D R A F T A G E N D A

CFEE Conference on California Water

Hanging Ourselves Out to Dry or The Beginning of a New Beginning?

December 8-9, 2021

As California slips deeper into what may be its most dangerous drought yet, state leaders are once again facing wrenching decisions to manage precious water supplies that grow scarcer every day. Looking to a foreboding future when this all-too-familiar scenario may play out again and again, what will it take to finally break free and make a generational investment in infrastructure, policies, and practices that confront our climate-changed future?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

11:30 – 12:45pm	Arrival/Check-In and Lunch
12:45 – 1:00pm	Welcome – Conference Overview and Virtual Roundtable Introductions

- Preview of conference topics, speakers, and goals

Jay Hansen, President & CEO, CFEE

Session 1

Not Your Parent's Drought – A Fresh Look at Our Unprecedented Water Crisis

Though no stranger to prolonged dry spells, California's latest drought has arrived with a severity and suddenness unlike any the state has endured in modern times. Our opening session is a two-part panel that will dissect the current crisis by understanding 1) the underlying factors and science driving this drought and 2) how water users are coping and planning.

1:00 – 2:00pm

Part I. A New Era in California Hydrology

As a new era in our climate develops, new hydrological norms are taking shape that suggest this drought is an early, bitter taste of what is in store for California. What does the latest climate science tell us about the future of our water supply?

- Why did our spring runoff projections overestimate expected supply?
- What is our precipitation forecast for winter 2021/22?
- What does California hydrology look like in five years? 10? 50?
- What are the regional variances in how hydrological conditions will change?
- Is this current drought really part of a larger, multi-decade period of historical drying? Are we moving from drought to aridification?
- What will be the role of atmospheric rivers (AR) in supplying our water needs? Are we ready to capture and store the bulk of AR's when they do return?
- How will sea-level rise affect water supplies?
- What's the present and future for the Colorado River and its watershed?
- Where does this put us for needed infrastructure investments and management practices?

Karla Nemeth, Director, Department of Water Resources

Daniel Swain, Climate Scientist, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, UCLA

Willie Whittlesey, General Manager, Yuba Water Agency

Roundtable Discussion

2:00 – 2:15pm Break

2:15 – 3:45pm Part II. Slowing to a Trickle – Update on Drought Impacts in Our Communities

The shrinking water supply has already delivered harsh blows to agriculture, environmental, and municipal communities throughout the state. What is the latest news on the consequences of the drought, and how can we better help water users from being left high and dry?

- What is happening to California farming operations as water supplies have tightened?
- What does California agriculture look like in the coming years? How will our economy and Central Valley communities be affected?
- Is it time to factor in "Food Security" into our discussions of statewide water use?
- What are the impacts to California forests, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wildlife?
- What water management and ecosystem restoration is needed to improve the outlook for vulnerable fish and wildlife?
- How are water supply shortages exacerbating our housing crisis?
- How much water do California businesses need to keep working and producing?
- What more can policymakers do to alleviate the damages done to California communities if aridification continues?

Enrique Martinez, General Manger, Imperial Irrigation District

Jennifer Clary, California Director, Clean Water Action

Jay Ziegler, Director of External Affairs and Policy, The Nature Conservancy

William Bourdeau, Vice President, Harris Farms

Adrian Covert, Vice President, Public Policy, Bay Area Council

Roundtable Discussion

3:45 – 4:00pm Break

**unconfirmed*

4:00 – 5:30pm	<u>Session 2</u> Diving Into Alternative Water Supplies - Desal, Recycling, and More

While we cannot avoid the "boom and bust" nature of California hydrology altogether, we can embrace proven and maturing technologies to further diversify and expand our supplies. Desalination, water reuse, and stormwater capture represent alternative supplies that are mainstays in other countries, but only finding regional success in California. As the availability of our traditional supplies becomes more unreliable, what must be done to accelerate our investment in alternative water sources?

- How effective are we using recycled water? How much reuse can we realistically achieve?
- What types of desalination technology could be deployed across the state?
- Does California need the new water supplies desal could bring? How much water is possible?
- Are there political and technological remedies on the horizon that could make desal more viable?
- Why is stormwater capture a critical investment in our climate-impacted future?
- What level of public and private spending will be needed to spur and sustain the development of alternative supplies?
- What are examples of local projects that have enhanced local water supplies during the current drought?
- What have other drought-stricken countries done to make themselves more resilient to water scarcity?
- Is it time for coastal cities to supply their own water and leave Central Valley waters to farmers and Central Valley residents?

Peter Fiske, Director, Water-Energy Resilience Research Institute, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Paula Kehoe, Director of Water Resources, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

John Kennedy, Executive Director, Engineering and Water, Orange County Water District

Kevin Tilden, President, California and Hawaii American Water

Roundtable Discussion

5:30pm	Reception and Dinner

**unconfirmed*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

7:30 – 8:45am	Breakfast
8:45 – 10:15am	**Session 3** **What's in Store for Storage? Looking For Answers Above Ground and Below**

Home to a bevy of artificial and natural reservoirs capable of storing hundreds of millions of acre feet, California has tremendous potential to stash water for our inevitable non-rainy days. Nevertheless, just two years into our latest dry spell, many of our surface storage facilities are uncomfortably shallow while our aquifers are still reeling from the previous drought. As California explores new storage options, what are the best investments? And how can we make better use of what we already have?

- What advantages do above ground reservoirs have versus underground storage? Disadvantages?
- Can conservation partially offset the need for new storage investments?
- How could new reservoir management improve existing surface capacity?
- What happened to the promised investments of Prop. 1 in 2014?
- As the luxury of snowpack fades, is our storage and conveyance infrastructure ready to capture precipitation from critical atmospheric rivers (AR) events?
- How can we better leverage underground storage opportunities, which represent a significantly larger portion of the state's existing capacity?
- What promising Groundwater Sustainability Plans are anticipated to offer enhanced aquifer recharge? What characteristics do they have, and can other groundwater agencies replicate their early successes?

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Michelle Reimers, General Manager, Turlock Irrigation District

Jon Parker, General Manager, Kern Water Bank Authority

Joseph Caves, Principal and Founder, Conservation Strategy Group

Roundtable Discussion

10:15 – 10:30am	Break

**unconfirmed*

10:30 – 12:00pm	**Session 4** **A New System for a New Century – Rethinking Water Rights, Infrastructure, Management, and the Coming Federal Investments**

Fashioned for a departing, bygone era, California's water "system of systems" is running on borrowed time. And if there was ever a moment for comprehensive modernization, it is now. This panel will feature innovative, controversial, but perhaps necessary proposals to construct a water system that can match 21st century realities.

- What might a modern water rights system look like?
- Does the state legislature have the authority to enact water rights changes? What tweaks can be initiated by the State Water Resource Control Board?
- Should we consolidate the management of water across the state, so only a few institutions coordinate the capture, storage, allotment, delivery, and conservation of all our supplies?
- How concerned should we be about unequal outcomes if we let regional and local strategies and investments lead the way, as the current system is designed? Or can the state not rise to the challenge?
- What can we do to improve the reliability and quality of drinking water in disadvantaged communities while managing costs?
- What does an optimal alignment of federal and state water management responsibilities look like?
- How do we smartly finance any big ticket infrastructure projects?
- What does the Biden infrastructure plan bring to California?

Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board

John Laird, Senator, California State Senate

Andrew Meredith, President Elect, State Building & Construction Trades Council of CA

Dudi Balsar, General Manager, Innovation and Ventures Division, Mekorot Israel National Water Company

Roundtable Discussion

12:00pm	Summary, Next Steps, and Adjournment

Jay Hansen, President & CEO, CFEE

**unconfirmed*