PARTICIPANTS

Curt Aikens has been the general manager of the Yuba Water Agency since 2001. The two core missions of the agency are flood risk reduction and water supply reliability for Yuba County. He manages reservoir and power operations through innovative programs for flood protection, water supply, power generation, environmental benefit, and dam safety. Aikens oversees agricultural water supply for 60,000 acres, groundwater sustainability for 80 percent of the county’s population, and a pilot forest fuel load reduction program to improve water supply and forest health. Key team accomplishments include the Yuba Accord, and $450 million in urban levee investments with Yuba County being on track for the state-required 200 year level of protection by 2025. Aikens holds an MBA in business and a BS in mechanical engineering from Golden Gate University.

Ashley Boren is executive director of Sustainable Conservation, a nonprofit that brings together business, landowners, government, and other stakeholders to steward the natural resources that we all depend on in ways that make economic sense. Current initiatives include promoting groundwater recharge, developing metrics to increase water and fertilizer efficiency in agriculture, manure management practices on dairies that protect water quality and reduce greenhouse gases, and programmatic permits to accelerate critical habitat restoration. She serves on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture and the University of California President’s Advisory Commission for the Division Agriculture and Natural Resources. She holds an MBA and an MA in applied economics and a BA in human biology from Stanford University.

Caitrin Chappelle is the associate director of the PPIC Water Policy Center, where she manages research and operations. Her own research focuses on natural resource management and California water policy. She has co-authored work on the statewide drought, funding gaps in water management, and multiple ecosystem stressors in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. Previously, she worked for the US Geological Survey. She holds an MPP from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley and a BS in ecology from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Dan Dunmoyer serves as the president and CEO of the California Building Industry Association (CBIA). He brings a wealth of experience in both the public and private sector. He is strongly committed to ensuring that the organization leads efforts to ensure home ownership is attainable for all Californians. Prior to joining the CBIA, he had various legislative caucus staff leadership and policy committee roles in the California State Assembly, starting as a fellow in the Jesse Unruh Fellowship program. He was president and CEO of the Personal Insurance Federation of California from 1996–2005. He served as deputy chief of staff and cabinet secretary for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger from 2006–08, overseeing all state agencies for the governor. He brings this experience to the PPIC Water Policy Center Advisory Council. Most recently he served as senior vice president and head of government affairs for Zurich and Farmers Insurance companies. He is chair of the board of overseers of the RAND Institute for Civil Justice, chair of the advisory committee of the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, and a former board member for CalPERS. He holds an MA in public administration and a BA in political science from USC.

E. Joaquin Esquivel was appointed to the State Water Resources Control Board by Governor Jerry Brown in March 2017. Previously, he served as assistant secretary for federal water policy at the California Natural Resources Agency in the governor’s Washington, DC office, where he facilitated the development of policy priorities between the agency, the Governor’s Office, the California congressional delegation, and federal stakeholder agencies. For more than eight years prior to that he worked for US Senator Barbara Boxer of California, most recently as her legislative assistant covering the agriculture, Native American, water, oceans, and nutrition portfolios, in addition to being the director of information and technology. He brings this experience to the PPIC Water Policy Center Advisory Council. He was born and raised in California’s Coachella Valley. He holds a BA in English from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Denise Fairchild is the president of Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC), a national nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, with affiliates in major urban centers across the United States. She is charged with advancing ECC’s mission to green US cities, build resilient local economies, and ensure equity inclusion in both the process and outcomes of a new green and healthy economy. She has a 40-year track record of developing
innovative programs in sustainable and community economic development, domestically and internationally. Her civic and political appointments have included the California Commission on Regionalism, the California Economic Strategy Panel, the California Local Economic Development Association, the Urban Land Institute National Inner City Advisor, the Coalition for Women’s Economic Development, and the Los Angeles Environmental Quality Board. She also served as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s special advisor for South LA investments. She holds a doctorate in urban planning from UCLA, a master’s in city planning from the University of Pennsylvania, and a BA from Fisk University.

Robyn Grimm is a senior manager in water information systems for Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Her work at EDF is primarily focused on filling critical water information gaps to enable more sustainable land and water management practices across the western United States. Currently, she is working with partners at NASA, the Desert Research Institute, and Google Earth Engine to create an open platform for estimating consumptive water use. Prior to joining EDF she worked at the consulting firm CH2M-Hill, where she was a water resources policy analyst and advised the State Department of Water Resources on flood planning. She holds a PhD in hydrologic sciences and an MA in physical geography from the University of California, Davis, and a BA in economics and political science from UCLA.

Ellen Hanak is director of the PPIC Water Policy Center and a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where she holds the Ellen Hanak Chair in Water Policy. Under her leadership, the center has become a critical source of information and guidance for natural resource management in California. She has authored dozens of reports, articles, and books on water policy, including Managing California’s Water. Her research is frequently profiled in the national media, and she participates in briefings, conferences, and interviews throughout the nation and around the world. Her other areas of expertise include climate change and infrastructure finance. Previously, she served as research director at PPIC. Before joining PPIC, she held positions with the French agricultural research system, the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, and the World Bank. She holds a PhD in economics from the University of Maryland.

A.G. Kawamura is a third generation fruit and vegetable grower and shipper from Orange County. He was secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture from 2003–10. He is co-chair of Solutions From the Land, a non-profit organization that collaborates with farmers, ranchers, foresters and stakeholders to implement climate-smart land management practices and strategies. He currently serves on several boards and committees, including American Farmland Trust, CSU’s Agricultural Research Institute, Southern California Water Committee, WaterReuse California, and the Agricultural Advisory Committee for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He is a former chair and current board member of Western Growers Association. As a progressive urban farmer, he has a lifetime of experience working within the shrinking rural and urban boundaries of Southern California.

David Mitchell is an adjunct fellow at the PPIC Water Policy Center and a consulting economist with the firm M.Cubed. His practice areas include benefit-cost analysis, regional economic impact assessment, utility rate setting, natural resource valuation, water demand forecasting, and water conservation program evaluation and planning. He has more than 25 years of experience using statistical and economic methods and models to help guide water resources management and investment decision-making. He served as the director of research for the California Urban Water Conservation Council for 15 years. During his tenure with the CUWCC he had a direct hand in shaping many of the policies and technical publications used today to guide urban water conservation programs.

Jeff Mount is a senior fellow at the PPIC Water Policy Center. He is an emeritus professor at UC Davis in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and founding director of the Center for Watershed Sciences. A geomorphologist who specializes in the study of rivers, streams, and wetlands, his research focuses on integrated water resource management, flood management, and improving aquatic ecosystem health. He has served on many state and federal boards and commissions that address water resource management issues in the West. He has published more than a hundred articles, books, and other publications, including the seminal book California Rivers and Streams (UC Press). He holds a PhD and MS in earth sciences from the University of California, Santa Cruz.
Lorelei Oviatt is director of the Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department. She has worked in both the public and private sector on land development. Her years of professional planning experience focuses on project management of large scale, multiagency planning, moving extremely complex projects through the system under accelerated timeframes to streamline business permitting and support quality of life for communities. She is a member of the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Certified Planners, American Society for Public Administration, and past president of the California County Planning Directors Association. She holds a master’s of public administration from California State University, Bakersfield, where she is lecturer on public policy topics.

Cheree Peterson is programs director of the US Army Corps of Engineers’ South Pacific Division (SPD). She works with a diverse array of customers from the Air Force, Army Material Command, state governments, and other federal agencies to deliver critical military infrastructure, reduce flood risk, and improve aging medical facilities for veterans. She began her career at the US Office of Management and Budget, where she specialized in environmental restoration, the Everglades, rivers and harbors maintenance, and the regulatory program. She oversees the Joint Federal Project at Folsom, and the Lake Isabella Dam Safety Project. She holds a master’s in public administration from the University of Washington.

Jason Phillips is the chief executive officer of the Friant Water Authority. He oversees all activity conducted by the authority on behalf of its member agencies and represents the public face of the organization. Prior to joining Friant Water Authority in 2016, he worked for 15 years for the Bureau of Reclamation’s Mid-Pacific Region. His experience at Reclamation included deputy regional director, area manager of the bureau's Klamath Basin area office, and manager of several complex programs in the region, including the San Joaquin River restoration program, Upper San Joaquin River Basin Storage Investigation (the federal Temperance Flat study), and the San Luis Drainage Feature Re-evaluation. Before this he was a project planner for the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Sacramento District, where he worked on flood control and ecosystem restoration projects. He holds a BS in civil engineering from Portland State University.

Jennifer Pierre is the general manager of the State Water Contractors (SWC), where she oversees implementation of the organization’s objectives and overall operations. She and her staff work to provide technical, legal, and scientific support to SWC members to ensure a sustainable water supply from the State Water Project. She has more than 15 years of experience on Delta management. She leads SWC’s participation in guiding and developing the framework for the state’s management of water supply and ecological issues within the Delta. Additionally, she manages coordination with the California Department of Water Resources regarding statewide water supply management, and the programs, policies, and regulations affecting the State Water Project. She holds a BS in environmental biology and management from the University of California, Davis.

Halla Razak is general manager of the Inland Empire Utilities Agency. She has more than 30 years of public service experience, and has worked with the City of San Diego, City of El Cajon and the San Diego County Water Authority. Prior to joining Inland Empire in 2017, she served for four years as the director of the Public Utilities Department at the City of San Diego, where she oversaw more than 1,650 employees and a budget of $864 million. Under her leadership, the Public Utilities Department initiated Pure Water San Diego, which will utilize water purification technology to clean recycled water and produce a third of the city’s drinking water by 2035.