ITEM NO. 12.2

DIRECTOR AB 1234 REPORT

Director Name: Dirk Marks

Meeting Attended: Urban Water Institute

Date of Meeting: February 25-27, 2026

Board Meeting to be Presented At: March 3, 2026

Points of Interest:

A copy of the conference Agenda is attached.

Joel Metzger, Deputy Director, Statewide Water Resources Planning and Enterprise Project Management, California Department of Water Resources provided the keynote presentation on planning efforts to adapt to our unpredictable water future. He indicated that there will be a significant revamping of the next California Water Plan. The next plan, at the Governor's direction, will identify the means to increase water supplies by 9 MAF over the next decade.

The next panel discussed the impact of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) on the San Joaquin Valley. The panel included an agricultural appraiser, a family farmer and the general manager of the Tulare Irrigation District. Agricultural land values have significantly declined since 2015. Properties with access to both surface and groundwater have declined 25%. Those with access to just groundwater have seen values decline around 75%. While a small portion of this decline reflects changes in commodity prices, SGMA implementation is the major driver. Banks' willingness to make loans for seed and operating expenses are now contingent on farmers being able to certify available water supplies. With SGMA limiting groundwater pumping, significantly less agricultural activity will occur. These circumstances make smaller family farming very challenging. Panelists anticipate that many family farms will be purchased by hedge funds. Tulare Irrigation District, like many other agricultural water agencies, are seeking partnerships with urban water agencies in the development of water banking programs. Conglomerations of fallowed lands may provide an opportunity for development of efficient spreading grounds.

The final session of the conference delt with the ongoing challenges on the Colorado River. There were representatives from Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Colorado, Arizona. All acknowledged that the Colorado River was oversubscribed and that reductions will be necessary. Each participant provided their region's perspective and noted what they have already done to reduce reliance on the Colorado River. Nevertheless, the seven Colorado River Compact states failed to meet the Bureau of Reclamation February 14 deadline to reach

framework agreement on the next Colorado River interim operating guidelines. While the Bureau continues to hold out hope that the parties may be able to come together over a shorter 5-year deal, it appears that some parties feel they are being asked to give up more than they could “lose at their worst day before the Supreme Court."

Attachment: UWI Conference Agenda

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2026 Spring Conference

Theme: Navigating Change, Shaping the Future

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 1:00 PM (PST) to Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:00 AM (PST)

Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa

44400 Indian Wells Ln Indian Wells, CA 92210 United States (https://maps.google.com/?q=(Renaissance Esmeralda Resort %26 Spa 44400 Indian Wells Ln Indian Wells, CA 92210 United States))

Unlock Member Pricing (https://www.urbanwater.com/membership)

Conference Sponsorships (https://www.urbanwater.com/sponsor-exhibitor-opportunities)

URBAN WATER INSTITUTE

A FORUM FOR WESTERN WATER ISSUES

Menu

Agenda

February 25

1:00 PM - 1:15 PM	Conference Welcome *Dave Pedersen, Incoming Chair* *Darcy Burke, UWI Executive Director* *2026 Spring Conference Agenda (https://assets.noviams.com/novi-file-uploads/uwi/2026_Spring_Conference/2026_UWI_Spring_Conference_Program_-_2-23-26_short.pdf)*
1:15 PM - 2:00 PM	Opening Keynote: Changing California's Water Planning Process to Meet Our Unpredictable Future *Joel Metzger, Deputy Director, Statewide Water Resources Planning and Enterprise Project Management, California Department of Water Resources*

	The Projected Change is Here: A Peek into SGMA's Impact on the Central Valley *Panel Presentation featuring:*
	Janie Gatzman, Owner, Gatzman Appraisal
	Jim Morehead, Co-owner, Morehead Farms, Inc.
	Aaron Fukuda, General Manager, Tulare Irrigation District; Executive Director, Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency
	Moderator: Jason Phillips, Vice President, Water Business Group, HDR
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM	Change Makers *Panel Presentation featuring:*
	Shivaji Deshmukh, General Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
	Anona Dutton, CEO, EKI Environment & Water
	Valerie Kincaid, Partner, Paris Kincaid Wasiewski, LLP
	Moderator: John Coleman, UWI Board of Directors
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Opening Reception *Conference registrants enjoy complimentary cocktails and hors d'oeuvres during a hosted onsite reception.*
February 26	
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast Buffet *Conference registrants enjoy a complimentary breakfast buffet onsite at the hotel.*
9:00 AM - 10:15 AM	Changing Affordability Metrics *Panel Presentation featuring:*
	Joe Mouawad, General Manager, Eastern MWD
	Greg Thomas, General Manager, Elsinore Valley MWD
	Dr. Kurt Schwabe, Professor of Environmental Economics & Policy, UC Riverside
	Peiffer Brandt, CEO & President, Raftellis
	Moderator: Andree Lee, EKI Environment & Water
10:30 AM - 11:45 AM	How to Change Public Perception *Panel Presentation featuring:*
	Will Ketchum, President, North Star
	Lynn Lipinski, Director of Communications, Southern California Water Coalition
	Bratton Riley, Founder & CEO of Citibot
	Moderator: Heather Collins, President, American Water Works Association
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Luncheon *Conference registrants enjoy a complimentary plated lunch onsite at the hotel.*

	Beyond the Labels: Understanding Generational Changes in the Workforce (Audience Interactive Session) *Hailey Rowbatham, Water Resources Engineer, EKI Environment & Water* *William McDonnell, Senior Water Resources Analyst, Inland Empire Utilities Agency* *Ofelia Rubio, Senior Managing Engineer, LA Dept of Water & Power* *Co-Facilitated by:* *Jennifer Persike, President/Founder, Jennifer Persike & Company* *Liji Thomas, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, MWDSC*
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	The Water Association Dating Game: Find Your Match *Sue Mosburg, Executive Director, CA-NV Section American Water Works Association* *Danielle Blacet-Hyden, Executive Director, California Municipal Utilities Association* *Brenley McKenna, Managing Director, WateReuse CA* *Charley Wilson, Executive Director, Southern CA Water Coalition* *Moderators:* *Lisa Ohlund, Principal, Ohlund Management & Technical Services* *Rich Nagel, Vice President, Jacobs*
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM	Changing Commodity Markets: California's (Wine) Grapes of Wrath *Panel Presentation featuring:* *John Chandler, Partner, Chandler Farms; Chairman, California Association of Winegrape Growers* *J.D. Harkey, CEO, Drake Enterprises* *Glenn Spyksma, Board Preseident, South San Joaquin Irrigation District* *Moderator: Darcy Burke, UWI Executive Director*
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Board Chair's Reception *Conference registrants enjoy complimentary cocktails and hors d'oeuvres during a hosted onsite reception.*
February 27	
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Breakfast *Conference registrants enjoy a complimentary breakfast buffet onsite at the hotel.*
9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	A Changing Colorado River *Panel Presentation featuring:* *Bill Hasencamp, Manager of Colorado River Resources, MWDSC* *Amy Ostdiek, Section Chief of Interstate, Federal, and Water Information Section, Colorado Water Conservation Board* *Kathryn Sorensen, Director of Research, Kyl Center for Water Policy at Arizona State* *Moderator: Meena Westford, Director of Imported Water, San Diego County Water Authority*

IMPORTANT:

In order to register attendees for the upcoming UWI Conference, each attendee must have a user profile (with unique email address).