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This AWA Water Symposium remains the only nonprofit initiative held annually in our region, exclusively focused on water issues — playing a pivotal role in assisting our county, cities, water providers, and industry/business community.

Through ongoing education, communication, collaboration, and partnerships, AWA creates the forum to ensure the course toward long-term reliability of our vital water resources.

The AWA 34th Annual Water Symposium Presented By Our Title Sponsor



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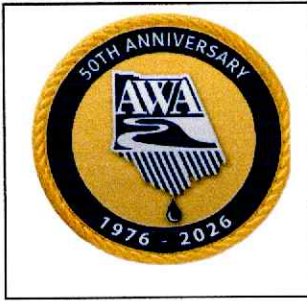
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AWA 34th ANNUAL WATER SYMPOSIUM

DATE: APRIL 16, 2026 | **LOCATION:** HOLIDAY INN – 600 ESPLANADE DR. OXNARD
TIME: 7:30 AM – 1:30 PM

“NAVIGATING WATER’S NEXT ERA: RIGHTS, RESILIENCE, AND THE TECHNOLOGIES SHAPING OUR FUTURE”

- 07:00 AM | **REGISTRATION & MORNING PASTRIES/COFFEE, NETWORKING & EXHIBIT VIEWING**
- 08:00 AM | **OPENING REMARKS/GENERAL WELCOME**
- 08:10 AM | **NEUTRAL SUMMARY ON LOCAL GROUNDWATER CASES**
 - ▶ Speaker: **GREGORY J. PATTERSON**, Partner - Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP
- 08:20 AM | **PANEL: THE GROUNDWATER PLAYBOOK: What Other Agencies Have Learned About Rights, Governance, and Long-Term Planning**
 - ▶ Speakers:
KELLY GARDNER, Executive Officer - Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster
MATT KNUDSON, General Manager - Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency
MEHUL V. PATEL, P.E., BCEE, Executive Director of Operations - Orange County Water District
 - ▶ Moderator: **ROBERT HAMPSON**, Hydrologist - Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency
- 09:30 AM | **THE ECONOMICS OF SCARCITY**

The fiscal reality of water affordability over the next three decades.

 - ▶ Speaker: **DUNCAN MACEWAN, PHD**, Principal Economist - ERA Economics, LLC
- 10:00 AM | **AI AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES SHOWCASE**

Emerging technologies to support agencies’ efforts in preparing for the future.

 - ▶ **Speakers:**
DR. NHUT TAN HO, Founding Director - NASA Autonomy Research Center (ARCS), and Professor - California State University Northridge: AI for Workforce Development
CHRISTOPHER TULL, Principal Data Engineer, Moulton Niguel Water District and Chief Data Officer - California Data Collaborative
ANTHONY OCCHIPINTI, Division Chief, - Ventura County Fire Department
Emerging Technologies for emergency prevention and response.
 - ▶ **Host:** **IAN PRICHARD**, Deputy General Manager, Calleguas Municipal Water District
- 11:30 PM – 12:00 PM | **BREAK | VISIT EXHIBITS (Ballroom Closed)**
- 12:00 PM | **LUNCHEON**
- 12:10 PM | **AWARDS and SPECIAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - The Annual John Flynn Water Award (Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency Presents)**
 - The Annual Richard V. Laubacher Water Award (United Water Conservation District Presents)**
 - Special AWA 50th Anniversary Presentation**
- 1:00 PM | **CLOSING KEYNOTE: METROPOLITAN’S STRATEGIC PIVOT**

The future of imported water supply and the workforce required to manage it.

 - ▶ Speaker: **SHIVAJI DESHMUKH**, General Manager, Metropolitan Water District
- 1:30 PM | **50th ANNIVERSARY DOOR PRIZE GIVEAWAY | ADJOURN**

Note: All session times are approximate and may vary.



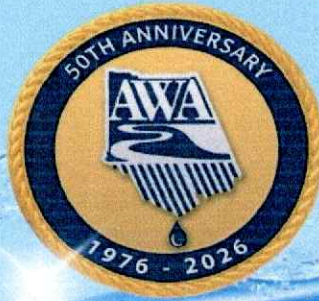
34TH ANNUAL WATER SYMPOSIUM

PRESENTED BY



United Water
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

"NAVIGATING WATER'S NEXT ERA: RIGHTS, RESILIENCE, AND THE TECHNOLOGIES SHAPING OUR FUTURE"



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!

AWARD
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SPEAKERS

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LUNCHEON

INDUSTRY
EXPOSITIONS

APRIL

16

2026

07.30 AM - 1:30 PM

Holiday Inn - 600 E. Esplanade Dr. Oxnard 93036

Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County
awavc.net awa@awavc.org 805.644.0922

**CELEBRATING AWA
50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY**



AWA 34th Annual Water Symposium

Welcome From The AWA Symposium Chairs



GREGORY J. PATTERSON, AWA PRESIDENT
Partner – Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP



SCOTT D. MECKSTROTH, PE
General Manager – Ojai Valley Sanitary District

Thank you 2026 Symposium Planning Committee

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AWA Water Systems Committee Chair
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NEUTRAL SUMMARY ON LOCAL GROUNDWATER CASES



GREGORY J. PATTERSON
Partner – Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

g.patterson@musickpeeler.com

Greg Patterson is a member of the Water Law, Environmental, Land & Resources, Litigation and White Collar & Government Investigations Practice Groups. Mr. Patterson is now in his 32nd year of practice. Over the years, he has represented both public and private sector clients at both the federal and state levels on matters involving virtually all federal and state environmental and land use laws and regulations. Mr. Patterson's current practice can best be described as providing experienced and knowledgeable general counsel on issues related to state and federal environmental, water and land use law for both public and private entities.

At the federal level, Mr. Patterson has extensive experience representing clients under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

At the state and local level, Mr. Patterson represents clients involving California's Hazardous Substances Control Act, the Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act, California's Clean Air Act, Fish and Game Code Act, California Environmental Quality Act, and Proposition 65. He has represented parties in numerous matters before the State Water Board, the Regional Water Quality Control Boards, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Department of Health Services, and the Air Quality Control Districts on various administrative, civil and criminal enforcement actions.

Mr. Patterson is experienced in handling complex environmental issues encompassing:

- Representing water rights holders involved with adjudication of water rights under the umbrella of the recently enacted Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
- Acting as general counsel to public and private water entities
- Environmental litigation cost recovery actions at the state and federal levels



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

PANEL: THE GROUNDWATER PLAYBOOK

What Other Agencies Have Learned About Rights, Governance, and Long-Term Planning.



– Panel Moderator–

ROBERT HAMPSON, PG

**Hydrologist - Fox Canyon Groundwater
Management Agency (FCGMA)**

robert.hampson@venturacounty.gov

Rob is a hydrologist with the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency and a registered Professional Geologist with over a decade of experience in water resource management. His work spans a range of complex groundwater and surface water systems across Colorado, Nevada, and California, including both adjudicated basins and those that have successfully avoided legal conflict through collaborative management. Rob focuses on practical, science-based solutions that bring stakeholders together, with a particular interest in finding clarity and even opportunity within technically challenging water issues.

-Panelist-



KELLY GARDNER

Executive Officer

**Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster
Raymond Basin Management Board**

Watermaster.org

As Executive Officer for the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster and the Raymond Basin Management Board, Mrs. Kelly Gardner oversees groundwater quality and supply management activities as well as administration of the Basin's groundwater adjudication. She directs staff functions associated with basin management as it directly relates to groundwater production, well construction, groundwater treatment and resource planning. A mission is to support the more than two million residents and businesses in the San Gabriel Valley who depend on these vital resources.

-Cont'd.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES **GROUNDWATER PANEL**

AWA 34th Annual Water Symposium – April 16, 2026

KELLY GARDNER, Cont'd.

As a water industry leader, she is committed and focused on advancing water resource management efforts to ensure groundwater producers and basin stakeholders have access to a reliable and sustainable water supply.

Mrs. Gardner was appointed to the position of Executive Officer for the Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster in March 2025 and for the Raymond Basin Management Board in January 2023. She previously held the position of Assistant Executive Officer for both agencies from 2012 to 2025. Including her time with Watermaster, Mrs. Gardner has more than thirty-five years of water management and resource planning experience in the San Gabriel Valley with a local Municipality.

She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Organizational Leadership and is certified by the State of California as a Water Treatment Operator and Water Distribution Operator.

-Panelist-



MATT KNUDSON

General Manager

**Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency
(AVEK)**

mknudson@avek.org

Matthew Knudson serves as the General Manager of the Antelope Valley–East Kern Water Agency (AVEK), providing executive leadership for the third-largest State Water Project contractor. In this role, he oversees strategic planning, operations, and long-term water resource management to ensure reliable and sustainable imported water deliveries within AVEK's 2,400 square mile service area which encompasses various communities throughout the Antelope Valley and eastern Kern County.

AVEK plays a key role in regional groundwater management through its participation in, and administration of, the Antelope Valley Watermaster, supporting compliance with the judgment and physical solution requirements. AVEK is also actively engaged in water banking initiatives that improve long-term water reliability by storing surplus State Water Project supplies for use during droughts and emergency conditions.

With 35 years of experience serving in various positions for public water agencies, Mr. Knudson brings practical insight into the challenges facing water agencies today, including infrastructure, regulatory compliance, regional collaboration, groundwater sustainability, and drought resilience.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES GROUNDWATER PANEL

-Panelist-



MEHUL V. PATEL, P.E., BCEE **Executive Director of Operations** **Orange County Water District (OCWD)**

mpatel@ocwd.com, www.ocwd.com

Mehul Patel has been with the Orange County Water District (OCWD) for 30 years. He is currently the Executive Director of Operations for OCWD. Mehul manages all district operations including: groundwater

recharge, Prado constructed wetlands, Green Acres Project non-potable reuse treatment facilities, and the 130 mgd GWRs Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF). Previously he worked as a process engineer assisting in troubleshooting for operation of OCWD's Water Factory 21 facility. Mehul has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the California State Polytechnic University Pomona and M.S. in Civil Engineering from the California State University Long Beach. Mehul is a registered professional engineer in California, a licensed Grade 2 Water Treatment Operator, a licensed Grade 3 Wastewater Treatment Operator, and a board-certified environmental engineer (BCEE). He is also past president of both the American Membrane Technology Association and the Southwest Membrane Operator Association.



THE ECONOMICS OF SCARCITY **The fiscal reality of water affordability over the next three decades.**

DUNCAN MAC EWAN, PH.D.
Managing Partner / Principal Economist
ERA Economics

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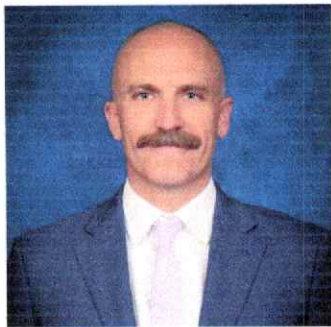
Duncan MacEwan is an economist specializing in water resources and agriculture. In 2013, he co-founded ERA Economics to provide data-driven analysis for water management and agricultural policy. He provides expert analysis and testimony for public agencies and private clients, working with water managers on policy and planning and with agricultural businesses on regulatory and market challenges. Duncan leads a team at ERA Economics that supports a wide range of clients with economic analysis, financial analysis, policy evaluation, and strategic planning across water and agricultural systems.



SHOWCASE: A.I. AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

How new technology can support agencies' efforts in preparing for the future.

-Showcase Host-



IAN PRICHARD
Deputy General Manager
Calleguas Municipal Water District

www.calleguas.com

Since his arrival to Calleguas in 2023, Ian has focused on cross-departmental collaboration to implement the District's "New Model for Resilience," the Board's

vision of a more interconnected future that forms the backbone of the District's 2023 Strategic Plan.

As Deputy General Manager, Ian oversees External Affairs, Information Technology, Operations & Maintenance, and Water Resources. With over a decade of experience in groundwater development, treatment, and litigation, Ian serves as the District's groundwater policy lead.

Prior to coming to Calleguas, Ian spent 12 years at Camrosa Water District, where he wrote Facilities Master Plans and Urban Water Management Plans, helped set up the Arroyo Santa Rosa Groundwater Sustainability Agency, and oversaw the Operations & Maintenance and Regulatory Compliance departments.

Ian has participated in Department of Water Resources and State Water Resources Control Board working groups related to the 2014-17 and 2020-23 droughts, Urban Water Management Plans, Low-Income Rate Assistance, Recycled Water Policy, Conservation as a California Way of Life, water loss, groundwater contamination, and the implementation of TNI standards for laboratories.

Ian was educated at the University of Virginia, where he received an MA/BA in English literature, and Chapman University, where he completed an MFA in creative writing.

-Speaker-



DR. NHUT HO
Professor at California State University, Northridge
Director of the Autonomy Research Center for
ARCS

nhut.ho.51@csun.edu

Dr. Nhut Ho is the Founder and Director of the Autonomy Research Center STEAHM (ARCS), a NASA-sponsored center advancing artificial intelligence, autonomy, and workforce development across science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, arts, humanities, and mathematics (STEAHM).

-Cont'd.



A.I. SHOWCASE

DR. NHUT HO, Cont'd.

Dr. Ho earned his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He leads ARCS' mission to bridge academia, industry, and government to develop practical, scalable solutions for complex infrastructure challenges, with a strong emphasis on AI workforce development. His work focuses on preparing the next-generation workforce to design, deploy, and manage AI-driven and increasingly autonomous systems across critical sectors—including water, energy, and public safety.

Through partnerships with organizations such as NASA, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and regional agencies, he develops applied training programs that address urgent workforce gaps facing water agencies—including operator shortages, retirements, evolving regulatory requirements, and the growing need for data and AI literacy. His approach integrates hands-on learning, real-world deployment, and human-centered design to help agencies upskill existing staff while building new talent pipelines.

At the AWA Symposium, he will share practical strategies for how AI workforce development can help water agencies retain institutional knowledge, modernize operations, improve decision-making, and build a resilient workforce prepared for the next era of water management.

-Speaker-



CHRISTOPHER TULL

Principal Data Engineer – Moulton Niguel Water District

Chief Data Officer – California Data Collaborative

chris@thecadc.org

Christopher Tull is the Principal Data Engineer for the Moulton Niguel Water District which provides high-quality drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to over 170,000 customers in Southern California. It is known for its commitment to conservation and maintaining low water and sewer bills in the region. He also serves as the Chief Data Officer at the California Data Collaborative, a nonprofit coalition of water supply agencies building community and technology to enable data-informed decisions for a sustainable water future.



A.I. SHOWCASE

-Speaker-



TONY OCCHIPINTI

Division Chief

Emergency Services Bureau

Ventura County Fire Department

Anthony.Occhipinti@venturacounty.gov

Tony Occhipinti is a Division Chief with the Ventura County Fire Department. Over the course of his career, he has held a range of operational and leadership roles, including Firefighter Paramedic, Engineer, Captain, Hand Crew Superintendent, and Battalion Chief in the Wildland and Aviation Division. Chief Occhipinti brings extensive experience in wildland fire operations, vegetation management, prescribed fire, and incident management. He has contributed to the advancement of strategies that integrate prevention, suppression, and large-scale incident coordination, supporting the department's evolving approach to wildfire resilience.

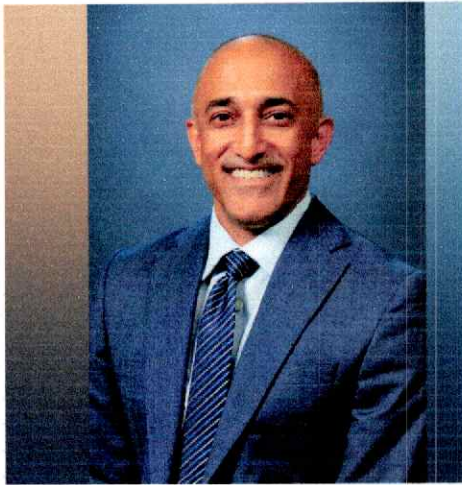
In addition to his operational background, Chief Occhipinti has been actively involved in advancing emerging technologies within the fire service. He previously served as Chair of the FIRESCOPE Emerging Incident Technology Subcommittee, where he helped guide the evaluation and implementation of innovative tools to enhance incident management capabilities across California.

He is a member of Federal Complex Interagency Incident Management Team 5, contributing to national-level, all-hazard incident response and coordination. Chief Occhipinti holds a bachelor's degree in Communication and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration.



-Water Symposium Keynote Speaker-

**THE FUTURE OF IMPORTED WATER SUPPLY AND
THE WORKFORCE REQUIRED TO MANAGE IT.**



SHIVAJI DESHMUKH

General Manager

**Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California**

www.mwdh2o.com

Shivaji Deshmukh became the general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California on Jan. 1, 2026.

Deshmukh came to the district from the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, one of Metropolitan's 26 member agencies, where he was general manager for six years. Before that, he served as assistant general manager at West Basin Municipal Water District and as program manager at Orange County Water District, where he oversaw the design, construction and operation of one of the state's first and largest recycled water projects, the Groundwater Replenishment System in Orange County.

Deshmukh is president-elect of the WaterReuse California Board of Trustees and serves on the US Water Alliance Board of Directors. Deshmukh holds bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from UCLA.
