's infrastructure and the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed, wrapping up the last of an exciting series of 2024 ACWA region events.

A sold-out crowd of 40 attendees enjoyed a day filled with insights, scenic views and networking in one of California's most beautiful watersheds surrounding what locals call "Mt. Tam." A tour of the watershed also included Marin Water's San Geronimo Treatment Plant and Alpine Dam, among other features.

The day started with a welcome and introductions from Region 1 Vice Chair Jennifer Burke, ACWA Vice President Ernie Avila and ACWA Executive Director Dave Eggerton.

Nothing beats seeing the breadth of our member agencies' work up close, and the Region 1 event didn't disappoint.

A presentation on Marin Water's System and Key Infrastructure Projects followed before we departed on a tour of the San Geronimo Treatment Plant and Alpine Dam, along with an overview of reservoir operations.

During lunch at Marin County's Rock Springs, we learned about Marin Water's participation in headwaters health through prescribed burning and an overview of local forest resiliency strategy. We then took in a compelling presentation on the history of the Mt. Tam Watershed and the unique One Tam Collaborative that brings together four public agencies and a nonprofit to manage the watershed together.

This was the last of eight ACWA region events this year throughout California, with each one serving as a magnifying glass on specific parts of our state's incredibly varied hydrology. The generosity of event sponsors makes these opportunities possible, and on that note, I would like to extend my gratitude, on behalf of the Region 1 Board, to ACWA JPIA, Stantec and event host Marin Water. I also want to thank ACWA staff members for their hard work behind organizing every detail behind this successful event.

Presentation
"History of Mt. Tam Watershed & One Tam Collaboration" by Claire Mooney, Vice President, Park Projects & Conservation, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy; and Daniel Franco, Senior Project Manager, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy



Jim Blake

OBITUARY

ACWA Mourns Past President Blake

Past ACWA President **Jim Blake** passed away earlier this month.

Blake was appointed to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors in 1988 on behalf of the City of Fullerton, actively representing Metropolitan within ACWA beginning in 1989. He held that position until 2012 and served as ACWA President during the 2000-'01 term.

In addition to his service at ACWA and Metropolitan, Blake served on the Southern California Water Coalition Board of Trustees and represented California on the Colorado River Water Users Association. He was also active outside of water as a member of the Fullerton Rotary and a community leader for the YMCA.

Blake started his service to ACWA as Finance Committee Chair and was well known for his commitment to financial health and the importance of reserves. Balance and planning in all areas – including the association's budget – were also an important part of his term as ACWA President.

" Jim Blake was ACWA President when I was selected to serve on the Board of Directors. Jim was an exceptional leader and well respected among all ACWA members and an important mentor to many. It was a privilege to serve with Jim, " said ACWA Past President Randy Fiorini.



Barbara Boucke

OBITUARY

Stinson Water Mourns Boucke

Stinson Beach County Water District is mourning the passing of Board President **Barbara Boucke**, who was serving her fourth consecutive term. She passed peacefully at her home in October.

Boucke initially served as Stinson Water Treasurer from 2002 through 2006, then joined the Board of Directors in 2007. Stinson Water issued a statement describing her as a strong advocate of the community and a beloved fixture at the district who will be sorely missed.

A certified public accountant, she previously worked Peat Marwick and later KPMG Peat Marwick, and then as Director of Development for the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. After retiring in 2006, she also become more involved in the West Marin Community where she served on the Marin Agricultural Land Trust Board of Directors as well as on the Board of the Coastal Health Alliance.



Richard Vásquez

Vista Irrigation Honors Vásquez

The Vista Irrigation District (VID) Board of Directors recently honored Board member **Richard L. Vásquez** for his 24 years of service. Vásquez did not seek reelection and is retiring in December.

Vásquez originally served on the Board of Directors from 1992 to 2000 and then from 2008 to present. This year marks his fourth as Board President since being first elected. A retired civil engineering designer, he has also represented VID on outside committees and organizations, including ACWA Region 10, ACWA's Water Quality and Groundwater committees, the Southern California Water Coalition and Groundwater Resources Association.



Joe Gridstaff

Grindstaff Joins EMWD Board

Joe Grindstaff was recently sworn in as the newest member of Eastern Municipal Water District's (EMWD) Board of Directors.

Elected in November, the Hemet resident brings decades of local and statewide water policy leadership experience to EMWD, Grindstaff was elected to the seat previously held by **Randy Record**, who served on EMWD's Board of Directors for 24 years before retiring this month.

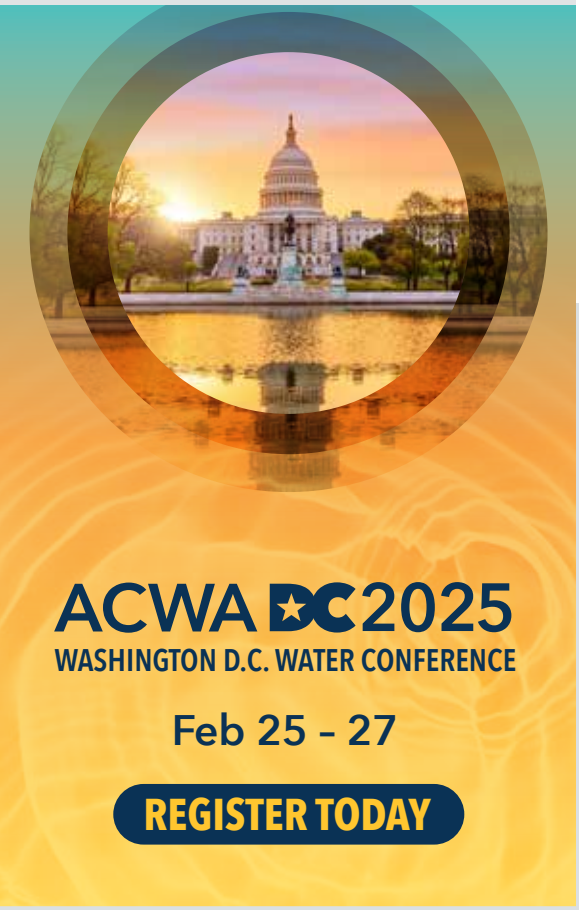
Grindstaff is also a former EMWD employee who worked as a manager in the Operations and Maintenance division early in his career. His experience also includes serving in leadership roles at the Delta Stewardship Council, California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Water Resources and as General Manager at the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority.

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- Mokelumne River Salmon Run Breaks Record for Second Year in a Row – Nov. 22
- ACWA Presents 2024 Emissary Award to Charles Gibson – Dec. 4
- Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District Expands Capacity in Mills Gravity Line – Nov. 27
- Two Sworn in to TID Board of Directors – Dec. 9
- ACWA Announces Two Promotions – Nov. 22

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

JANUARY 2025
29–31
CASA 2025 WINTER CONFERENCE
CASA | Palm Springs

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies will offer several technical sessions and networking opportunities, including an extended session on AI and how it is being used at local public agencies.

FEBRUARY 2025
5–6
2025 CALDESAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CalDesal | Temecula

Mark your calendars for the 2025 CalDesal Annual Conference. This year's conference will continue to highlight the crucial role desalination plays in California's water resiliency, security, and sustainability.

FEBRUARY 2025
25
ACWA DC2025 – ANNUAL WASHINGTON, D.C. CONFERENCE
ACWA | Washington, D.C.

The 2025 D.C. Conference will give water professionals a close-up perspective on federal water policy while offering a breadth of topics and a variety of speakers. Registration is now open.

MARCH 2025
26
ACWA 2025 LEGISLATIVE SYMPOSIUM
ACWA | Sacramento

Save the date for the ACWA 2025 Legislative Symposium, an annual event that keeps California water professionals informed on key policy issues.

MAY 2025
13–15
ACWA 2025 SPRING CONFERENCE & EXPO
ACWA | Monterey

Save the Date! ACWA's conferences are the go-to events for water professionals to explore key topics like groundwater management, water rates, crisis communications and more. Don't miss this chance to learn and connect!

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