



Department of Water Resources staff conduct the season's first snow survey on Dec. 30, after storms throughout the state raised reservoir storage and boosted snowpack in the Sierras. *Photo courtesy of DWR*

December Storms Boost Snowpack and Water Supply

The first snow survey of the season by the Department of Water Resources on Dec. 30 showed how year-end storms had provided a significant boost to the state's water supply after a dry early December. Those same storms dumped enough rain to raise Lake Oroville by 23 feet over three days, with both events offering a promising but far from certain start to 2026.

DWR's manual survey at Phillips Station recorded 24 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 5 inches, which is 50% of average for the location, according to a DWR news release. Statewide, the snowpack is 71% of average for this date. Major reservoirs statewide were at 123% of average going into the new year thanks to recent precipitation on top of three

consecutive years of above-average snowpack conditions.

California's statewide snowpack had been lacking in early December with above-average temperatures and very little storm activity.

"The dry conditions and warmer temperatures in early December delayed our snow-building season, but the return of storm activity, especially in the last week, helped to build a solid base for this year's snowpack," stated Angelique Fabbiani-Leon, State Hydrometeorologist for DWR, in the news release. "Thankfully, the recent storms that reached the state were cold enough to provide necessary benefits for the snowpack and our water supply. While California is in a better position

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Legislators Back, Proposed Budget Out

The California Legislature returned to work on Jan. 5 and ACWA has produced a toolkit to encourage and support member agencies' legislative outreach.

Just as ACWA's State Relations Department continued to meet with legislators during the winter recess to advance the association's goals, ACWA encourages member agencies to make similar contact by considering the following and using ACWA's "Outreach Handbook" as a helpful guide.

ACWA's "Outreach Handbook" provides a summary of the state and federal legislative processes, ACWA's policy process, an

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ACWA President
ERNIE AVILA, P.E.

Driving ACWA's Strategic Plan: Empowering Regions and Committees



Thank you for placing your trust in me to serve as President of ACWA. It is an honor to lead a world-class association with a distinguished history of advancing the needs of California's water community. Together, we will build on our foundation of expertise and collaboration throughout 2026 and beyond.

My priority is clear: strengthening ACWA's presence and voice in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. At a time of rapid policy change, our association must be more assertive in advocating for member agencies. This vision is the "beating heart" of our **2025-'29 Strategic Plan**, which establishes 50 key performance indicators (KPIs) to gauge our progress.

Empowering Committees and Region Boards for Action

While we have completed 70% of our initial KPIs, we are now elevating the ACWA committee and region process to be more than just advisory. We are shifting toward a framework where **ACWA Region Boards and Committees** are responsible for crafting strategic initiatives that are:

- **Actionable:** Moving beyond high-level discussion to create concrete water policy initiatives that originate from members and advance directly into association advocacy.

- **Built on Implementation Strategies:**

We are laying the groundwork for a more responsive framework that positions ACWA to lead rather than react. This requires committees to develop robust roadmaps for how each policy goal or initiative will be achieved and what resources our members can bring to bear in support of this effort.

- **Focused on Clear Next Steps:** To bring these initiatives to fruition, our regions and committees must identify the specific tactical steps and milestones necessary to unlock historic gains for our members.

Your Voice in the Implementation Process

Vice President Carol Lee Gonzales-Brady and I have recently led an ACWA Board task force to facilitate this shift toward a member-driven, action-oriented system. I encourage every member to get involved through committee service and regional participation.

When you contribute to these discussions, you are doing more than sharing an opinion — you are helping to build the implementation strategies that will shape California's water future. I welcome your input and partnership as we move forward into what should prove a dynamic year for our association. ♦

"It is an honor to lead a world-class association. Together, we will build on our foundation of expertise and collaboration throughout 2026 and beyond."

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ACWA Selects Firm for Executive Director Recruitment

The ACWA Board of Directors has selected Bob Murray & Associates to lead the new recruitment process for hiring the association's next Executive Director. The firm is expected to open the position to candidates by the end of January.

In the meantime, Marwan Khalifa continues to serve as Interim Executive Director. Khalifa previously worked as Chief Financial Officer and District Treasurer for Mesa Water District, also

serving on the ACWA Board, Executive Committee and as Chair of ACWA's Finance Committee.

Earlier this year, the Board conducted a nationwide search to identify potential candidates for the role. Following a thorough and thoughtful review, the Board determined that additional time would best serve the association's long-term interests.

"The ACWA Board of Directors is eager to identify an Executive Director who can help lead the association into its next chapter," ACWA President Ernie Avila said. "This is a pivotal decision, and we want to be deliberate in selecting the right individual — someone whose experience, leadership, and vision best serve our member agencies." ♦

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now, it is still early in the season and our state's water supply for this year will ultimately depend on a continued cadence of storms throughout winter and early spring."

DWR's electronic readings from 130 stations placed throughout the Sierra Nevada indicate that the statewide snowpack's snow water equivalent is 6.5 inches, or 71% of average for this date, compared to 115% on this date last year.

On average, the largest snow-producing months in the Sierra Nevada are January, February, and March. Drought and flood always marked the California climate, but extreme whiplash between wet and dry is becoming more pronounced, not just year to year but often within the same season or month.

On average, the Sierra snowpack supplies about 30% of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why the Sierra snowpack is often referred to

as California's "frozen reservoir." Data from these snow surveys and forecasts produced by DWR's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit are key factors in determining how DWR manages the state's water resources.

DWR conducts four media-oriented snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for February 3. ♦

MEMBER NEWS

Sites Could Have Captured 168,000 AF from Recent Storms

The Sites Project Authority announced in January that during the recent atmospheric river events the off-stream reservoir, if it were now operational, could have captured more than 168,000 acre-feet of water from late December 2025 through the end of this January.

This analysis continues to demonstrate the availability of water in the Sacramento River that can be safely diverted to bolster supplies for dry years and confirms the project's ability to meet performance and funding expectations. The issuance of the water right order from the State Water Resources Control Board is the key approval necessary to move forward with

building the project. Continued delays in the order's issuance increase project costs by approximately \$20 million per month.

"Weather events like this highlight the critical role Sites Reservoir could play during wet years by capturing excess water when it is available and holding it for the dry times ahead," stated Fritz Durst, Chair of the Sites Project Authority Board of Directors, in a news release. "As California faces increasingly intense storms, expanding our water storage capacity is essential to ensure reliability during dry times, which is why the Sites Project continues to move forward."

Sites Reservoir is designed to capture and store water during wet periods, ensuring flexibility, reliability and resiliency during dry years. Based on actual river flows, recent analysis found that Sites could have diverted more than 168,000 acre-feet in a single month, in addition to the 1.35 million acre-feet captured during the 2024 and 2025 diversion seasons (September through mid-June).

For perspective, one acre-foot of water exceeds the average annual indoor and outdoor use of two to three California households, according to the Water Education Foundation. ♦



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explanation on how to read bills from both bodies, and outreach tips — ranging from how to write letters to legislators and comment letters to regulators to infographics that visually break down complex legislative and regulatory processes. The resource also includes dozens of links that connect readers to ACWA toolkits and state and federal agencies.

You can find the “Outreach Handbook” on the [acwa.com](https://www.acwa.com) website.

Proposed Budget

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Jan. 9 unveiled his \$348.9 billion proposed state budget for the 2026-'27 fiscal year. While it would reduce funding for some important water issues, it would also include additional funding for programs like recycled water and conveyance.

Newsom's proposed budget would help address an estimated \$3 billion shortfall. While the significant shortfall must be addressed, ACWA will advocate to maintain funding for water and climate issues.

Specifically, the governor's budget proposes funding and reductions in the following areas of interest to ACWA member agencies:

- **Proposition 4** – The administration is proposing additional allocations to Proposition 4 funded grant programs. While some categories would receive significant additional funding, others are proposed to be funded lower than expected.

On the positive side, the water quality-safe drinking water category would get a boost of an additional \$160 million, recycled water would receive \$78 million, and conveyance funding would receive almost a full allocation of \$69 million. Disappointingly, dam safety received almost no additional funding.

- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund**

As part of the reauthorization of California's Cap and Invest program, the Legislature established policy that put existing funding categories within the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) into tiers. There are two categories within the GGRF that ACWA has actively advocated to maintain: Healthy and Resilient Forests and the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Program. Unfortunately, these two programs were put in the bottom tier of priorities by the Legislature and face proposed funding cuts.

Healthy and Resilient Forests used to be statutorily guaranteed \$200 million a year, but is now proposed to receive \$141 million. The Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Program used to be statutorily guaranteed \$130 million a year, but is now proposed to receive \$92 million.

There is significant uncertainty with the Cap and Invest program and receipts that go into the GGRF have been affected; if those receipts increase, these numbers could be revised upwards.

California's Constitution requires the governor to submit a balanced budget proposal to the Legislature by Jan. 10 of each year. A revised budget will be released in May, and the Legislature will have until June 15 to pass a final budget.

AB 35

ACWA's State Legislative Committee took a support position in December on AB 35 (Alvarez, D-San Diego), which would exempt Proposition 4 spending from the regulatory process. A full exemption would enable funds to be deployed more quickly and efficiently, ensuring that protracted administrative processes do not hold up vital projects.

An exemption from the Administrative Procedure Act would not eliminate transparency, consultation or public engagement, but would instead streamline implementation, maintain consistency across programs and avoid creating barriers to delivering critical funding where it is most needed.

Proposition 4, the \$10 billion climate resilience bond approved by voters in 2024, includes \$3.8 billion in funding for water-related categories and there are shovel-ready projects ready to move forward in nearly every category. ♦



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Handbook**



Awards Spring 2026

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Deadline March 2**





Committee Leadership Announced for New Term

ACWA President Ernie Avila recently announced the 2026-'27 committee appointments with the Board of Directors ratifying the committee chair and vice chair positions on Jan. 7.

Committee appointments are made by the President upon recommendations from the region chairs and vice chairs, taking into consideration regional composition

and other guidelines. To view the full 2026-'27 committee rosters, please visit acwa.com.

There are 13 standing committees. They are structured to include member representation from all 10 ACWA Regions, bringing together diverse voices on technical and policy matters. Some

committees have a limited size while others are unlimited.

Committee members are appointed for two-year terms that begin on Jan. 1 of even-numbered years.

Below is a list of the 2026-'27 committee chairs and vice chairs:

Committee	Chair	Vice Chair
Agriculture	Anjanette Shadley, Crescenta Valley Water District, Reg. 8	Kyle Morgado, Yuba Water Agency, Reg. 2
Business Development	Stacy Taylor, Mesa Water District, Reg. 10	Bill Cooper, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency, Reg. 8
Communications	Cristel Tufenkjian, McMullin Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency, Reg. 6	Melissa Williams, Modesto Irrigation District, Reg. 4
Energy	Damon Wyckoff, Calaveras County Water District, Reg. 3	Morgan Mitchell, Westside Water Authority, Reg. 7
Federal Affairs	Jolene Walsh, Eastern Municipal Water District, Reg. 9	Scott Petersen, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority, Reg. 6
Finance	Don Patterson, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Reg. 8	Bruce Rupp, Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, Reg. 1
Groundwater	Trevor Joseph, Sacramento Suburban Water District, Reg. 4	Kassy Chauhan, Fresno Irrigation District, Reg. 6
Legal Affairs	Lutfi Kharuf, Helix Water District, Reg. 10	Nicholas Whipps, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Reg. 5
Local Government	Raul Avila, Calleguas Municipal Water District, Reg. 8	Roseryn Bhudsabourg, Valley Water, Reg. 5
Membership	Joone Lopez, Moulton Niguel Water District, Reg. 10	Chris Perri, Scotts Valley Water District, Reg. 5
State Legislative	Lauren Layne, Alta Irrigation District, Reg. 6	Brian Poulsen, El Dorado Irrigation District, Reg. 3
Water Management	Sean Bigley, City of Roseville, Reg. 3	Nina Hawk, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Reg. 8
Water Quality	Edgar Dymally, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Reg. 8	Katie Duncan, Friant Water Authority, Reg. 7

Support HRL Program Before State Water Board

ACWA is encouraging member agencies to show their support for the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program at the State Water Resources Control Board's public hearing on Jan. 28-30.

The State Water Board will accept both in person and virtual comments at the

hearing regarding its updated Bay-Delta Plan documents. Written comments will also be accepted through Feb. 2.

ACWA is a long-standing supporter of the HRL Program as the best approach to protecting, restoring and enhancing the Bay-Delta. Staff will continue their review

of the revised draft updates and plans to provide oral and written comments to the State Water Board.

Background, a timeline and more information about the hearing and HRL program is available online at acwa.com/hrl-program. ♡

Water District & Community Collaboration Creates Multi-Beneficial Bioswale Project

A broad collaboration between a Region 8 ACWA member agency and conservation groups overcame regulatory barriers to create a stormwater capture project — a bioswale that captures stormwater, recharges a local aquifer and benefits wildlife and local education all at the same time.

Completed in late 2024, the bioswale came about through a partnership among the Crescenta Valley Water District (CVWD), Los Angeles County Flood Control District, Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy and its affiliated Friends of Rosemont Preserve advisory committee. The project itself is simple: a 3-foot-deep, 600-square-foot depression landscaped with plants native to the preserve. It works by slowing and capturing stormwater flowing out of a canyon watershed in the Rosemont Preserve, part of the western foothills of the Angeles National Forest. Stormwater absorbs into the naturally porous soils and recharges an aquifer that provides roughly half of the Crescenta Valley's drinking water.

The project represents out-of-box thinking to overcome all-too-common barriers to such projects such as thorny water rights, numerous permits, costly construction, and other costs and delays.

It wasn't necessarily easy, said CVWD General Manager James Lee.

"Ultimately, we were just trying to dig a hole in the ground," Lee said. "We had completed a feasibility study, developed designs, pivoted projects to circumvent water rights issues, applied for and received a permit — think we were done

— then learn that we'd need still other permits, one of which would take several more years," Lee said. "At a certain point, we looked at each other and determined that we would somehow find a way to complete the common-sense project within reasonable time and cost."

Partners were identified, and the partnership generated momentum that pushed past regulatory and challenges. The collaborative effort secured support from nonprofits and other local governments, namely the city of Glendale and communities such as La Crescenta, along with Los Angeles County. Without that buy-in, the bioswale project could have foundered during a years-long bureaucratic process.

Once all the permits and approvals were in place, the actual work creating the bioswale took place over a weekend through the work of volunteers. CVWD provided a couple of backhoes, turning the work into a staff training opportunity on heavy equipment operation.

The bioswale is now part of enhancements to the nature preserve that draw school field trips from across the region and is joined by other projects, including a gate to a trail designed by local tribe members. Heavy rains dousing Southern California in December put the project to the test.

"It worked great, just as designed, and it's been exciting to watch," said Frank Colcord, a volunteer and Co-Chair at the Friends of Rosemont Preserve and a Board Director at nearby Foothill Municipal Water District.



It also adds wildlife habitat, serving as a watering hole for deer, mountain lions and fox.

"Pretty much everything that lives in Southern California comes through here," Colcord said, about its benefits to local wildlife species.

As for enhancing water supplies, the bioswale might add an extra five to 15-acre-feet of aquifer recharge a year. But that's not really the point, Lee said.

"Is that a huge amount of water? Absolutely not," Lee said. "It's definitely a symbolic project. We're an Anytown USA Water District, and the primary value of this project is to demonstrate to ourselves and others that we can pursue timely and real results with imagination and collaborative work. It's a vision that produced a success, and it all comes down to making friends and forming partnerships."

Crescenta Valley has subsequently planned for similar short and longer-term projects, including through DROPS (Data-Driven Resource Optimization and Planning



Photo courtesy of CVWD

System), a collaboration between Foothill Municipal Water District, Glendale Water & Power, Pasadena Water & Power, the California Data Collaborative and Crescenta Valley. It is an initiative that prioritizes future stormwater projects using satellite data to identify more pervious soils and is funded by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's Future Supply Actions grant. ♦



Watch video
on Stormwater
Capture Solutions
at Rosemont
Preserve

OC Agency, Organizations Launch First AI Course for Water Professionals

A coalition of Orange County agencies including the Moulton Niguel Water District is launching a groundbreaking online education program designed to equip Orange County water professionals with artificial intelligence skills to modernize water utility management.

A collaboration between California Data Collaborative, CEO Leadership Alliance Orange County, Moulton Niguel and the University of California Irvine, Division of Continuing Education, has launched the nation's first online course dedicated to AI for water professionals. Funding for the course was made possible through a California Jobs First grant awarded to the CEO Leadership Alliance Orange County to catalyze local workforce development projects.

The program introduces real-world applications of AI in water operations, conservation, infrastructure planning, customer service and more, strengthening California's position as a leader in innovative, future-ready workforce development.

Creative direction of the course was led by CEO Leadership Alliance

Orange County Senior Advisor of Talent Strategies, Amy Kaufman, and Moulton Niguel General Manager and CEO and Founder of the California Data Collaborative, Joone Kim-Lopez and Dean of the Division of Continuing Education at University of California, Irvine, Krissy Collins.

The partnership grew from a shared belief that essential industries must be ready for the rapid evolution of technology.

"The workforce of tomorrow must harness new technology to deliver bold and accessible solutions," Kim-Lopez stated in a news release. "By joining forces, we created a platform that expands access to AI knowledge for the water sector and helps ensure communities remain resilient for decades to come."

The online course, AI for Water Management Professionals, includes weekly live sessions with industry subject matter experts. The Jobs First grant will provide funding to educate 75 Orange County water professionals; enrollment is on-going throughout the first half of 2026. ♦



LIKE, SHARE & FOLLOW

The start of a new year is a great time to evaluate your agency's social media (and also check out what others are doing!) and find new, fresh ideas and ways to improve your reach. Memes and pop culture trends can be an effective way to grab your followers' attention.

To the right are some examples you might find inspiring.

How are you getting your followers' attention? Be sure to tag us in your most creative social media posts so we can share them with other ACWA members.

In 2026, ACWA plans to highlight even more creative social media posts from members and share more short-form video content. Be sure to follow along on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram @ACWAWater.

EXPLORING THE WATER WORLD ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA



The Department of Water Resources brought attention to invasive species by changing "Stranger Things" into "Invasive Things." This is a compelling example of using a pop culture trend to draw attention to an important topic.



Coachella Valley Water District came up with seven water-wise tips and presented them in memes. To see all the memes, be sure to check them out on Instagram at @CVWDh2o.



Valley Water added speech bubbles to an amusing vintage photograph to make their own meme and highlight the importance of staying out of flooded streets.







Camille von Kaenel
Politico Reporter

Discussing California's gubernatorial race and key water and environmental issues shaping the campaign

ACWA LEGISLATIVE SYMPOSIUM '26

FEBRUARY 11
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REGISTER



LaMalfa Honored for Leadership on Water and Agriculture



U.S. Rep. Doug LaMalfa passed away Jan. 6. He was 65 and had represented Northern California's 1st Congressional

District since 2013.

LaMalfa — a lifelong Northern Californian — engaged on several major issues related to water at the federal level and also participated in many ACWA events over the years, including the association's annual D.C. Conference. He addressed attendees at the 2025 D.C. Conference as a member of the Congressional Speakers program.

"Congressman LaMalfa was a champion for California water, agriculture and forest health issues. As a fourth-generation rice

farmer, he used his personal expertise and dedication to become a leading proponent of these critical issues and elevate them on the national level," said ACWA Interim Executive Director Marwan Khalifa. "California's water community will miss the congressman's leadership. ACWA sends its heartfelt condolences to the congressman's family, loved ones and staff."

Previously serving in the California Assembly and Senate, in 2025 LaMalfa was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, the second largest membership organization in Congress.

Several water districts and other associations also issued statements upon his passing, praising his leadership.

"As a farmer, Congressman LaMalfa understood that water is the lifeblood of

the Valley that allows our farmers to feed the nation," stated Allison Febbo, General Manager of Westlands Water District, in a news release. "His commitment to practical solutions and advocacy for growers and rural communities will leave a lasting impact."

"All of us at Friant Water Authority are deeply saddened by the passing of Congressman LaMalfa," stated Jason Phillips, CEO of Friant Water Authority in a news release. "He was a dedicated advocate for California agriculture and rural communities, and consistently brought a practical, on-the-ground understanding of water and resource issues to his public service. On behalf of Friant Water Authority, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, his staff, and all those across Northern California mourning this loss." ♦

Member Agencies Name Board Officers

Desert Water Agency



The Desert Water Agency Board of Directors has elected **Kristin Bloomer** as President, **Gerald McKenna** as Vice President and

Paul Ortega as Secretary-Treasurer.

Bloomer was first elected to the Board in 2015. McKenna was elected in 2022, and Ortega was appointed in 2020.

Rancho Water



The Rancho California Water District Board of Directors has re-elected **Brian Brady** as President and **J.D. Harkey** as Senior

Brian Brady

Vice President for the upcoming one-year term beginning in 2026.

Brady, first elected to the Board in November 2020, has more than 40 years of engineering and executive leadership experience in both public and private water and electric utilities. Harkey, elected to the Board in November 2022, is a long-time Temecula resident, the CEO of Drake Enterprises and farms 450 acres of avocado and wine grapes.

Yorba Linda Water District



Gene Hernandez

The Yorba Linda Water District Board of Directors has appointed **Gene Hernandez** as President and **Wayne R. Scott** as Vice President.

Hernandez has served on the Board since 2024. He previously served as Mayor

and Councilmember of the City of Yorba Linda since 2012 and held a career in law enforcement for more than 34 years. Scott also joined the Board in 2024 and previously dedicated more than 29 years to serving in the U.S. Air Force, retiring at the rank of Colonel.

Yuba Water



Wayne Bishop

The Yuba Water Agency Board of Directors has selected **Wayne Bishop** as Chair and **Renick House** as Vice Chair for 2026.

Bishop has served on the Board since 2022 and this is his first year as Chair, having previously served as Vice Chair in 2025. House has served on the Board since 2025 through his role as a Yuba County Supervisor. ♦



Gary Arant

Arant Retires from VCMWD

Gary Arant is retiring from Valley Center Municipal Water District (VCMWD) after nearly 37 years as General Manager, part of a more than 52-year career devoted to the water and wastewater industry.

Arant guided VCMWD through countless challenges since becoming its General Manager in 1989 and has actively participated in ACWA since 1973, chairing multiple committees, receiving numerous awards and serving several terms on ACWA's Board of Directors.

His career in water began a year after graduating from California State University, Fullerton in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in political science. He joined the Walnut Valley Water District as an Administrative Assistant while earning a master's degree in public administration and advancing to Assistant General Manager.

Arant next served as General Manager for the Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District in Escondido from 1980 to 1989 before joining VCMWD. Arant has also served as the district's representative to the San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors since 2006 and will continue serving VCMWD in that capacity. ♦



Richard Atwater

Atwater Retiring from Foothill MWD

The Foothill Municipal Water District recently announced the retirement of **Richard Atwater** from its Board of Directors, effective in February.

Atwater was originally appointed to the Board in 2006 and served as Foothill's representative to Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's Board of Directors from 2014 to 2023.

He started his career at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, where he directly managed Colorado River issues as Special Assistant to the

Commissioner. He also served as manager of the Resources Division at Metropolitan and General Manager of West Basin and Central Basin municipal water districts. He subsequently became Senior Vice-President and then President of Bookman Edmonston Engineering, Inc. and Chief Executive Officer/General Manager at Inland Empire Utilities Agency.

Additionally, Atwater served as part-time Executive Director for the Southern California Water Committee between 2010 and 2016. ♦



Erik J. Holt

UWPA Hires Holt as GM

The Utica Water and Power Authority (UWPA) Board of Directors recently hired **Erik J. Holt** as General Manager.

Holt brings more than 20 years of experience in the fire service field and managing emergency response operations. He joins UWPA from Calaveras County, where he served as Director of Emergency Services.

Holt replaces **Dave Andres**, who served as Interim General Manager on a temporary basis after former General Manager **Joel Metzger** accepted a position with the Department of Water Resources in 2024.

Holt obtained a bachelor's degree in fire administration from Columbia Southern University and a Certificate of Executive Leadership from Cornell University. ♦



Phil Paule

EMWD Names Paule to Met Board

The Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) Board of Directors has selected Board member **Phil Paule** as the district's delegate on the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors. Paule has served on EMWD's Board since 2007.

He replaces EMWD Board Member **Jeff Armstrong**, who announced earlier this month that he would step down from the Metropolitan Board to spend more time with his family. Armstrong will remain on EMWD's Board. ♦

THIS MONTH IN ACWA HISTORY

10 years ago

The California Water Action Plan 2016 Update was in focus at a special event presented by ACWA and the administration of then-Gov. Jerry Brown, who said “there’s nothing quite like (the action plan) ever in the history of California.” The state’s plan, originally released in 2014, echoed many points made in ACWA’s own Statewide Water Action Plan for California released in 2013.

20 years ago

The ACWA Board of Directors approved a statement supporting Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s water infrastructure package but also expressing serious concerns about a proposed Water Resource Investment Fund, noting that “some elements of the governor’s water infrastructure financing package need additional clarity regarding long-term plans for the Delta and other major water infrastructure needs, including surface storage.”

30 years ago

ACWA’s Hydroelectric Subcommittee filed comments with the Federal Energy

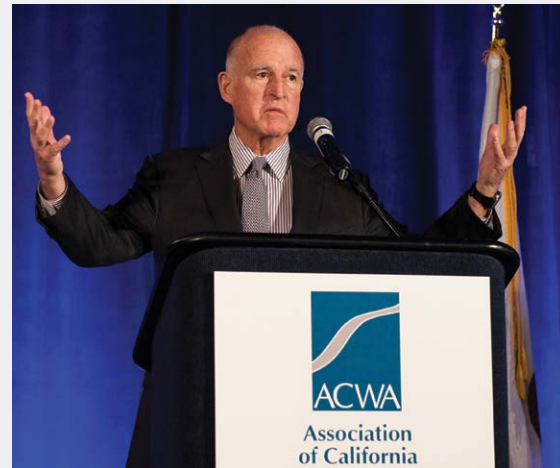
Regulatory Commission, or FERC, which supported streamlining its permitting process and acknowledging hydropower’s role as an emission-free energy source. “It is obvious that hydroelectricity produces no emissions (and that alternatives to hydropower do),” the ACWA comment letter stated. [But] There is no explicit requirement to produce that kind of information in the FERC license procedure.”

40 years ago

ACWA *News* identified challenges and opportunities expected to affect members during the coming legislative year. They included liability insurance and tort reform, water marketing, toxics, water quality standards in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta and further expansion of the state’s wild and scenic rivers system. Other issues in 1986 were to include state funding and a major election year that would decide 80 Assembly and 20 Senate seats as well as California’s governor.

50 years ago

Gov. Jerry Brown proposed the elimination of the Colorado River



Gov. Jerry Brown speaks during a 2016 event about the California Water Action Plan.

Board of California in his state budget, recommending instead that the Board’s responsibilities be shifted to the Department of Water Resources. Brown’s plan was immediately opposed by Southern California water agencies dependent on Colorado River water, prompting a meeting in Indian Wells to discuss ways to inform the public, legislature and governor about the importance of maintaining the Board. ♣



Peter Thompson

CCWA Names Thompson ED

The Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) Board of Directors has appointed **Peter Thompson** as Executive Director, effective May 15. Thompson previously served as Associate Director.

Ray Stokes, CCWA’s current Executive Director, will retire in 2026 after nearly 30 years with CCWA and 13 years as Executive Director.

Thompson brings 25 years of leadership experience and previously served as Assistant General Manager

of the Antelope Valley–East Kern Water Agency, General Manager of the Antelope Valley State Water Contractors Association and Administrator of the Antelope Valley Watermaster.

Thompson received a bachelor’s degree in business administration – management from Western Governors University and Water Treatment Operator V and Water Distribution Operator V certifications from the California State Water Resources Control Board. ♣

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Voters Support More Funding to Reduce Wildfire Threat – Dec. 23

State Water Board Soliciting Proposals for Water Quality Grant Funding – Dec. 17

Gary Arant Retires After Decades of Service to Valley Center Municipal Water District – Jan. 5

BCVWD Continues Commitment to Water Reliability with 2026 Imported Water Order – Dec. 23

ACWA Selects Firm for Executive Director Recruitment – Dec. 30

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit acwa.com/events for complete listing and registration

JAN 2026

29

ACWA Virtual CLE Workshop 2
ACWA | Virtual

Learn key differences between form and manuscript contracts, explore procurement and non-procurement agreements, and gain practical skills in redlining, version control, and two- vs. multi-party negotiations.

FEB 2026

11

ACWA 2026 Legislative Symposium
ACWA | Sacramento

ACWA's annual Legislative Symposium features critical updates on California water policy for directors, managers, attorneys and staff. Speakers include Politico Reporter Camille von Kaenel. Register by Feb. 6.

FEB 2026

24-26

ACWA DC2026
ACWA | Washington D.C.

Join water professionals in Washington, D.C. to elevate California's key water issues, strengthen federal advocacy efforts, and connect with national policymakers and agency leaders.

MAR 2026

11

Lower Colorado River Tour 2026
Water Education Foundation | Las Vegas

Join the Water Education Foundation to explore the lower Colorado River firsthand where virtually every drop of the river is allocated, yet demand is growing from myriad sources — increasing population, declining habitat, drought and climate change.

APR 2026

16

ACWA Virtual CLE Workshop 3
ACWA | Virtual

This workshop covers core risk-management tools, including allocating duties and rights, insurance and indemnity, and key term, termination, default, and remedies provisions.

MAY 2026

5-7

ACWA 2026 Spring Conference & Expo
ACWA | Sacramento

ACWA conferences are the premier event for water industry professionals to learn, network, and engage through various programs and exhibits. It brings together experts and leaders to discuss key water issues and innovations.