



Lisa Haney, center right, with Orange County Water District speaks during a panel discussion about AI use at water agencies, the subject of Region 8's June 26 event in Pasadena. See page 5 for more details about ACWA's first region event of 2026.



Member Support Critical as Legislature Heads Toward End of Session

While the Legislature is on summer recess during the month of July, ACWA staff continue to engage with members of the Legislature and advocate on more than 75 bills for the benefit of member agencies.

When summer recess ends Aug. 3, work at the Capitol will intensify through the end of session on Aug. 31. It's critical for ACWA member agencies who have not yet joined ACWA coalitions to do so for this final stretch and help play a critical role in strengthening the association's legislative advocacy. ACWA is urging members to join coalitions in support of three bills in particular, listed below.

All the information necessary to learn more and act is available online at acwa.com/coalitions.

Wildfire Liability

SB 1153 (Caballero, D-Merced) has been referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This ACWA-sponsored bill would clarify and declare the limited role of public water systems during wildfires. While water systems support firefighting, they are not designed or intended for wildfire defense or suppression, and it would be impractical and costly to require them to function as such. The bill would

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ACWA Polling Shows Bipartisan Support for Water Priorities Outlined in Vision

ACWA and FM3 Research recently conducted a statewide survey that showed strong, broad-based and bipartisan support for prioritizing and addressing California's water issues. Among the highlights, 77% of California voters say they are more likely to support a candidate for governor who prioritizes improving California's water reliability and affordability.

The polling results reinforce the timing of ACWA's Vision for Our Water Future



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ACWA Interim Executive Director
MARWAN KHALIFA

ACWA East Enhancing Advocacy Opportunities for Members in Washington



Among countless highlights during my time at ACWA, one that stands out took place not in Sacramento, or even California, but across the country in our nation's capital.

Working alongside our ACWA East staff while advocating for members in Washington D.C. has been a privilege, as well as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I've witnessed firsthand how navigating the federal process demands policy expertise, stellar communication skills and limitless patience. Our three-member federal team possesses these qualities in abundance and uses them to your benefit.

Led by Director of Federal Relations Ian Lyle and including Federal Relations Representatives Caleb Raspler and Libby Spekhardt, ACWA East's work is guided by the association's Federal Affairs Committee under the leadership of Chair Jolene Walsh and Vice Chair Scott Petersen.

The federal process poses many challenges, but I'm proud to report progress in several areas that answer our members' concerns, especially in the area of federal funding, which member agencies consistently rank as a top concern.

On the legislative front, staff constantly engages with members of the California delegation and partners on Capitol Hill. This work focuses on federal water infrastructure appropriations and reauthorizations of multiple key federal programs, such as helping secure Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.

Additionally, ACWA is continuing to position key water measures for inclusion in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). WRDA includes various ACWA priorities for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects, such as water supply, drought resiliency, dam safety, forecast-informed

reservoir operations and environmental infrastructure funding.

Currently, legislation moving in the Senate also includes ACWA-supported bills to reauthorize the Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program, expand large-scale water recycling and establish a Water Project Navigators program to help communities access federal water infrastructure funding. All three bills recently advanced out of the committee process and are now eligible for a vote in the full Senate.

On the regulatory front, ACWA is working on numerous fronts to support Safe Drinking Water Act procedures to regulate drinking water contaminants such as PFAS, by recommending stability and long-term infrastructure investments in federal financial policies and requirements, as well as consistent, efficient permitting for environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Recently, ACWA further strengthened its already robust federal advocacy by rejoining the National Water Resources Association (NWRA), a federation of state water associations that focuses on western water policy issues. Under NWRA's membership model, all ACWA member agencies can access its membership benefits at no additional cost.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to lead ACWA as a world-class organization, with effective advocacy benefiting our members and the communities they serve. And while far away geographically, the ACWA East team plays a vital role in helping our members achieve their mission here in California. You can count on them to remain engaged, adaptable and effective as we navigate an evolving federal landscape together. ♦

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ACWA Foundation Event Will Link Students with Water Careers

The ACWA Foundation will host a Central Valley Water Careers Pathways Symposium on Sept. 24 to expand awareness of water sector career opportunities among educators and strengthen the workforce pipeline between water agencies and schools.

The symposium in Fresno will convene high school counselors and private and public sector industry representatives to showcase the broad range of career opportunities within the water sector. Content will include information about job opportunities, pathways, course requirements, local needs, salaries, benefits and more.

“Studies show we need to reach students earlier, capturing their attention and

interest in the water sector during high school. Year after year, counselors provide direct guidance to new classes of students about career opportunities. This pilot program could become the foundation for ongoing educator-industry partnerships throughout the state,” said ACWA Foundation Executive Director Lisa Mealoy.

The ACWA Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)3 formed by the ACWA Board of Directors in 2022. The Foundation and its Board of Trustees operate separately and independently from ACWA and its Board of Directors.

For more information about the event, including sponsorship opportunities, visit acwa-foundation.org.



ACWA FOUNDATION

From Page 1 | Vision

initiative to elevate water as a top priority for California’s next governor, legislators and state officials.

“California voters have sent a clear message: they want the next governor to make water a top priority,” said ACWA Director of Regulatory Relations Chelsea Haines. “Meeting the state’s long-term water challenges will require bold leadership and strong partnerships, and ACWA’s Vision for Our Water Future provides a practical policy framework to help the next administration deliver lasting solutions.”

Meanwhile, momentum continues to build for the Vision with more than 60 partners now supporting the policy framework.

Three member working groups continue to develop specific recommendations to support the broader policy priorities.

Other key findings from the recent poll include: 93% said safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California’s goals; 87% think we need to accelerate the construction of water infrastructure to prepare for droughts, floods and changing climate conditions.

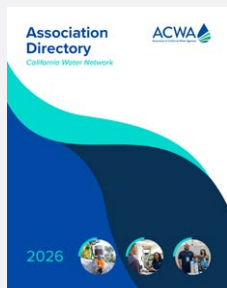
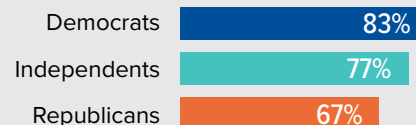
Additional information about Vision — including the polling data, working groups, how to become a partner and communications toolkits — is available at acwa.com/vision. ACWA members can expect updated toolkit items related to the polling by the end of the month.

Support for a Gubernatorial Candidate Who Prioritizes Water



California voters say they are more likely to support a candidate for governor who prioritizes improving California’s water reliability and affordability

Across party lines:



Your ACWA Network, All in One Place.

The ACWA Member Directory makes it easy to discover members, build partnerships, and strengthen your professional reach.



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From Page 1 | *Capitol Corner*

establish that water supply or pressure limitations during a wildfire are not a substantial cause of wildfire damage. It also would require certain urban water suppliers in high fire-risk areas to include wildfire specific response procedures in their emergency response plans.

Rate Setting

AB 2180 (Ward, D-San Diego) is awaiting a Senate Floor vote.

This ACWA-sponsored bill would clarify how water agencies comply with Proposition 218 when setting water rates. The clarification would provide predictability for agencies, support California's water-use conservation goals and help minimize unnecessary legal disputes over water rates.

Water Affordability

SB 1125 (Menjivar, D-San Fernando Valley/Burbank) has been referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This ACWA-supported bill relates to the establishment of a statewide low-income rate assistance (LIRA) program. ACWA strongly supports state efforts to protect water affordability and has consistently advocated for a LIRA program that is workable and efficient for the public water agencies that will play a key role in administering it.

Meanwhile, ACWA is entering the final month of the Legislature's 2025-'26 session with several wins and continued engagement on critical issues affecting members, outlined below.

Proposition 4 Allocations

AB 35 (Alvarez, D-San Diego) was signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom on July 16 and will exempt all Proposition 4 grant solicitations from the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) moving forward, which ACWA has supported. An exemption from the APA 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. This bill contained an urgency clause and will take immediate effect.

Golden Mussels

ACWA staff continue tracking and engaging on three bills related to golden mussels. ACWA has a support-if-amended position on AB 1772 (Papan, D-San Mateo), and favor positions on AB 1894 (Rubio, D-Baldwin Park) and AB 2032 (Ransom, D-Stockton). All three bills have advanced out of Senate policy committees. ACWA advocacy on the issue of golden mussels is also focused on educating legislators about impacts to water agencies and the vital importance of funding to countering the threat of invasive species to water infrastructure. Members can access an informational fact sheet aimed at educating decision makers at acwa.com. ♦

CDFW Releases Amendments on Invasive Mussel Regulations

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has announced amendments that would expand existing regulations to cover all invasive mussel species, including golden mussels, to align with existing Fish and Game codes.

CDFW has opened a comment period that will end on Aug. 18, when it will host a virtual public hearing. ACWA staff will submit written comments and attend the hearing.

While similar to invasive quagga and zebra mussels, golden mussels pose more significant challenges because they can thrive in a wider range of water conditions.

They significantly impact water systems because they attach to infrastructure in dense clusters, clogging water conveyance systems, pipelines, pumps, filters, hydropower facilities and agricultural operations.

Left unaddressed, their continued spread will put massive strain on California's water system, leading to costs which will ultimately be borne by ratepayers.

ACWA fact sheets, additional details and background are available in a July 6 ACWA Advisory available at acwa.com. Member login is required. ♦



Region 8 Event Explores AI Role in Water

By Region 8 Chair Dr. Anthony Fellow

Water agencies will likely see greater efficiencies and cost savings if they can harness AI, Dr. David L. Feldman, professor emeritus at University of California, Irvine told those gathered for the ACWA Region 8 Conference June 26 in Pasadena.

The event, which attracted more than 100 attendees, provided valuable expert insights on AI from a water management perspective, exploring challenges but also the enormous potential behind this rapidly evolving technology.

“Greater efficiencies resulting from AI use can translate into potential cost savings, but a significant challenge remains in communicating those benefits to build public confidence and trust,” Feldman said. “A lot of that work is already succeeding in customer relations and water conservation but now needs to include AI.”

He said water agencies don’t need to reinvent the wheel. “You are doing great things in terms of public education and outreach in other domains,” Feldman said. “Those processes need to be adopted to the challenges of AI.”

Vision for Our Water Future

A panel discussion also highlighted ongoing progress of ACWA’s Vision for Our Water Future, the association’s initiative to elevate water as a top priority within the next governor’s administration. ACWA is urging member agencies to pass board resolutions in support of the initiative, as well as contribute technical expertise to working groups on affordability, infrastructure and permit reform.

“We’re collaborating like we’ve never done before. We know what we need to do now. It’s a matter of just elevating it to the next administration,” said Eastern Municipal Water District General Manager Joe Mouawad, a member of ACWA’s GM working group that developed the Vision policy framework.

AI Member Panel

In addition, three ACWA member agency representatives shared advice on how water agencies should approach and use AI. A wide-ranging discussion covered the need for accountability and offered advice on how to get started in AI use — start with small, low risk pilot projects and avoid uploading sensitive human resources data onto platforms such as ChatGPT.

Examples of uses for AI ranged from turning archives and public data into usable intelligence, to applying generative AI to convert complex regulations into actionable checklists.

“AI could provide us with more time to be thoughtful and strategic about how we want to be, who we want to be in the future,” said Lisa Haney, executive director of Planning and Natural Resources at Orange County Water District. “AI is still evolving. It’s a teenager right now, who lies to us occasionally, and on certain days is really nice to us. That’s where we are.”

Sponsors included: Stantec, ACWA JPIA, SCV Water, Calleguas Municipal Water District, City of Burbank Water and Power, and the Upper San Gabriel Municipal Water District. And, of course, a thank you extends to ACWA staff for helping to organize such a great start to this year’s series of ACWA region events. ♦



ACWA Director of Regulatory Relations Chelsea Haines, left, moderates a panel discussion about the association’s Vision for Our Water Future during the Region 8 event.

Presentation: “AI and Water Management: Building Security, Trust, and Resilience,” by Dr. David L. Feldman, Ph.D., Director, Water UCI, University California, Irvine

Panel: “From Vision to Action: Elevating Water Priorities in California’s Governor’s Race”

Speakers: Chelsea Haines, Director of Regulatory Relations, ACWA (moderator); Dee Zinke, Chief External Affairs Officer, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; and Joe Mouawad, General Manager, Eastern Municipal Water District

Panel: “From Concept to Practice: AI in Today’s Water Agencies”

Speakers: Christopher Tull, Chief Data Officer, California Data Collaborative (moderator); Jenna Shimmin, Director of Water Use Efficiency, Eastern Municipal Water District; Lisa Haney, Executive Director of Planning and Natural Resources, Orange County Water District; and Patrick Atwater, Innovation Program Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

ACWA region events are a great way to learn how member agencies are addressing various water industry challenges. Visit acwa.com/events for dates and details of other upcoming events.



Top: ACWA Senior Regional Affairs Representative Jennifer Rotz, center, presents an ACWA resolution to the CCWD Board honoring the district on its 90th anniversary. Board members receiving the resolution include (l-r) Vice President Antonio Martinez, President Ernie Avila, Rotz, Patt Young and Constance Holdaway. **Center:** A Water Fiesta celebrated the first water delivered through the Contra Costa Canal in this 1940 photo. **Bottom:** People tour one of CCWD's treatment plants as part of the 90th anniversary events.

Photos courtesy of CCWD

Contra Costa Water District Celebrates 90 Years

Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) is thriving as it celebrates 90 years of securing a reliable supply of high-quality water throughout central and eastern Contra Costa County.

CCWD operates within one of California's most challenging environments for water professionals, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta. Changing salinity levels can heavily impact water quality, while periodic droughts can drastically affect supply. Add in a booming population, and you have what could be a difficult situation for even the most seasoned water manager. However, forward-thinking leadership stretching back to its 1936 creation has helped CCWD remain successful.

A Salty Start

Efforts to secure a reliable supply of water in Contra Costa County began in the early 1900s as farmers and community leaders worked to address declining water quality amid a prolonged drought and changing Bay-Delta conditions. By the 1920s, conditions worsened to the point where farmers were forced to halt irrigating, and factories resorted to bringing in fresh water by rail tank cars. While the drought ended in 1930, the experience underscored the vital need for a sustainable solution. That would come in the form of the Contra Costa Canal.

Richmond attorney Thomas Carlson was retained to explain the salty situation to the California Legislature and then the federal government. His advocacy contributed to a commitment by the federal government to launch the Central Valley Project.

Construction of the 48-mile Contra Costa Canal began in 1937, just one year after voters approved CCWD's formation, and by 1940 the canal started delivering water from the Delta to the City of Pittsburg. The occasion was marked with a three-day celebration called the Water Fiesta, including the largest parade ever seen in Contra Costa County and the coronation of a Fiesta Queen.

The demands from World War II caused construction delays due to shortages of labor and materials, but the entire canal was completed in 1948. However, salinity and changing Bay-Delta conditions continued posing challenges to water quality and reliability. In response, CCWD leaders worked tirelessly to stay one step ahead.

Los Vaqueros Reservoir

Early investments in conveyance and treatment facilities laid the foundation for a system designed to grow and adapt alongside the rapidly growing communities served by CCWD. Over the decades, CCWD's mission expanded beyond water delivery to include water quality protection, water treatment, watershed stewardship and collaboration with regional and state partners. By the 1980s, CCWD decided to embark on a decisive answer to further securing a reliable and higher-quality water supply — Los Vaqueros Reservoir.

In 1988, voters authorized funding for a 100,000-acre-foot off-stream reservoir that would improve water quality by storing fresh water from the Delta and provide an emergency supply. At the time, it was the first new dam built in California in more than 15 years and was built on time and under budget. It was the largest and most significant project undertaken by CCWD.

Aside from municipal water supply, Los Vaqueros provides recreation with fishing and more than 55 miles of trails. It also protects endangered species ranging from the red-legged frog to the Alameda whip snake and protected golden eagles.

In the early 2010s, CCWD expanded Los Vaqueros to increase storage by 60,000 acre-feet, strengthening drought resilience and making it one of the largest reservoirs in the Bay Area.

Continued Innovation

Today, CCWD continues to meet the needs of industry and a growing urban

population. Operating as both a water retailer and wholesaler, the district relies on a team of 330 employees to serve approximately 550,000 people in central and eastern Contra Costa County.

More recently, CCWD has advanced critical initiatives such as its Canal Replacement Program, which will modernize infrastructure while enhancing climate resilience and safeguarding water quality through a fully enclosed, buried pipeline. Construction is scheduled to start in 2032.

“We have a responsibility to not only deliver reliable water today, but to undertake the thoughtful planning needed to advance the Canal Replacement Program to ensure reliable water for decades to come,” said CCWD General Manager Rachel Murphy.

At the same time, CCWD has remained an active ACWA member, including through its contributions to the association's leadership. CCWD Board President and current ACWA President Ernie Avila, P.E., is the second CCWD Board member to lead ACWA. Bette Boatman served as ACWA President during the 2002-'03 term and actively participated in the association until her passing in 2024.

Looking Ahead

CCWD's legacy is also a roadmap for its future. Like numerous water agencies throughout California, CCWD has navigated cycles of drought, regulatory change and population growth. Meeting these challenges has required ongoing innovation – from advances in water treatment and monitoring to investments in system reliability and emergency preparedness. Avila summed up the secret to CCWD's success in a single sentence.

“As we mark this milestone, we're reminded that CCWD was built on innovation, collaboration and long-term planning,” Avila said. ♦

DISTRICT FACTS

Location

Concord (Contra Costa County)

Established

1936

Service Area and Connections

61,780 connections serving approximately 550,000 people in central and eastern Contra Costa County, including agricultural and major industrial users such as refineries

Water Source

Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta

Water Supply and Operations

- 814 miles of treated water pipelines
- 41 storage reservoirs, including 160,000-acre-foot capacity Los Vaqueros Reservoir, for a total capacity of 72 million gallons
- Bollman and Randall-Bold water treatment plants

Employees

330

Website

ccwater.com

LIKE, SHARE & FOLLOW

If you decide to hop on this trend, be sure to tag us in your post so we can share it. Follow us on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram @ACWAWater to see more of what other ACWA member agencies are doing on social media.



EXPLORING THE WATER WORLD ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA

You might have seen the latest trend on Instagram or TikTok: “Preparing for our Netflix documentary on...” followed by a topic of the creator’s choice. A few ACWA members have used this trend to educate their audiences on topics that are important to their districts and customers.

Here are two fun examples:



What would your water agency’s Netflix documentary be about? Walnut Valley Water District had its staff get “documentary ready” to talk about the truth about tap water. Using this trending format gets more eyes on a topic that is important to the district while making the content fun and engaging.



Scan to
watch



Sonoma Water used the trend to spotlight the reliable, essential water service it provides to customers under the documentary title “Into the Water.”



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JOB HUNTING?

Discover career opportunities across California’s water industry — from engineering to public policy.

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acwa.com/careers

IID's Dippy Duck Celebrates 60 Years of Promoting Water Safety

Dippy Duck, the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) beloved water safety mascot, celebrated his 60th birthday on June 13 with hundreds of local elementary students and their families at the El Centro Aquatic Center, commemorating six decades of helping keep Imperial Valley communities safe around canals.

The special invitation-only celebration brought together students from across the Imperial Valley for a day of fun, recognition, and water safety education. To mark the occasion, IID distributed 400 golden tickets to 44 elementary schools throughout the region. School administrators selected students based on academic achievement, citizenship, attendance, leadership, and other accomplishments.

"Dippy Duck has helped generations of children understand that canals are dangerous and are not safe places to swim

or play," IID Board Chairwoman Karin Eugenio stated in a news release. "For 60 years, Dippy has been one of our most recognizable ambassadors for water safety. This celebration was a wonderful way to honor his legacy and the positive impact he has had on our community."

Since his introduction in 1966, Dippy Duck has served as the face of IID's water safety outreach program, delivering a simple but critical message to children and families throughout the Imperial Valley.

IID manages more than 3,100 miles of canals and drains across the Imperial



Photo courtesy of IID

Valley. While the system is critical to delivering water that supports agriculture and the region's economy, canals are not designed for recreation. Water levels and flows can change suddenly, making canals dangerous even for strong swimmers. ♦

THIS MONTH IN ACWA HISTORY

10 years ago

ACWA mobilized members to oppose Proposition 53, a ballot measure that would amend the California Constitution to require statewide voter approval of infrastructure projects financed through revenue bonds over \$2 billion. ACWA's Board of Directors voted to oppose the measure because of its potential to undermine local control and restrict critical infrastructure projects in the future. Voters defeated the measure in November.

20 years ago

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and local leaders toured levee repair construction sites along the Sacramento River. The

Department of Water Resources launched work to fix 29 critical erosion sites following record rain and snowfall earlier in the year.

30 years ago

Gov. Pete Wilson signed SB 900, which placed ACWA-supported Proposition 204 on the November 1996 ballot. The \$995 million bond, passed by voters, was at the time the largest and most significant water bond in 36 years.

40 years ago

The U.S. Senate joined the House of Representatives in passing landmark legislation to implement a coordinated operating agreement between the

California State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. Later signed into law, the legislation created an accord that allowed water to be transferred between the two conveyance systems.

50 years ago

ACWA issued a report on power plant siting and water supply, which made the case for locating power plants along the coast where they could use sea water for cooling rather than fresh water. The analysis indicated that even without using fresh water for power plant cooling, California would still suffer a deficiency of 2.25-million-acre-feet annually by the year 2000. ♦

Governor Appoints DWR Director, State Water Board Member



Thomas Gibson

Gov. Gavin Newsom in late June appointed Thomas Gibson as Department of Water Resources Director and Jared Blumenfeld as the newest member of the State Water Resources Control Board.

Gibson

Gibson succeeds Karla Nemeth, who joins ACWA

as Executive Director effective Sept. 1. She had served as DWR Director since former Gov. Jerry Brown appointed her to the position in 2018.

Gibson's appointment as DWR Director requires confirmation by the state Senate. He would lead DWR after serving as its Chief Deputy Director since 2024 and has extensive experience as an attorney

and through executive positions at the California Natural Resources Agency and Department of Fish and Wildlife. He previously served as Chief Counsel at DWR from 2021 to 2024. Additionally, he served in multiple positions at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife from 2007 to 2014.

"ACWA staff are excited to work with Director Gibson, and we look forward to continuing our long-term collaboration with the Department of Water Resources on behalf of our member agencies," ACWA Interim Executive Director Marwan Khalifa stated in a June 30 news release.

Blumenfeld

Blumenfeld served as California Environmental Protection Secretary from 2019 to 2022. His experience also includes serving as Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 2010 to 2016. He succeeds former State Water Board member Laurel Firestone, who departed the State Water Resources Control Board on June 18.

Newsom also announced the reappointment of Dorene D'Adamo as Vice Chair of the State Water Board earlier this year.

"On behalf of ACWA, I congratulate Jared Blumenfeld on his appointment to the State Water Resources Control Board," Khalifa stated in a news release. "ACWA looks forward to partnering with Mr. Blumenfeld in his important role on the Board to advance collaborative solutions that balance California's diverse water needs and strengthen the state's long-term water resilience."

"We also extend our appreciation to the former Board Member Laurel Firestone for her dedicated service and thank Board Member D'Adamo for her continued service to advancing sound water policy for California."

In addition to Blumenfeld and D'Adamo, the five-member State Water Board includes Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel, Sean Maguire and Nichole Morgan. ♦

Now Accepting Entries and Nominations for Fall Awards

Visit acwa.com/awards for more information and award guidelines.

Outreach Award
Due Oct. 1

Communication Award
Due Sept. 1

Emissary Award
Due Sept. 1

Innovation Award
Due Sept. 1



Gary Arant

OBITUARY

ACWA Mourns Arant

Past ACWA Board member and longtime California water leader, **Gary Arant**, passed away on July 16.

“Gary’s contributions were far-reaching – shaping policy, strengthening collaboration, advocating for farmers, and mentoring many who now carry forward the work he cared for so deeply,” San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) Board Chair **Nick Serrano** stated in a news release. “He brought not only technical knowledge and thoughtful perspectives, but also genuine respect for those around him.”

Arant represented Valley Center Municipal Water District (VCMWD) on the SDCWA Board, where he continued serving following his January 2026 retirement from the district after 52 years, having led it as General Manager for nearly 37 years.

“He was not only a colleague and leader, but also a friend to those that had the privilege of working

alongside Gary for many years,” VCMWD General Manager **Lindsay Leahy** stated in a district news release.

His involvement within ACWA stretched back to 1973, including multiple terms on the association’s Board of Directors over a span of 20 years, as well volunteering his time to chair ACWA’s Energy, Local Government and Communications committees while actively serving on ACWA’s Region 10 Board.

ACWA honored Arant’s extensive contributions to the association during the 2024 Fall Conference for his invaluable service on the association’s Board of Directors, regions and committees. He also received ACWA’s Emissary Award in 2007, among many recognitions within the ACWA community.

Arant is survived by three sons, two grandchildren and extended family. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that memorial contributions be made to the American Heart Association. ♦



Grant Davis

RETIREMENT

Davis Retiring from Sonoma Water

Sonoma Water General Manager **Grant Davis** will retire Aug. 25 after nearly 20 years with the agency, including two terms as General Manager totaling more than 18 years.

Since first joining Sonoma Water in 2007, Davis led the agency through a period of innovation and infrastructure investment while strengthening water supply reliability, environmental stewardship and wastewater services across Sonoma County.

Under his leadership, Sonoma Water provided naturally filtered drinking water to more than 600,000 residents in Sonoma and Marin counties, maintained nearly 100 miles of streams and detention basins for flood protection and built one of California’s leading watershed restoration programs to benefit federally listed salmon and steelhead.

Davis also served as Director of the Department of Water Resources between August 2017 and January 2018. ♦



Stacy Taylor

RETIREMENT

Taylor Retires from Mesa Water

Mesa Water District Policy Manager **Stacy Taylor** recently retired from Mesa Water District after 16 years, which included extensive involvement within ACWA through service on the Board of Directors and multiple committees.

Taylor joined Mesa Water District in 2010 as Manager of its new Communications Department. After implementing award-

winning water awareness, education and outreach programs, her role expanded to include legislative and regulatory advocacy under a renamed Department of Public & Government Affairs, which she led as Water Policy Manager.

Her activity within ACWA included chairing the Business Development Committee, serving as Region 10 Outreach Captain and participating in the Communications and State Legislative committees, among other roles. ♦

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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for complete listing and registration

JULY 2026

29

ACWA EVENT

**Developing an AI Policy: A
Communications-First Approach**
ACWA & CAPIO | Virtual

Explore how public agencies can develop practical AI policies that support innovation, accuracy, accountability and trust. Learn how communications professionals can shape guidelines and communicate expectations across organizations.

AUGUST 2026

12

ACWA EVENT

ACWA 101
ACWA | Virtual

Celebrate Membership Appreciation Month with a special virtual ACWA 101 session. Discover member resources, advocacy, governance, events and communications, and learn how to maximize your ACWA membership experience.

AUGUST 2026

20

WELL Webinar: Water at the Crossroads
WELL | Virtual

California water policy changes are reshaping affordability, reliability, and planning. This webinar explores impacts on communities, ratepayers and water providers, and examines how regional decisions influence statewide resilience.

AUGUST 2026

20

ACWA EVENT

ACWA Fall Quarterly Policy Committee Meetings
ACWA | Virtual

The Quarterly Policy Committee Meetings will include the Agriculture, Energy, Groundwater, Water Management and Water Quality committees. A detailed agenda and meeting materials will be available at a later date. These meetings will be held virtually.

SEPTEMBER 2026

4

ACWA EVENT

ACWA Region 5 Event
ACWA | Oxnard

Save the date for the ACWA Region 5 Event, bringing together California water agency leaders and professionals for regional networking and collaboration on water issues across the Central Coast and Bay Area.

SEPTEMBER 2026

16

ACWA EVENT

ACWA Executive Edge Leadership Forum
ACWA | North Hollywood

The ACWA Executive Edge Leadership Forum is a professional development event for public agency executives focused on strengthening leadership, communication, strategic thinking and collaboration through interactive sessions and peer networking.

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