

PANELISTS

Session 1

Back to Basics – Getting Clarity on California’s Water System

Kristin White

**Deputy Regional Director
US Bureau of Reclamation**



Kristin White is Deputy Regional Director of Operations for the Bureau of Reclamation’s California-Great Basin Region, a federal agency under the Department of the Interior that delivers water and power to California, Nevada, and the Klamath Basin.

White was appointed Deputy Regional Director of Operations in April 2023, overseeing regional operations that includes the Northern California Area Office, Central California Area Office, and South-Central California Area Office, as well as the Central Valley Operations Office, Bay- Delta Office and the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

White previously served as CVO operations manager where she was responsible for the daily water and power operations of Reclamation’s Central Valley Project, one of the world’s premier water storage and delivery systems. The CVP is comprised of 19 dams and reservoirs, 11 powerplants and more than 500 miles of canals and aqueducts within California’s Central Valley.

White began her career with Reclamation in 2010 as a hydrologist in the Klamath Basin Area Office in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Since that time, she has served as a modeler, project manager, branch chief, and technical expert on various long-term water supply planning efforts for the CVP. Prior to joining Reclamation, White worked as a consultant in Virginia and Texas, focusing mainly on flood control modeling, planning, and design.

White holds a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Florida Institute of Technology, a Master of Engineering degree in civil engineering with an emphasis in water resources from the University of Houston and is a registered Professional Engineer in Texas. White and her husband, Edward, live in Sacramento and enjoy hiking around the state with their dogs.

Jay Ziegler

**Delta Water Master
State Water Control Board**



On April 3, 2023, Jay Ziegler was appointed to a four-year term as Delta Watermaster for the State Water Resources Control Board. Prior to being appointed, Mr. Ziegler was the Director of External Affairs and Policy for The Nature Conservancy (TNC). During his 12 years at the conservancy, he led the agency’s policy engagements on water, climate strategies, biodiversity protection and environmental funding initiatives. Prior to joining

TNC, he was a partner in the interdisciplinary public affairs firm, Ziegler Associates, where he focused on land use, water policy, renewable energy, and permitting and mitigation matters. Previously, he served in multiple roles at state and federal natural resource agencies, including intergovernmental affairs with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, where he focused on endangered species, public lands, water, and natural resource management issues across the West. The position of Delta Watermaster was created by the 2009 Delta Reform Act. The Delta Watermaster is an independent office of the State of California reporting jointly to the State Water Resources Control Board and the Delta Stewardship Council. The Watermaster has statutory responsibility for administering water rights within the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta and the Suisun Marsh. Additionally, the Delta Watermaster advises the Board and the Council on matters relating to water rights, water quality, habitat and land use across this vital estuary, agricultural and recreational area, and the hub of California's water conveyance infrastructure. He is a graduate of the University of California, Davis, serves on several non-profit boards, and resides in Davis, California with his wife, Carri.

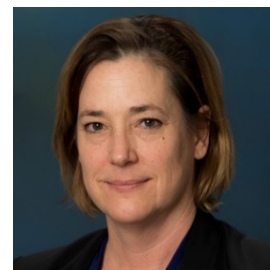
Session 2

From Bust to Boom! What Did We Learn? What Do We Do Now?

Karla Nemeth

Director

California Department of Resources



Karla Nemeth is director of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), where she oversees 4,000 employees. Nemeth focuses on preparing the department and state to adapt to more extreme weather as a result of climate change—investing in aging and green infrastructure, better management of groundwater supplies, and programs to improve local water resilience. Nemeth is committed to providing programs and services that meet the needs of California's diverse population. Prior to joining DWR, Nemeth worked at the California Natural Resources Agency as Governor Brown's deputy secretary and senior advisor for water policy. She was the Bay Delta Conservation Plan project manager from 2009 to 2014. She received a bachelor's degree in political science and Latin American studies from the University of California, San Diego, and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Washington

Adel Hagekhalil

General Manager

Metropolitan Water District of Southern



Adel Hagekhalil is the general manager and chief executive officer for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the largest wholesale drinking water supplier in the country that provides water to 26 member public agencies, serving 19 million people.

As general manager, Hagekhalil is responsible for leading Metropolitan's operations and long-term planning to provide safe, reliable drinking water to Southern California. He oversees Metropolitan's \$1.9 billion annual budget, 1,800 employees, and an extensive system of conveyance, storage, treatment, and delivery infrastructure.

Under Hagekhalil, the agency is entering a new era of sustainability and resiliency in the face of climate change and other threats to the region’s water reliability. He is committed to a “One Water” vision that incorporates every source of water, including imported and groundwater supplies, reuse, conservation, stormwater and wastewater. And he is focused on empowering Metropolitan’s workforce, promoting diversity, equity and inclusion and fostering innovation and partnerships so that Metropolitan can better serve its Southern California communities.

Hagekhalil is a registered civil engineer and national board-certified environmental engineer, having earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering from the University of Houston in Texas

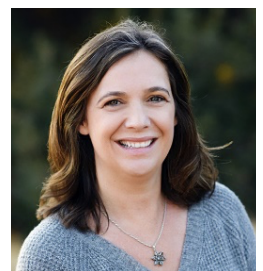
Before joining Metropolitan, he was the executive director and general manager of the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Services. There, he worked to integrate climate adaptation, equity and green infrastructure into the largest municipal street system in the nation.

Hagekhalil has more than three decades of experience in water, climate and environmental issues, and infrastructure management, including as assistant general manager of the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation, where he oversaw the city’s wastewater collection system, stormwater and watershed protection program, water quality compliance, advance planning and facilities. He also helped develop the city’s 2040 One Water LA Plan.

Hagekhalil is a member of the American Public Works Association as well as the Water Environment Federation, which recognized him in 2019 as a WEF Fellow for his contributions to and impact in the global water environment. In 2021, he received the Edward J. Cleary Award for his public service in the conduct of environmental protection programs from the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists. He also served for more than a decade as a board member on the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, including a term as president.

Hagekhalil and his wife, Lubna, reside in Fullerton. They have three adult children.

Allison Febbo
General Manager
Westlands Water District



Allison Febbo is the first woman to serve the Westlands Water District as general manager, where she is responsible for directing, coordinating, and reviewing the district’s activities and operations. She also serves as the administrative head of the district in its relations with the public, legislative bodies, federal and state governments, and local public agencies. Ms. Febbo is a hydrologist with 25 years of professional experience in natural resources, hydrology, and water operations. Prior to Westlands, she served as the general manager of the Mojave Water Agency and was the deputy operations manager for the Central Valley Operations Office for the US Bureau of Reclamation. Ms. Febbo holds a BS in earth and atmospheric science from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a MS in hydrologic science from the University of California, Davis.

Amanda Fencl, PhD

**Western States Senior Climate Scientist
Union of Concerned Scientists**



Amanda Fencl is a Western States Senior Climate Scientist for the Climate & Energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. Dr. Fencl is an expert in water, climate adaptation, and environmental policy solutions. Their research at UCS focuses on the risks and opportunities from climate change in California and the Western United States. She is committed to advancing climate justice and sustainable water management through her work.

Dr. Fencl has broad professional experience working with a variety of stakeholders, including local and state governments, community-based organizations, and other nongovernmental organizations. Most recently, they were a AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow and Climate Change Specialist for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a bilateral US foreign aid agency. Previously, Dr. Fencl worked on water and climate issues at Texas A&M University, Community Water Center, the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, UC Davis Center for Environmental Policy and Behavior, and the Stockholm Environment Institute.

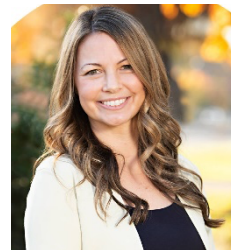
Dr. Fencl earned a PhD in geography from UC Davis and a bachelor's degree in international relations and environmental studies from Tufts University. They are available to speak about drought and other climate and water justice issues in California.

Session 3

Powering Progress: Harnessing the Energy-Water Nexus

Michelle Reimers

**General Manager
Turlock Irrigation District**



Michelle Reimers directs the day-to-day operations of Turlock Irrigation District's (TID) extensive irrigation water storage and delivery system as well as the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity within a 662-square mile service area in Central California. Reimers joined TID in 2006 and was appointed to General Manager by the District's Board of Directors in 2020.

As the District's ninth General Manager and first female, Reimers' is a change agent with over 15 years of experience, prepared to lead the District with a focus on transparency and collaboration. In her first year as General Manger, she effectively led the District through the implementation of is second-ever Strategic Plan, outlining the District's five year priorities. Only three months into her tenure the world was struck by the COVID-19 pandemic thus requiring her focus to include navigating a team of 458 employees through a new way of conducting business. Known for tackling problems pragmatically and encouraging an environment of innovation, Reimers implemented new initiatives and practices in her first year as General Manager of TID to propel the District, its business functions and its customer service capabilities to the next level, including TID's entry into the Western Energy Imbalance Market and the implementation of a new Customer to Meter (C2M) system.

Prior to her current position, Reimers served as the District's Assistant General Manager of External Affairs and Director of External Affairs. As an influential communicator, Reimers has advocated on TID's behalf via several state and national professional organizations including the American Public Power Association, Northwest Public Power Association, California Farm Bureau Federation and the Association of California Water Agencies. She has played an integral role in the creation of the West Turlock Groundwater Sustainability Agency, in support of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) as well as the Water Sales Agreement with the Stanislaus Regional Water Authority, which will aid efforts to ensure water supply reliability to the people of the region while improving conditions in the Turlock groundwater Subbasin. As General Manger, she continues to be a driving force in the relicensing of the Don Pedro Dam Project with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Voluntary Agreement talks with the state.

Reimers holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Communications from California State University Stanislaus and graduated Magna Cum Laude. She is also an inaugural member of the Water Solutions Network, and a graduate of The James Irvine Foundation New Leadership Network.

Gary Bradford

Supervisor, Yuba County
Chairman, Yuba Water Agency



Gary Bradford is a community leader, elected to represent the residents of Yuba County on the Board of Supervisors and the board of directors for the Yuba Water Agency.

Gary and his wife Jennifer live in Plumas Lake with their two kids Justin and Megan. Gary graduated from the University of California at Davis in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and has worked on public sector Information Technology projects for over 20 years. He served on the Reclamation District 784 board from 2008 - 2010 and the Olivehurst Public Utility District Board from 2010 - 2016.

Jon Reiter

Founder and Principal
Cavalrei



Jon Reiter is a principal of Cavalrei, a consultancy offering services in the agriculture, finance, solar and water industries. From 2013-2019, Jon served as the CEO of Maricopa Orchards. Maricopa Orchards is a leading almond, pistachio, and fresh produce grower and Jon led the company on, among other things, a multi-pronged water strategy that included federal and state surface water, long term surface water contracts and groundwater banking. He sits on the boards of Wheeler Ridge Maricopa Water Storage District, the White Wolf Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the Arroyo Passajero Mutual Water Company.

Prior to joining Maricopa Orchards, Jon was a finance attorney for Milbank where he represented developers, lenders and investors in the water and renewable energy industries. Prior to Milbank, Jon worked for British Telecommunications (BT), a Global Fortune 500 communications company, where he was responsible for global procurement and real estate transactions as well as leading BT's renewable energy efforts in the Americas. Jon

joined BT upon the sale of his prior technology company to BT in 2004. Prior to BT, Jon was a mergers and acquisitions attorney with O'Melveny.

Jon graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts degree emphasizing in Political Science/Environmental Science Policy and Management. Jon went on to earn his JD/MBA from the University of Southern California. Jon is a member of the California State Bar, a California real estate broker, and a private pilot.

Session 4

Improving Water Management Through Better Data – Atmospheric Forecasting, Water Rights, and More

Robyn Grimm, PhD

**Director, Climate Resilient Water Systems
Environmental Defense Fund**

Robyn serves as Senior Director of Applied Research and Innovation for Climate Resilient Water Systems at the Environmental Defense Fund. Her work focuses on filling critical research, decision-support, and other information gaps to enable more sustainable land and water management practices across the Western United States.



For the past six years, Robyn helped lead the OpenET consortium, working with partners at NASA, the Desert Research Institute, Google Earth Engine, a dozen other organizations and a wide range of stakeholders on the development of an online open platform for estimating consumptive water use. In her current role, Robyn is now focused on working with partners to drive adoption of the platform to foster sustainable water management and community resilience in the face of mounting climate impacts.

Prior to joining EDF, Robyn worked at the consulting firm CH2M Hill, where she was a water resources policy analyst and advised California's Department of Water Resources on statewide flood and water planning. Robyn holds a doctorate degree in Hydrologic Sciences from UC Davis and has contributed to a number of flood control and water management studies in California.

Marty Ralph, PhD

**Director, Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes
UC San Diego Scripps Institution of Oceanography**

Dr. F. Martin Ralph is a synoptic and mesoscale research meteorologist focused on understanding the physical processes that create extremes in precipitation ranging from flood to drought, and on advancing associated observations, predictions, climate projections and decision support tools. A primary topic has been atmospheric rivers and their role in mid latitude precipitation. From 2001 – 2013 he was Chief of the Water Cycle Branch at NOAA's Earth System Research



Laboratory in Colorado where he led the development of the Hydrometeorology Testbed. He also managed NOAA's Science, Technology and Infusion Program, Chaired NOAA's US Weather Research Program Executive Committee, and led the creation of NOAA's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program. In 2013 he moved to the University of California San Diego/Scripps Institution of Oceanography where he is developing the "Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes."

A major goal through his career has been to better understand, monitor, and predict key elements of the global water cycle including water vapor transport, precipitation and runoff. Scientific understanding of atmospheric rivers, which are critical to both the global water cycle and to the distribution of precipitation and flooding in key parts of the world, is a major thrust. Using these results to evaluate and improve short-term precipitation forecasting and to provide reliable regional climate projections of flooding and water supplies in several areas of the world, are desired outcomes. The application of these findings to key users of weather and climate information on extreme events in the Western U.S. is being developed through new observing strategies, modeling and the creation of decision support tools tailored to user needs.

Dr. Ralph has published over 75 peer-reviewed scientific articles, roughly 25 as the lead author. He has helped lead the establishment of testbeds as a method to accelerate the development and infusion of new science and technology into weather and climate forecasting operations. He has developed new projects, experiments and teams on several subjects, most having to do with observations, physical understanding, precipitation extremes, predictions and decision support tools.

Awards Include:

- Elected Fellow of the American Meteorological Society
- Climate Science Service Award from California's Dept. of Water Resources
- Department of Commerce Silver Medal & Bronze Medals (3)
- "For comprehensive flood mitigation efforts in response to a severely weakened Howard Hansen Dam project with the potential of catastrophic flooding." (2012)
- To the Boulder Planning and Transition Team "For designing and implementing the consolidation of six research organizations in Boulder, CO into the new NOAA Earth System Research Laboratory," (2006)
- To the PACJET Research and Development Team "For the development of a snow-level algorithm for boundary layer wind profilers which will improve national winter weather forecasts," (2003)
- NOAA Administrator's Awards (2)
- "For exemplary leadership of the NOAA Unmanned Aircraft System Program during its formative stage" (2009)
- "For the successful planning, implementation and initial deployment in the San Diego and Oxnard Areas of the first NOAA/USGS Debris-Flow Warning System." (2007)
- OAR Employee of the Year
- OAR Outstanding Scientific Paper (3)

Educational Background

B. S. (Meteorology) University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 1984

M. S. (Atmospheric Sciences), University of California at Los Angeles, 1987

Ph.D. (Atmospheric Sciences), University of California at Los Angeles, 1991

Steven Ritchie

**Assistant General Manager for Water Enterprise
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission**



Steven Ritchie is Assistant General Manager of the Water Enterprise, where he oversees water system operations and planning from Hetch Hetchy through the Regional Water System to the City Distribution Division, and the management of lands and natural resources. He served as Manager of Planning from 1995-98. Previously, he managed the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, a multi-agency effort to restore 15,100 acres of valuable habitat in South San Francisco Bay while providing for flood risk management and public access. He has served in management positions at the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (1987-95), the CalFed Bay-Delta Program (1998-2000), and URS consultants (2000-04). He holds a B.S. and M.S. in civil engineering from Stanford University.

Session 5

Up, Up and Away...How Can We Reel In the Rising Price of Water

Laurel Firestone

**Board Member
California State Water Resources Control Board**



Laurel Firestone was appointed to the State Water Resources Control Board in 2019 and reappointed by Governor Newsom in February 2023. Prior to joining the Board, Laurel co-founded and co-directed, from 2006-2019, the Community Water Center, a statewide non-profit environmental justice organization based in California's Central Valley and Central Coast. Her career has focused on ensuring all Californians have access to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water, and building increased diversity, equity, and inclusivity into water decision-making.

Laurel has received a variety of awards and recognitions for her work, including the James Irvine Foundation's Leadership Award in 2018, and the Gary Bellow Public Service Award by the Harvard Law School in 2013.

Laurel served on the Tulare County Water Commission from 2007-2012, as well as a variety of state policy advisory committees. She has partnered with universities to develop research and clinical programs to further the human right to water, and written articles and publications related to drinking water and the environment.

Laurel graduated with honors from Harvard Law School and holds a B.A. magna cum laude in Environmental Studies from Brown University

Tish Berge

Deputy General Manager San Diego Water Authority



Tish Berge is deputy general manager of the San Diego County Water Authority, an agency responsible for providing wholesale water supplies to serve 24 member agencies, 3.3 million people and a \$268 billion regional economy. Berge joined the Water Authority as assistant general manager in February 2021, bringing more than 17 years of executive-level experience across every aspect of water utility management.

As deputy general manager, Berge oversees the Finance, Administrative Services, Government Relations, and Public Affairs departments at the Water Authority.

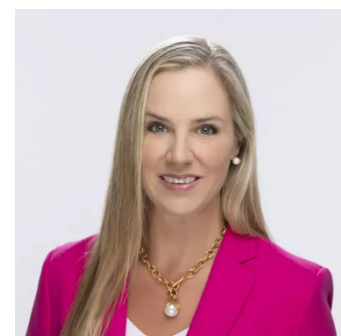
From 2017 to 2021 Berge served as general manager of the Sweetwater Authority, leading the agency to earn a “District of Distinction” award from the Special District Leadership Foundation for demonstrating sound fiscal management policies and practices – an award given to only 2% of special districts.

Prior to her service with the Sweetwater Authority, Berge served as Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District’s director of administration and finance where she implemented a 10-year financial model to drive policy decisions related to debt issuance, Capital Improvement Projects, and water rates. Berge also served as assistant general manager for San Elijo Joint Powers Authority, where she helped the organization earn the 2006 California Water Environment Association Plant of the Year award.

Berge holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Harvey Mudd College, and a Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in Finance from the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine. She is a Certified Special District Manager and Registered Professional Engineer.

Claire Collins

Partner Hanson Bridgett



Claire represents public entities, private companies, and individuals in real estate and environmental matters with an emphasis on water-related issues.

Her practice includes transactional law, compliance counseling, and litigation. She regularly handles the following types of matters:

- Public agency general counseling
- Contract negotiation, drafting, and review
- Real property sales, acquisitions, and leasing
- Boundary disputes
- Easement and “Right of Way” negotiation and interpretation
- California Environmental Quality Act compliance and litigation

- Public finance issues, including Prop. 218 compliance, State Revolving Fund loans, and bond issuances
- Eminent domain and inverse condemnation
- Clean Water Act and Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act litigation and compliance
- Water, solid waste, wastewater, recycling, and recycled water contracts, ordinances, laws, and regulations
- Railroad-related matters
- Open government law, including the Public Records Act and the Brown Act
- California Government Claims Act
- Local agency formation commission matters
- Joint powers authority matters

She serves as General Counsel to [Irvine Ranch Water District](#), [Trabuco Canyon Water District](#), and as special counsel to a variety of other public agencies across the state.

Rami Kahlon

Director of Regulatory Affairs California Water Service

Rami currently serves as Director, Regulatory Affairs for California Water Service – a regulated water utility serving 2 million Californians in over 100 communities. Previously, Rami served as the Director of the Water Division at the California Public Utilities Commission from 2007 through 2019 where he was responsible for the regulatory oversight of about 100 privately owned water and sewer utilities. Rami holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of California at Davis and a Master of Management from the Kellogg School at Northwestern University, and he is a licensed Professional Electrical Engineer.

