DATA FOR LUNCH PANEL SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

E. Joaquin Esquivel  
Chair, State Water Resources Control Board

E. Joaquin Esquivel was appointed to the State Water Resources Control Board by Governor Jerry Brown in March 2017, designated by Governor Gavin Newsom as Chair in February 2019, and reappointed to the board by Governor Newsom in 2021. Previously, he served as Assistant Secretary for federal water policy at the California Natural Resources Agency in the Governor’s Washington, D.C. 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, Joaquin worked for U.S. 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 was born and raised in California’s Coachella Valley. He holds a BA from the University of California, Santa Barbara in English.

Laurel Larsen  
Delta Lead Scientist, U.S. Geological Survey and Associate Professor, UC Berkeley

Dr. Laurel Larsen is an Associate Professor at UC Berkeley with appointments in the Departments of Geography and Civil and Environmental Engineering and a Senior Fellow at the Berkeley Institute for Data Science. For 2020-2024, she is serving a term as the Delta Lead Scientist, a US Geological Survey position housed within the Delta Stewardship Council in Sacramento, CA. The Delta Science Program, which Dr. Larsen leads, is tasked with the mission of providing the best possible unbiased scientific information for management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for the “coequal goals” of ensuring a reliable water supply while protecting, enhancing, and restoring Delta ecosystems. Dr. Larsen also leads the Environmental Systems Dynamics Laboratory at Berkeley, which is tackling challenges of streamflow forecasting and teasing out understanding of how physics, biology, and human systems interact to influence conservation and restoration objectives. Her research has focused on the Everglades, Chesapeake Bay, and coastal Louisiana, as well as California ecosystems. Dr. Larsen has a bachelor’s degree from Washington University in St. Louis, with dual majors in Systems Science and Mathematics and Environmental Studies, a master’s degree from Washington University in Earth and Planetary Sciences, and a PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder in Civil and Environmental Engineering.
Karla Nemeth
Director, California Department of Water Resources

Karla Nemeth was appointed Director of the California Department of Water Resources by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. on January 10, 2018 and was reappointed by Governor Gavin Newsom on June 28, 2019.

DWR operates and maintains the California State Water Project, manages floodwaters, monitors dam safety, conducts habitat restoration, and provides technical assistance and funding for projects for local water needs. Nemeth oversees the Department and its mission to manage and protect California’s water resources, working with other agencies in order to benefit the State’s people and to protect, restore and enhance the natural and human environments.

Nemeth worked at the California Natural Resources Agency as Governor Brown’s deputy secretary and senior advisor for water policy since 2014. She was Bay Delta Conservation Plan project manager from 2009 to 2014.

Nemeth was environmental and public affairs director for the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District from 2005 to 2009. She was community affairs manager at Jones and Stokes from 2003 to 2005.

She has a Master’s degree in public administration from the University of Washington.

Deven Upadhyay (moderator)
Executive Officer and Assistant General Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Deven Upadhyay is the Executive Officer and Assistant General Manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. He is responsible for managing the operational business functions of the district, which include system operations, engineering, planning and water resources management. Among his primary duties is to implement the Chief Executive Officer’s business plan and initiatives as well as to oversee the application and operational practice of the Metropolitan Board’s policies and directives.

Upadhyay began his career with Metropolitan in 1995 as a resource specialist in the Planning and Resources Division. In 2005 he left Metropolitan to work for the Municipal Water District of Orange County on water policy issues. In 2008, he returned to Metropolitan as the budget and financial planning section manager before becoming group manager for Water Resources Management in 2010. Upadhyay earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from California State University, Fullerton and a master’s degree in public administration from the University of La Verne.