

DRAFT AGENDA

CFEE Conference on California Water

Plumbing the Future... Fulfilling Our Vision of a Resilient Water System

February 4-5, 2021

With the final draft of the Water Resilience Portfolio, the Newsom Administration laid out its bold plan to set California's water system on the path to resiliency for the coming years and decades. At the same time, the California Senate and Assembly continue to hatch their own ideas on infrastructure enhancement, water supply diversification, ecosystem vitality, and the security of clean, affordable drinking water. What comes next for everyone is the hard part – reconciling our complementary, and sometimes competing, visions of resiliency and translating them into a functioning reality. What will it take to get it done?

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4th

11:30 – 12:45 pm

Arrivals & Check-In – Buffet Lunch

12:45 – 1:00 pm

Welcome – Conference Overview and Roundtable Introductions

- Preview of conference topics, speakers, and goals

Jay Hansen, President & CEO, CFEE

1:00 – 2:20 pm

Session 1

Checking the Meter – An Update On Our Political and Economic Landscape

After a year unlike any other, it's time to evaluate the political and economic context for 2021. Our first panel will provide an update on key dynamics shaping water policy and what it means for our ambitious plans to invest in the resiliency of our water system.

- What are the thorny political issues that will shape California water policy discussions in the coming months and year?
- What might we expect from the federal-state relationship going forward?
- Is the federal government providing any pandemic-recovery stimulus packages that will benefit California water systems?
- How have state and local coffers been affected by the pandemic? What does it imply for our ability to invest and operate our system in the short and medium term?

Speaker, Ag

Speaker, Academic/NGO

Roundtable Discussion

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| 2:20 – 2:30 pm | Break |
| 2:30 – 4:00 pm | Session 2 Dollars and Sense: The Costs of COVID and Quest to Maintain Affordability |

Even before the pandemic triggered the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression, the affordability of our water system investments and essential utility services was a top of mind consideration for policymakers, agencies, and communities. Now, with declining public revenues and millions of California households feeling the economic crunch, the challenge of re-investing in our water system without cost-burdening the public and ratepayers has intensified in scope and complexity. Add in the growing need for cleaner systems with heightened pollution controls, how can we smartly pay for large, systemwide improvements while containing costs and keeping rates low?

- How can the state help to leverage funds to invest in storage, conveyance, and ecosystem stabilization?
- What investments can we make today to offset or avert costs tomorrow?
- During the first months of the pandemic, utilities suspended service disconnections for non-payment of bills – do we know how much money must still be collected?
- During the period of payment forbearance, what was learned about consumer behavior, and who was paying or not paying?
- With Proposition 218 constraining what costs can be passed onto customers, what options can local agencies consider to develop funding streams to invest in and operate the water system?
- What about waste management and recycling? Why is this basic utility bill projected to increase significantly and further saddle the average household with rising expenses?

Kate Gordon, Director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research

***Eric Sandler**, Chief Financial Officer, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Speaker, San Diego Public Utilities Commission

***Doug Kobold**, Executive Director, California Product Stewardship Council

Roundtable Discussion

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| 4:00 – 4:10 pm | Break |
| 4:10 – 5:30 pm | Session 3 Keeping Our Ear to the Ground: Where Do We Stand on SGMA? |

Any road to resiliency will require the sustainable management of California’s groundwater resources. And after several years of implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), newly formed Groundwater Sustainability Agencies have begun to deploy their plans to manage medium and high-priority basins. What have locals learned as they operationalize groundwater management regimes, and what more must be done to set us on the path to sustainability?

- What additional surface storage and conveyance might we need to enable aquifer recharge on the scale needed to bring our systems into balance?
- What progress have we made in integrating surface and groundwater management?
- How might strategic flooding of crops and natural floodplains be incorporated into basin management?
- What data and science-driven decisions are guiding groundwater management?
- What challenges remain in SGMA implementation that new legislation can help to address?

***Taryn Ravazzini**, Deputy Director of Statewide Groundwater Management,
California Department of Water Resources

Eric Averett, General Manager, Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District

***Ann Hayden**, Senior Director, CA Habitat Exchange & Western Water,
Environmental Defense Fund

Speaker, Environmental Justice

Roundtable Discussion

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| 6:00 pm | Reception and Dinner |
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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

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| 7:30 – 8:30 am | Buffet Breakfast |
| 8:30 – 10:00 am | Session 4 Fighting Fire with Fire: Controlled Burns, Watershed Management, and Big Science for the 21st Century |

As California forests, grasslands, and communities continue to be scorched by devastating wildfires, our attention must shift to our watersheds where many of these conflagrations begin. Dead, dry, and bunched trees and plants are not only readymade kindling for megafires, but also impediments to the health of our ecosystems and water supply. What more must be done in our forested spaces to reduce the risk of wildfire and improve the condition of our watersheds?

- Who is responsible for managing California’s 33 million acres of forestland?
- How can the mix of federal, state, local, and private forest owners coordinate with one another to develop a strategy to mitigate fire risks by restoring and maintaining healthier watersheds?
- Do we have a plan to do more controlled burns in at-risk areas? What additional regulatory streamlining can be accommodated to support these efforts?
- What rural economic development opportunities can be generated from a more concerted watershed management strategy?

***Thom Porter**, Chief, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

***Angela Avery**, Executive Officer, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

***Jay Ziegler**, Director of External Affairs and Policy, The Nature Conservancy

Roundtable Discussion

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| 10:00 – 10:15 am | Break |
| 10:15– 11:45 am | Session 5 Where Regulations Collide – How Do We Harmonize Inter-Agency Workflow? |

California has a proud track record of prioritizing public welfare and environmental stewardship, a commitment requiring thoughtful rules and well-staffed agencies to execute our ambitious plans. However, with a hearty bureaucracy comes the potential for disharmony between different state agencies as each work to deliver

considered but sometimes conflicting objectives. What steps can be taken to better align overlapping rules, agency priorities, and regulatory processes as we work to enhance the resiliency of our water system?

- How are agencies already collaborating with each other to implement the Water Resilience Portfolio?
- How do we reconcile air, land use, and water regulations when one regulatory domain urges an action that others inhibit?
- What type of projects will we need in the coming years, and what can be done to streamline their approval?
- How can the legislature play a role in facilitating project development and program success?

Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, California Environmental Protection Agency

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

***Paul Townsley**, VP Regulatory Matters & Corporate Relations, California Water Service Group

Roundtable Discussion

11:45 – 12:00 pm

Summary, Next Steps, and Adjournment

Jay Hansen, President & CEO, CFEE

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