

Director AB 1234 Report
December 15, 2020

Director name: Gary Martin
Meeting attended: ACWA 2020 Fall Virtual Conference
Date of meeting: December 2-3, 2020
Location: Virtual
SCV Water Board meeting to be presented at: December 15, 2020

On December 2 and 3, I attended the ACWA 2020 Fall Virtual Conference & Exhibition. The following is a brief summary of the sessions attended and points of interest:

12/2, 8:00 am, Opening Session

Welcome and Introduction by Steve LaMar, ACWA President

Welcome and comments by Dave Eggerton, ACWA Executive Director.
Mr. Eggerton gave an excellent summary presentation of ACWA activities and priorities.

Keynote speaker: Cassandra Pye, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Lucas Public Affairs
Ms. Pye spoke on social justice issues and how they relate to organizational strategies.

Awards:
Bette Boatman and Curt Aikens received 2020 Lifetime Achievement Awards
Best in Blue – East Bay MUD for their PSPS Public Outreach Campaign

ACWA JPIA Presentation
Jerry Gladbach, Board President, ACWA JPIA
Walter “Andy” Sells, Chief Executive Officer, ACWA JPIA

12/2, 10:30 am, Attorney’s Program

SCOTUS – A Look Back and a Look Forward at the Supreme Court

This was a discussion about interstate legal water wars and the Supreme Court’s jurisdiction in disputes between states. A number of case studies were discussed.

12/2, 1:00 pm, Afternoon Keynote Address: Tim Quinn, Stanford University Fellow, former ACWA ED

Mr. Quinn gave a fast-paced and informative talk on long term water planning and what he believes is the proper collaborative approach to be most effective. In regards to effective collaboration, here are the take-away priorities according to Tim:

- Embrace politics
- Coalition building is the essence of political competition
- Coalition building is universal
- Two types of coalitions – “warrior” and “collaborative”
- Anxiety about status quo is justified
- Push past “warriors” for collaborative governance

What makes successful collaboration:

- Facilitative leadership

- Engage stakeholders, build relationships and trust
- Be open and transparent
- Big tents
- Grow the problem to be able to solve it

12/2, 1:30 pm, Water Industry Trends

Water Quality Issue Forum: Regulating Contaminants

This panel discussed some of the different approaches being taken to regulate contaminants and the impact to water systems and the public. Points of interest:

- Finding PFAS everywhere and in so many products
- Cost to treat is expensive and a more robust effort is needed
- Water utilities looking for regulatory certainties
- Quote from panelist: “the more we learn, the more alarmed we are”
- Question: should PFAS be considered a class?
- Could be end of 2023 to get an MCL for PFOS and PFOA only.
- Compliance period??

12/2, 2:45 pm, Finance Program

A Superior Court Victory for Water Efficiency & Budget Rates: How Western MWD Prevailed

This was an excellent presentation on how tiered water rates can be structured to comply with Prop 218. The panel described how WMWD developed water budgets for each customer based on indoor and outdoor use and cost of various water sources. GPD consumption went from 249 in 2007 to 122 in 2019, as customers learned more about the program and embraced the cost benefits of conservation.

Points of interest:

San Juan Capistrano case was misinterpreted. They lacked the data to back up their tiered system.

Lower cost water can be allocated to 1st tier for health and sanitary needs.

Rate structure benefits efficient users who stay within their budget

12/2, 4:15 pm, Statewide Issue Forum

Post-election Analysis: The 2021 Crystal Ball

This was a fascinating discussion by political consultants on both sides of the isle and moderated by Dave Reynolds, ACWA’s Director of Federal Relations

Points of Interest, key observations, and what to expect in the Biden administration:

- Most contentious election ever
- Climate change now a cabinet level post
- Cooperation with Newsom administration
- Focus of disadvantaged communities, clean water and the environment
- Unfinished business in DC – WRDA
- Winners, besides Biden and Harris – women in general, diversity in DC

12/3, 8:00 am, Opening Session

Opening remarks by Pam Tobin, ACWA Vice President

Keynote speaker: Daniel Swain, PhD, Climate Scientist, Institute of Environmental & Sustainability, UCLA

Dr. Swain gave a very interesting and informative presentation on climate change.

Points of interest:

- California has a strong seasonal cycle of precipitation and drought susceptibility.
- Limited window for receiving rainfall.
- Warming will be greater going forward.
- Expect a large increase in storm runoff, and increasingly large pulses of heavy rainfall.
- CA headed for bot wetter and drier future.
- Overall precipitation not projected to reduce.
- Frequency of very wet and vert dry seasons increasing, however the mean to stay the same.
- Precipitation whiplash!
- Example: wild swings between drought and flood at Oroville.
- Sharpening of seasonal cycles expected, loss of snowpack and more evaporation.
- 50-50 chance of “great flood” in CA; repeat of 1862 flood in next 40 years.
- More atmospheric river storms.
- Flood risk looms large in warming climate.
- Climate change is making wildfires larger, more intense, more dangerous.
- Future warming in CA is inevitable, but how much?
- Post-fire debris flows / floods affecting water quality.
- Need flexibility to cope with extremes.
- Might be possible to mitigate flood and drought risks simultaneously.
- Must adapt to warming
- Must get serious about groundwater banking

12/3. 9:00 am, Region Issue Forum

Wildfire: Partnership in Forest management

This was a discussion about “reactivating” flood plains in the Sacramento Valley

12/3, 10 am, Statewide Issue Forum

“SAFER” – Getting down to Nuts and Bolts for Safe Drinking Water for All

This was panel discussion about how the State Water Board will evaluate “at risk” systems, fund solutions for domestic wells and estimate the cost for long-term solutions.

Points of interest:

- SB 200 needs assessment will provide the backbone for the program
- Affordability assessment
- Risk assessment component
- Cost estimate for near-term and long-term solutions
- Affordability and feasibility are important considerations

12/3, 11:00, Closing Session, Keynote speakers:

Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary of CA Environmental Protection Agency

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary of CA Natural Resources Agency

Karen Ross, Secretary of CA Department of Food and Agriculture

This was a panel discussion on the Newsom Administration Water Resilience Portfolio.

Points of interest, Secretary Crowfoot:

- Thanks water agencies of California for keeping safe and clean water flowing during the pandemic!
- Local agencies are responsible.
- Comprehensive action plan – 142 actions.
- Will set CA up for resilience for the coming years.
- Focused on highest priorities (SGMA, water conveyance, voluntary agreements).
- Making substantial progress on 103 of 142 actions.

Points of interest, Secretary Blumenfeld:

- We're in a climate emergency.
- Need a roadmap on how to get to water resiliency.
- Funding more complicated now.
- Climate change very expensive.
- Safe and affordable (SB200) have not set interim and long-term goals.
- Expand re-cycled water.
- Voluntary agreements – came out with framework on what agreements look like.
- Need water recycle regs for direct potable re-use.
- Water is on the front line of climate impacts.

Points of interest, Secretary Ross:

- Crops in CA's Mediterranean climate.
- How important to have a water resilience portfolio.
- Integrated approach needed.
- Sustainable groundwater is critical to agriculture.
- Healthy soil is critical; 1% increase in organic material in soil saves 25% in water demand.

Conclusion: I found the conference interesting and informative and I appreciate being able to attend.