



**California Special  
Districts Association**  
*Districts Stronger Together*

**ITEM NO.  
4.2**

## 2018 CSDA Award Nominations

Name of Award Submitting for: General Manager of the Year		
Name of Nominee: Matt Stone		
Individual/District: SCV Water Agency		
Address: 27234 Bouquet Canyon Rd.		
City: Santa Clarita	State: CA	Zip: 91350
Phone: 661-297-1600	Fax:	
Main Contact: Kathie Martin	Email: kmartin@scvwa.org	
District Operating Budget: \$224 million		
Nominated by: Kathie Martin, Public Information Officer, SCV Water		
Main Local Newspaper: The Santa Clarita Valley Signal		
Legislators (Assembly/Senate): Assembly: Dante Acosta, 38 <sup>th</sup> State Assembly District; Senate: Scott Wilk, 21 <sup>st</sup> Senate District		

### HOW TO ENTER

The District must be a CSDA Member in good standing and must submit the following information by July 20, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.

- Submit the completed Award Nomination Form.
- Submit Executive Summary of nomination (not to exceed four pages).
- Optional: submit up to three attachments (not to exceed five pages each) of supporting material.
- There are categories for Small District (budget under \$5 million; and Large District (budget \$5 million+) for the District Awards only.

#### *Address your packet to:*

Vanessa Gonzales, Editor-Communications Specialist  
California Special Districts Association  
1112 I Street, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Or electronically to: [vanessag@csda.net](mailto:vanessag@csda.net)

*An external non-biased public relations firm will be reviewing all submissions and selecting the winners.*

*Questions?* If you have any questions regarding the awards or the awards process, please contact Vanessa Gonzales, editor, at the CSDA office toll-free at 877.924.2732 or by email at [vanessag@csda.net](mailto:vanessag@csda.net). DEADLINE for submissions is FRIDAY, JULY 20, 2018. All applicants will be notified prior to the Annual Conference who the winner is. Winners will be awarded at the CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase in Indian Wells during the Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, September 26.

## **CSDA AWARDS**

### **2018 CSDA Award Nominations Now Open! Due July 20.**

Each year, CSDA presents various awards during the CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase. There are several different categories to enter your district, chapter, and/or an individual. All nominations must be submitted by July 20, 2018.

### **INDIVIDUAL AWARDS**

#### **Board Member of the Year**

Nominations may be submitted for Board Member of the Year based on experience, effectiveness and leadership. Examples must be submitted that illustrate the rationale for the nomination.

#### **General Manager of the Year**

Nominations will be accepted for the general manager believed to have exhibited exceptional experience, effectiveness and leadership in his or her district. Illustrative examples must be submitted with the nomination demonstrating how the individual has excelled and brought substantial benefit to the district and/or public.

#### **Staff Member of the Year**

Selected from nominations by special district board members/trustees or district management staff. Nominations should include length of service to the district and specific accomplishments during employment.

**Ralph Heim Exceptional Outreach & Advocacy** *(The 2018 winner has been selected and award presentation given at Legislative Days. This award will open for nominations again in 2019 and will continue to be presented with all other awards at the Annual Conference.)*

The criteria for this award include a demonstration of exceptional engagement with the public, Legislature, and/or other key stakeholders to promote the individual's district and the entire special district community, particularly on matters related to CSDA's grassroots advocacy and public outreach efforts. Additionally, the individual may have initiated or contributed to significant grassroots or public outreach communications efforts that are appealing and include creative, thorough, and highly relevant content. As CSDA's long-time contract lobbyist, Ralph Heim contributed significantly to CSDA and special district advocacy efforts for well over 20 years. As someone that always represented CSDA and its members extremely well and with strong integrity, Mr. Heim and his work in outreach and advocacy serves as a great example of excellence in this area.

#### **William Hollingsworth Award of Excellence**

The criteria for this award includes a demonstration of significant leadership for special districts regionally or statewide over time. Individual must be actively identifying and implementing programs and/or partnerships that benefit special districts regionally or statewide, dedicating time, efforts, and/or career toward the advancement of special districts, and advocating on behalf of special districts regionally or statewide over time. William Hollingsworth was one of the "founding fathers" of CSDA and an advocate for special districts in the Capitol from the 1970s to his retirement in 1990. Mr. Hollingsworth served the Olivenhain Municipal Water District for over 22 years, was instrumental in the formation of CSDA, and has helped to establish and perpetuate the finest tradition of public service and the special district form of government during his long career.

***While this award is open for nominations from CSDA Members, selection of the recipient will be by the CSDA Board of Directors. The CSDA Board reserves the right to not award each year if they so choose. In addition, active CSDA Board Members and Staff are not eligible to receive the award.***

### **CHAPTER AWARDS**

### **CSDA Chapter of the Year**

Chapters are an integral part of communication, advocacy and education efforts throughout the State. CSDA will present an award to one affiliated chapter nominated for its effectiveness in outreach, involvement and creativity with activities on behalf of all districts in the chapter's territory and/or an ongoing commitment to continuing education.

### **DISTRICT AWARDS**

#### **Innovative Program/Project of the Year**

The criteria for this award includes originality of program/project, tangible and positive results produced and a documented decrease in district costs or a demonstrated improvement in the district's quality of service without significantly increasing costs. Additionally, the program/project should be easily adaptable and serve a best practices example for other districts.

#### **Exceptional Public Outreach & Advocacy**

The criteria for this award include a demonstration of an increase in the district's visibility with the public, Legislature and/or other key stakeholders. Additionally, the program may include improvement in district-constituent communication and evidence of communication pieces that are appealing and include creative, thorough and appropriate content relevant in communicating the districts business and/or program(s)/service(s). Additional consideration will be provided to nominees that have actively participated in CSDA's Grassroots Advocacy efforts.

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A completed [Award Nomination Form](#)

Executive Summary of nomination not to exceed four pages

*Optional:* up to three attachments of supporting materials not to exceed five pages each

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winners. QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions regarding the awards process, please contact Vanessa Gonzales, editor-communications specialist, toll-free at 877.924.2732 or by email at [vanessag@csda.net](mailto:vanessag@csda.net). All nominees and selected award recipients will be notified prior to the CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase in Indian Wells, CA where awards will be announced and given out.

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**SCV Water**  
CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase  
General Manager of the Year

**BACKGROUND**

In August of this year, SCV Water will celebrate its eighth month of service as the newest public agency in California. Formed to provide more efficient management and oversight of Santa Clarita Valley's most vital resource, the new water agency streamlined processes, enhanced water management, and removed redundancies in operational procedures and costs. The new district not only aligns with state goals to integrate regional water management, but also promises to improve local reliability and save approximately \$14 million in its first decade of operations.

Following years of litigation, Steve Cole, general manager of Newhall County Water District (NCWD) and Matt Stone, general manager of Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA) announced in early 2016 a shared desire to analyze and consider forming a new regional public water provider.

The goal was to build a combined agency that encompassed the best elements of each separate district. The public weighed in on the proposal via four public workshops, joint board meetings, two public opinion surveys, digital engagement, direct and electronic mail and one-on-one presentations. Customers indicated overwhelming support for the concept by a 4-to-1 margin. The year-long analysis culminated with a 130-page study that identified significant savings, stronger water management and more efficient operations – and approval by the two boards to create a new agency. The local action required passage of state legislation to make it official. In October 2017, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 634, authored by State Senator Scott Wilk, and SCV Water was born.

Among many other key staff, Matt Stone and Steve Cole led this transition to a streamlined agency. Part of the streamlining process included moving from two general managers to one, and both opted to stay and invest in SCV Water. Matt Stone was tapped to be the new general manager and Steve Cole stayed on as assistant general manager.

The goals of the transition were to:

- Enhance water supply reliability
- Improve regional water resource management
- Collectively strengthen groundwater supplies and replenishment
- Reduce reliance on imported water
- Integrate recycled water, stormwater capture and additional conservation programs

## **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WATER GOVERNANCE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY**

Matt Stone and the executive team have worked tirelessly in collaboration with Senator Wilk, their 14-member board, more than 200 staff, and the entire Santa Clarita Valley community to create a beacon of change in the water industry. Adding to the complexity of the process, two additional water retailers were folded into the family at the same time – the Santa Clarita Water Division and Valencia Water Company. By creating a new agency, leadership was able to provide a clear picture of what a unified water provider could offer the Santa Clarita Valley and its residents:

### Economics

- \$1.62 million in annual savings
- \$13 million in first three years (seven years ahead of schedule)
- Greater economies of scale
- No sharing of debt between former agencies

### Efficiencies and Effectiveness

- \$1.25 million in staff cost savings
- Upwards of 30% reduction in legal and outside fees
- 7% reduction in staff through attrition
- Retention of superior customer service

### Enhanced Water Resource Management

- 100% divisionally-elected board of directors (first time in history)
- Increase recycled water and other alternative supply opportunities
- Stronger, more integrated groundwater management
- Integrate systems currently in silos
- A unified voice for water industry issues and legislation

After more than a year of evaluation, legislation and feedback from residents, the vision of a new water agency was realized. On October 15, 2017, SB 634 was signed into law, making SCV Water a new agency. This new agency was set to start operations on January 1, 2018, leaving a lot to do in less than three months. The executive team worked in concert to ensure a seamless transition and the new agency was launched on time with no interruptions in service.

## **SUCCESS IN THE FIRST 120 DAYS**

Matt Stone and the executive team did not flinch at the mountain of tasks ahead of them in the creation of a new agency. Matt organized a transition team made up of representatives from the various entities and, in the first 120 days, major accomplishments included:

- Developing an entirely new brand and messaging
- Crafting mission, vision and values statements
- Merging processes through unified best practices

- Unifying Capital Improvement Project and developer project management
- Implementing divisional cross-training program
- Refinancing Valencia debt through bond issuance

Along with innumerable other successes along the way, management engaged the staff by:

- Restructuring the organization
- Not laying off a single employee
- Facilitating staff training
- Organizing a staff logo contest
- Holding the first all-staff meeting
- Completing new employee manual
- Relocating staff to combine function groups and improve efficiency

Led by Matt Stone, the executive team pioneered this process, encouraging feedback and garnering internal and external buy-in along the way. They have created a successful model for other agencies seeking the same efficiencies to follow, building an agency formed from the goodwill of its leaders, staff and community.

### **A LOCAL AGENCY AND REGIONAL LEADER**

SCV Water has set an innovative new standard for regional water management statewide. It has become a blueprint for agencies interested in pursuing similar benefits for their own regions. Matt Stone has led the charge for efficiency at every turn and driven the executive team to increase ratepayer satisfaction while decreasing agency costs. This has proven successful through updated forecasting that changed previous savings estimates of \$14 million over 10 years to \$13 million over the next three.

The support SCV Water has received from members of the community and regional and neighboring organizations is a special victory in the water world. Beyond the measurable, positive support that SCV Water received, the fiscal advantages of the new agency are estimated at \$1.6 million annually, and nearly \$13 million in SCV Water's first three years of operation. The approval of Senate Bill 634 was the direct result of the agency's effective, consistent relationships with all stakeholders. SCV Water approached the transition by emphasizing public outreach and education to honor a policy of transparency with all constituents. Multiple leaders stepped up and assumed responsibilities to create the success that is now one of the largest agencies in Southern California, with Matt Stone at the helm.

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# SCV Water

## CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase CSDA Exceptional Public Outreach & Advocacy Award

### **BACKGROUND**

In August of this year, SCV Water will celebrate its eighth month of service as the newest public agency in California. Formed to provide more efficient management and oversight of Santa Clarita Valley's most vital resource, the new water agency streamlined processes, enhanced water management, and removed redundancies in operational procedures and costs. The new district aligns with state goals to integrate regional water management, will improve local reliability and save approximately \$13 million in its first 3 years over the current approach.

Following years of litigation, Newhall County Water Agency and Castaic Lake Water Agency announced in early 2016 a shared desire to analyze and consider forming a new region-wide public water provider. The goal was to build a new district that drew from the best elements of each district.

The public was asked to weigh in on the proposal via four public workshops, joint board meetings, two public opinion surveys, digital engagement, direct and electronic mail and one-on-one presentations. Customers indicated overwhelming support for the concept by a 4:1 margin. The year-long analysis culminated with a 130-page study that identified significant savings, stronger water management and more efficient operations. As a result, the two boards approved the process to create a new agency. The vote was 14-1.

To formalize the local action and create the new agency, legislation was required – and State Senator Scott Wilk wrote Senate Bill 634 (SB 634). In October 2017, after passing both the State Assembly and Senate, Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 634 and SCV Water was born.

SCV Water presented the primary objectives in the programming process:

- Improve regional water management and oversight
- Improve efficiency of management and operations
- Reduce costs for customers
- Construct a division-based governance system fully compliant with CVRA

### **STAFF ENGAGEMENT**

*Invite staff to be part of the conversation and garner feedback to ensure staff buy-in*

**OBJECTIVE:** Building a new agency requires collaboration and cooperation at every turn. SCV Water built a foundation of communication and internal outreach as a cornerstone of the new agency to develop community goodwill both within and without.

**STRATEGY:** The executive team focused on creating a culture of communication and transparency throughout the creation of the new agency. From concept to completion, input was considered and addressed using the strategies below.

- One on ones
- Joint Staff Meetings
- Employee Logo Contest
- Transition Task Force
- Employee Events

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

*Comprehensive Research, Gathering Public Input, Regional Collaboration and Partnerships*

**OBJECTIVE:** This project could significantly improve the efforts of SCV Water’s public outreach, as the stated goals were unable to be reached without the support of community members. This was the logical next step. Realizing the critical importance of engaging the community and garnering buy-in across the diverse stakeholder groups in the region, the agencies devised a plan.

**STRATEGY:** With an eagerness to gauge the community’s initial response to the idea, the agencies commissioned a private firm to help develop a strategic outreach plan. Directed by this tactical plan, the agencies held a series of community workshops, conducted public opinion surveys, used social media and digital engagement, and held joint board meetings to spread the idea and invite feedback from their customers. Gathering positive feedback from the community, the agencies went to work to collect objective, scientific data to inform the next steps. However, the focus of the effort was to learn priorities and help shape the new district.

Public outreach strategies included:

- Increase public engagement through direct customer contact tools, a new website, digital ads, and earned media strategy
- Encourage community feedback by conducting public workshops and building a lobby experience
- Nourish strategic partnerships by presenting roadshow style presentations as well as one-on-one meetings

SCV Water garnered community involvement and buy-in through multiple strategies. By creating and designing materials that would reflect the innovation of this transition, community members became well educated based on the information they received from the district.

Aligned with the implementation timeline of the strategic outreach plan, the Your SCV Water campaign was launched to educate the public on the proposed changes, share the findings of the study, and to foster consistent, two-way communication between customers and the existing water providers.

Agency staff facilitated a Sacramento tour with targeted stakeholders and community members to strengthen local and regional buy-in and invite the public to participate in the discussions regarding the regional and statewide policy changes necessary to create a new agency.

With community outreach well underway, the agencies' elected officials and managers shifted their focus to engaging local and regional legislators. Strengthening collaborative partnerships, participating in local government events, and taking every opportunity to share Santa Clarita Valley's story with peer agencies, representatives focused on building awareness and support through a commitment to public education and industry relations.

Through this project, SCV Water gained the trust of the public, visibility with the legislature and the approval of key stakeholders.

#### **TACTICS:**

Brand development and implementation tactics included:

- Website creation
- Print Advertisements
- Billboards
- Transit Ads
- Postcards
- Bill inserts
- Letters
- Surveys
- E-Blasts
- Social Media
- Digital Ads
- Movie Theater Ads
- Videos

#### **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

##### *Community Involvement and Constituent Relationships*

**OBJECTIVE:** SCV Water's relationship with their constituents directly correlates to the longevity and success of this new project. Therefore, more community engagement drives the new agency to innovate and improve constantly, better serving community members and the region.

**STRATEGY:** When the agency completed their rebranding process in January, the public's involvement remained essential to the success of SCV Water. Visitors were welcomed to the new website with a video produced by SCV Water, educating viewers on the background of the transition and the future of water governance in the Santa Clarita Valley. The SCV Water lobby experience invited customer feedback through comment cards and encouraged community engagement by providing reusable water bottles, pens and cookies to share with friends and family. Letters and bill inserts were distributed directly to customers informing them of the changes, and service staff were trained with key messages and given resources, like an FAQ pocket guide, to effectively answer inquiries in the field. These strategies allowed the public to gain an understanding of SCV Water's brand and tune in to learn more.

**TACTICS:**

A wide range of innovative strategies were developed to better provide the community with a positive experience with SCV Water. Outreach tactics included:

- Community gardening classes
- K-12 school education
- Speaker Bureau
- Local demonstration garden and plant library
- Accessible educational tools and resources
- Environmental science workshop
- Residential and business water incentives and rebates
- Virtual landscape inspiration tour
- Lobby Experience

*Measuring Impact*

The support SCV Water has received from members of the community and regional and neighboring organizations is a special victory in the world of water. The unique response to the area's challenges and spirit of collaboration between over 200 staff members from both public and private water purveyors speaks to the valley's dedication to building and maintaining significant partnerships focused on achieving the region's water management goals.

**METRICS:**

The measurements of this publicly driven process included:

- 72% support among Santa Clarita Valley residents
- Approximately 30 public and stakeholder meetings
- Two public opinion surveys
- Approximately 18 emails and 3 direct mail pieces with an audience of more than 40,000
- Approximately 700 customer responses on priorities and ideas

Beyond the measurable, positive support that SCV Water received, the fiscal advantages of the new agency are estimated at nearly \$13 million in SCV Water's first 3 years of operation. The bill's approval was the direct result of the agencies' effective, consistent public education across all stakeholders.

Because of the exhaustive education efforts and outreach, public confusion was significantly reduced by the time the new agency opened its doors on January 1, 2018. In a two-month period, the agency's three divisions, which serve over 275,000 customers, received just 32 phone calls regarding the transition.

SCV Water's commitment to public education, transparency, and its unwavering promise to listen to its stakeholders offers the public sector an exemplary model of innovative, responsive governance. The public outreach strategy surrounding the creation of SCV Water exemplifies the CSDA Exceptional Public Outreach and Advocacy Award criteria. SCV Water strives to set an example in public outreach and advocacy, maintaining a steady approval rate while becoming one of the largest water agencies in Southern California over the past year. Every individual

involved made historical, remarkable, visible contributions to the enhancement, protection and development of water resources in the Santa Clarita Valley and beyond.