

URBAN WATER INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



Term: Spring | Issue 31 | Date: April, 2023

Water Leaders Delta Water Quality Drill Down

Wayne Clark, founder of Urban Water Institute, was passionate about education, especially related to water. As part of our ongoing education efforts and support of future leaders in the water industry, Urban Water Institute annually sponsors one of the Water Education Foundation's (WEF) applicants. Our sponsorship is provided in Wayne Clark's name and memory.

For the class of 2022, we sponsored Andrea Abergel, Manager of Water Policy for the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA). She represents CMUA's water member agencies on regulatory issues before various California water-related regulatory bodies. Andrea holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, Davis School of Law, and a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Psychology from the University of California, Davis.



Andrea Abergel

Andrea has shared with us the Executive Summary of the final 2022 Water Leaders report presented to the WEF board earlier this year. The group drilled down into water quality matters related to the Bay-Delta with some specific recommendations.

Introduction

The 2022 Water Leaders class was tasked with studying the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Bay-Delta Plan) and preparing policy recommendations that address key challenges identified by the group.

Key challenges to updating the Bay-Delta Plan include knowledge and data gaps; dynamic and unpredictable flows; natural hydrologic variability and climate change; changes to land use; differing opinions on how best to improve water quality; and contention around setting water quality objectives.

Recommendation 1: Process and Planning

Improving the existing Bay-Delta Plan review and update processes is critical to timely evaluation of water quality standards.

The last update to the Bay-Delta Plan occurred in 2006, but the same flow criteria have been in place since 1995. Reducing process and timeline ambiguities will establish accountability for timely updates of the Bay-Delta Plan and give stakeholders a clear opportunity to engage in the process.

Ambiguities can be reduced by increasing transparency in the State Water Board's triennial review, integrating Voluntary Agreements (VAs) into the Bay-Delta Plan update process earlier, and codifying ...*(continued to page two)*



Water Leaders Delta Water Quality Drill Down

(from page one)... update and implementation processes. VAs are enforceable contracts, between parties that hold rights to the water being managed and the State Water Board, to manage water in a beneficial way to achieve certain objectives.

Recommendation 2: Flow Objectives

The goals of the Bay-Delta Plan are best achieved through a mix of flow and non-flow measures that can only be accomplished through VAs. Increasing the collective understanding of how non-flow measures can supplement flow measures to achieve the goals of the Bay-Delta Plan will increase the efficiency of the VA process and facilitate the ultimate implementation of the Bay-Delta Plan. This can be accomplished by integrating non-flow metrics into the State Water Board's technical analyses, developing explicit criteria for substituting non-flow measures for flow measures, and expediting research that advances the understanding of how flow and non-flow measures interact and can be leveraged to achieve the goals of the Bay-Delta Plan.



Recommendation 3: Adaptive Management

Strong implementation of adaptive management is critical to meeting water quality objectives amid uncertainty associated with climate change and ecological responses to management. The Bay-Delta Plan includes monitoring metrics for how well management meets water quality objectives and provides reasonable protection of defined beneficial uses.

However, if monitoring and management is fragmented within implementation, it could lead to lack of synthesis, agreement, or weakened ability to inform management.



To prevent this, adaptive management and how it is implemented needs to be clearly defined, including roles and timelines. It also needs to consistently close the loop from monitoring back to management, and a committee should be established to coordinate monitoring and evaluation across all watersheds.

Recommendation 4: Interested Parties and Tribal Engagement

The Bay-Delta Plan update process is hard to understand and follow. Various interested parties have expressed concerns about access to information and decision-making during the process.

Creating clear opportunities for interested party engagement and enhancing information accessibility will lead to a more equitable Bay-Delta Plan update, such as including Native American tribes through government-to-government consultation.

Ensuring that the data and information necessary are clear and understandable will also ensure essential buy-in with the final update and ultimate implementation of the Bay-Delta Plan.



2022 Water Education Foundation Water Leaders Class

The full report can be found on the Water Education Foundation website at: [Watereducation.org/yearly-class-reports](https://watereducation.org/yearly-class-reports) and select 2022.



SAVE THE DATE!

Urban Water Institute's 30th Annual Water Conference

August 23-25, 2023

Hyatt Regency Mission Bay

1441 Quivira Rd

San Diego, CA 92109

For more information please contact Urban Water
Institute at (949) 679-9676 or stacy@urbanwater.com