

URBAN WATER INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



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Urban Water Institute's Annual Conference

Urban Water Conference - In-Person Again!

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Urban Water Institute (UWI) we are pleased to announce our newest in-person conference event!

"Message From A Bottle - An S.O.S. For Western Utilities"
The Westin South Coast Plaza, Costa Mesa
September 8-9, 2021

UWI is a premier relationship-based water utility organization bringing together elected board members, general managers, expert staff, the consultants and thought-partners that support these essential services.

During the pandemic 'shut down' we developed compelling virtual mini-conferences keeping our promise to bring you programs, policies and updates affecting the water business. In September we will reset the way we gather in-person to enhance existing relationships, meet new leaders, and listen to a diversity of voices addressing issues for today, tomorrow and beyond. Our basic theme is: "Message From A Bottle - An S.O.S. For Western Utilities." Specifically, our SOS features: Sources, Organizations & Sustainability.

As you make your plans to re-engage in-person add September 8 and 9 to your calendar. Sponsors are invited to contact Stacy Davis at (949) 679-9676 to learn about our new sponsor benefits packages.

In this July 2021 issue of the UWI newsletter we present an early glimpse of what to expect with this compelling, informative, safe and healthy 2021 UWI event. Look for announcements to register online coming to you soon through emails and featured on the UWI website.



SAVE THE DATE: September 8-9, 2021 @ The Westin South Coast Plaza, Costa Mesa.

**Review past conference presentations and discussions at:
www.urbanwater.com/presentation-archives.**

For more information about the UWI Annual Conference, please contact Stacy Davis at Urban Water Institute at (949) 679-9676.

Sources

Imported water, recycled water, stormwater, ground water, desalinated water, conserved water, and low water appliances and practices fill the water portfolio for California water utilities. During the pandemic shut down the challenges continued to require mixing and matching these source options despite the pandemic. Even with the shut-down conditions, water demands were met, source options were enhanced, and coping lessons were learned and shared across the utility spectrum.

At this time, at our September 8-9 in-person conference in Costa Mesa we plan to feature 3 dialogues related to **Sources: Colorado River, Drought Management, and SITES** reservoir new water for dry periods.

Source: Colorado River

We will begin with an informed discussion of the Colorado River – a key imported source for California and 6 other basin states. What can we expect in the reallocation process? Will there be "winners" and "losers?" By meeting and discussing in person we can enhance our exploration, inquiry, and offer new perspectives to guide decision makers.

From Felicia Fonseca's article published in the June 14th edition of *The Columbian*, we learn "Lake Mead, key Colorado River reservoir, hits record low amid drought."



Whetting our appetite to learn the details Fonseca explains:

"The surface elevation of Lake Mead along the Nevada-Arizona border dipped to 1,071.56 feet at 11 p.m. on Wednesday evening. The level was last hit in July 2016 and is 18.5 feet lower than one year ago, according to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. It's the lowest level since Lake Mead was filled in the 1930s."

This panel discussion will set the stage for the source realities facing the 7 basin states and provides an appropriate segue to the following panel – focusing on drought.

Source: Drought Management

The California Department of Water Resources website features photos of drought conditions – the one at right is of Folsom Lake just north of the state capitol in Sacramento.

There was a time when we spent a lot of time trying to define drought – agreeing on the criteria, stages of drought impacts, and proposing mitigation measures. Today drought contingency plans are part of the 'normal' water management planning portfolio.

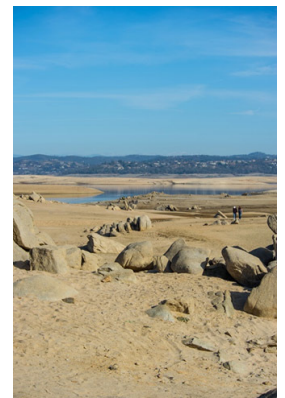
Lessons learned, tips and techniques shared help us all get better at managing our limited water supplies to reduce impacts on urban, agricultural and environmental sector water uses.



But Western US and California droughts make national news and this image at left appeared on CNN in June 2021. With the following tag line:

"A drought that began more than two decades ago is growing worse across much of the Western US, with serious consequences for millions of people and ecosystems across the region."

The panel addressing drought will focus on its impact and on constraints to our water supply. Not a new story, but there are new lessons and impacts to share with each other. This panel provides the segue into a new source option – the Sites project.



Sources (continued)

Source: SITES Reservoir Project

Planning for the Sites Reservoir Project, located in northern California has continued throughout the pandemic. This second consecutive year of drought only highlights the benefits that a constructed and operating Sites project will bring to the entire state. If we had Sites in 2021 there would be nearly 1 MAF of additional water supply for farms, cities and the environment. This story is unique in many ways – especially in how southern and northern California can be connected in positive ways for collective, statewide source benefits.



A lot has been accomplished in the past year! Hear the latest update from the project leaders about the unique Sites benefit of providing stored, new water to mitigate dry periods, offer flexibility for surface deliveries and ground water balancing, fish and environmental protection and drought management for California's agricultural industry.



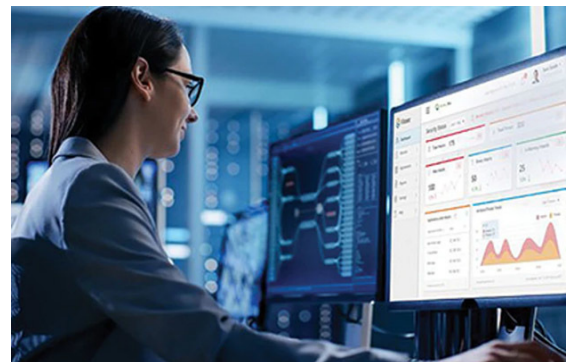
Source: Sites Project Authority Website

Organizations

For over a year, water agencies have been faced with many new experiences. It began with a cacophony of new voices in the health and political world. The results of these voices led to "shut-downs" for many businesses, with only essential workers permitted to continue working in their office environment, with significant constraints employing healthy risk reducing measures. Three panels will discuss cutting edge applications to utility management to keep pace with the changing social and pandemic driven impacts. The panel discussions will address Cybersecurity threats, pandemic measures to keep or toss away, and a social change discussion called "Us Too."

Organizations: Cybersecurity

Practitioners will walk us through their cybersecurity protection schemes and offer hands on experiences transferable throughout the water utility industry. You may be surprised at what these experts and professional leaders will share about their cybersecurity threats and ways to avoid them.

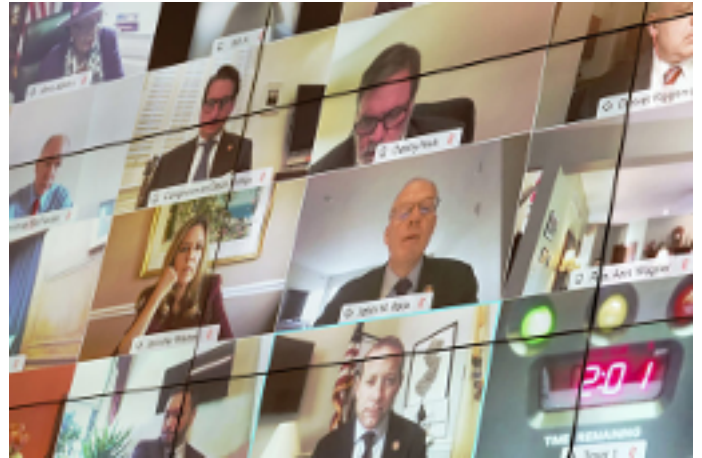


Organizations *(continued)*

Organizations: What to keep; what to stop; what to take to another level.

Not all the pandemic related adaptations will go away once we are fully "opened" and moving beyond the pandemic period. Be on the cutting edge of this dialogue that will resonate throughout the entire industry. For example, one utility shared how an online public hearing increased the public involvement by 300%. They don't want to lose that level of involvement – leading them to think differently about public policy communications in the future.

From Congress to State Legislatures, to City Councils, School Boards and Water Boards, public involvement was enhanced with "Zoom-type" virtual applications. Many organizations are planning to make this form of access part of their routine public involvement and outreach. The panel will discuss many more lessons learned about converting other pandemic required adaptations to normal business practices in the future, while letting go of some no longer needed.



Organizations: Us Too

During the past year's pandemic shut down we also witnessed images, heard and read commentary about the social changes occurring in our society. Some messages were handled in person, others in the media, others in our virtual based community, friendship and church exchanges.

In a conversational style setting, civic leaders will discuss how they bring in diverse views and voices to expand the dialogue and reach more users, ratepayers, stakeholders and taxpayers. Turning what may be seen as a negative impact into a positive way to enhance transparency and inclusion will be shared openly in a welcoming setting.

Sustainability

With both the federal and state legislative and executive branch leaders sponsoring funding proposals tied directly to climate change adaptations there is much to stay on top of. You know these opportunities are "out there" – but now you can learn about how to bring the rewards into your utility operations. Three panel presentations will feature the federal opportunities, the state bond opportunities and the proposed San Diego Regional Conveyance System all poised to address a measure of sustainability.



Conference Reception: Of course we will host a reception with an open bar and tasty reception-type food offerings. You don't want to miss this. Some surprise new leaders are expected, along with the colleagues and cohorts you have nurtured and enjoyed for decades! At the close of the September 8th session at the Westin.

Sustainability (continued)

Sustainability: Federal Proposals

Many practitioners advise to begin the discussion by figuring out where investments can bring measurable changes to achieve sustainable practices and reduce climate change impacts. From the Resources for the Future website in March 2021 comes the graphic below.

2019 US Greenhouse Gas Emissions By Sector



Source: EPA Greenhouse Gas Inventory 2019

RFF

The proposed federal infrastructure bill includes funding to improve drinking water systems by replacing old delivery structures with new, more efficient ones. Enhancing and recreating nature-based infrastructure to operate in sync with built infrastructure takes us a step closer to resiliency. Investments in water systems for the least served communities provides secure water service to all customers within a shared jurisdiction.

Sustainability: State Bond

California is well known for the practice of setting state funding policies through the ballot box. These measures often involve bond funds, which, can spark discussion about debt-based financing and impacts on future generations balanced by meeting immediate needs to prevent even greater future impacts. This year is no exception from recent past California State legislative and voter-approved efforts. One such measure is called the: Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2022.

The legislative language tees up the dialogue pointing out:

“(a) California’s changing climate creates increased risks of catastrophic wildfire, drought, floods, severe heat events, intense rain events, and sea level rise that will impact California’s residents, agriculture, water supply, water quality, and the health of forests, watersheds, fish and wildlife, our biodiversity, and our economy.

(b) Climate change threatens and undermines California’s ability to provide access to clean, safe, and reliable drinking water.



Sustainability (continued)

(c) These risks and impacts vary by region and can overwhelm the resources of local governments and communities that must cope with changing conditions and severe climate change-related events.

(d) Reducing vulnerability to fire, flood, drought, and other climate change-related events, and building the trained workforce needed to accomplish this goal, requires a statewide investment to save lives and increase climate resilience of communities and natural systems.

(e) An integrated statewide investment that prevents wildfires and other natural disasters, reduces near-term climate change risks, and increases long-term resilience to climate change will save local and state agencies and California residents billions of dollars by preventing or reducing the amount of damage that would otherwise occur.

(f) The investment of public funds pursuant to this division will result in public benefits that will address the most critical statewide needs and priorities for public funding while saving local and state agencies billions of dollars."

From wildfires to drinking water to green energy and community infrastructure, the bond is proposed to invest dollars for protection and prevention of devastation. This is an integral part of living in California and these challenges have shed many iconic images and highlighted tragic stories. Listen to the latest and learn about future opportunities for your agency.

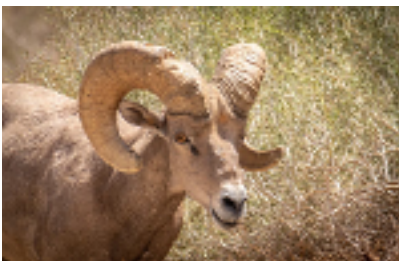
Sustainability: Point / Counter Point On The Proposed San Diego Regional Conveyance System

Sometimes sustainability is defined by the degree to which there is 'local' control. That has been a theme meandering in and around California water policy discussions for decades, sometimes reaching piercing levels of debate and disagreement. Past and current proposals to move water from the north to the south, judicial decisions related to moving water into California from the Colorado River basin, are just a couple of well-known dialogue points of contention.

In February 2021 The San Diego Union-Tribune describes the San Diego Regional Conveyance System project this way:

"The new pipeline would connect San Diego directly to the Imperial Irrigation District, or IID, and its All-American Canal outside of El Centro. Those pushing the project argue that MWD has long overcharged San Diego for delivering water, including supplies the region has purchased from IID.

The idea of building a new pipeline to Imperial Valley just to bypass MWD has enraged environmental groups. They have vowed to block the massive, decade-long construction project, arguing it would needlessly generate new greenhouse-gas emissions, threaten endangered species such as big horned sheep and rip up pristine wilderness landscapes."



A big horn ram (pictured at left) in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (Ernie Cowan) in San Diego Union-Tribune Feb. 5, 2021.

This conference closing panel discussion features a classic UWI brand by highlighting sometimes controversial ideas for transparent and lively discussions of different views and priorities. It will surely be a fitting end to our first return to in-person gatherings! You won't want to miss this event!



Proposed \$5 billion water pipeline routes

The San Diego County Water Authority is exploring ways to import Colorado River water through Imperial Valley. Both possible alignments would require a massive tunneling operation through the Coyote Mountains.



Source: San Diego County Water Authority, Mexican Canal Authority

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