California Water Data Consortium

Summer Roundtable | Putting Water Data to Work: Maximizing the Climate Bond's Impact

Speaker Profiles

Welcome and Framing | 9:30 – 9:50 a.m.

Senator Bill Dodd (ret.) spent 25 years in public service, including two terms as representing California's 3rd Senate District spanning the North Bay to the Delta. The fifth-generation Californian grew up on his family's small Napa farm and was a successful business owner before being elected to the Napa County Board of Supervisors, the state Assembly and the state Senate. During his tenure, he has established himself as the most prolific lawmaker in the Legislature, authoring 126 bills that were signed into law. Sen. Dodd's work has spanned many topics – from generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) to water and the environment to data privacy, insurance reform and wildfire prevention. He is the author of the California Water Data Act and established himself as a leader in water policy issues. Since leaving elected office at the end of 2024, Senator Dodd founded Dodd and Chaaban Strategies LLC, a government and public relations firm.

Meredith Lee is the Head of Strategic Partnerships and Chief Technical Advisor to the Dean at the UC Berkeley College of Computing, Data Science, and Society—the first new college established at Berkeley in 50+ years. She has partnered broadly to develop initiatives for research, education, and public service, including the UCSF-UC Berkeley Joint Program in Computational Precision Health, the Joint California Summit on Generative AI, and a globally recognized effort focused on open-source technologies and infrastructure. During the Obama Administration, Dr. Lee led the White House Innovation for Disaster Response & Recovery Initiative and managed strategic investments in data visualization, risk assessment, machine learning, and distributed computing. She was the Founding Executive Director of a National Science Foundation Data Innovation Hub, where her team launched public-private partnerships including the California Water Data Challenge. Meredith holds a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Stanford and is a two-term California Senate appointee to the statewide Cradle-to-Career Governing Board, a National Leadership Council member of the Society for Science, and the Chair of the California Water Data Consortium Board of Directors.

Better Data, Better Decisions: Local and Regional Tools for a Resilient Water Future | 9:50 – 10: 50 a.m.

Eric Averett is CEO of Atlas Water and has been an adjunct professor at Taft College and Bakersfield College for 20 years. Before joining Atlas Water, he was general manager of the Rosedale–Rio Bravo Water Storage District for over 14 years. He has been involved in evaluating and resolving water supply and quality challenges facing Kern County since 1991. He sits on the board of directors of the Kern County Water Agency. Eric graduated from California State University, Bakersfield with a degree in environmental resource management.

Darcy Austin has been working on San Francisco Bay-Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers Delta (Bay-Delta) issues for 20+ years, combining her background in contaminants with a love for California water issues and an appreciation of the nexus between ecology and water supply. Darcy holds a BS in Biology with an emphasis in Microbiology and Parasitology from Colorado State University, and a Master of Public Health with an emphasis in Environmental Health and Toxicology from San Diego State University. She has spent most of her career working on systems and processes that apply best science practices to management issues throughout California. Since coming to work for the State Water Contractors (SWC) in 2018, Darcy has overseen the funding of over $15m for research projects focused on filling knowledge gaps in the Bay-Delta system and the watersheds. This investment in research seeks to reduce uncertainties around how an estuarine ecosystem can thrive while also serving as water supply for 27 million Californians and irrigation supply for over 750,000 acres of farmland. Outside the office Darcy still enjoys spending time with her two sons, teaching yoga, gardening, and traveling.

Matt Beaman is the Groundwater Regulatory Manager at Merced Irrigation District (MID), where he oversees SGMA compliance and leads groundwater sustainability initiatives. He manages the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MIUGSA) and represents MID in regional groundwater resource matters. Matt focuses on developing and implementing data-driven strategies for long-term groundwater sustainability, emphasizing local engagement and effective resource management.

Aaron Fukuda was born and raised in Hanford, California. Mr. Fukuda graduated from Hanford High in 1995 and continued his education at the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Mr. Fukuda obtained his Bachelor of Science, cum laude in Civil Engineering from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, in 2000. After college, he began working for Summers Engineering, Inc. in Hanford, where he spent six years as an associate engineer specializing in agricultural hydraulic design. During his career at Summers Engineering, Inc. he attended California State University, Fresno where he obtained his Masters in Public Administration, with Honors. Mr. Fukuda is also a registered Professional Engineer with the state of California.

Mr. Fukuda began his career with the Tulare Irrigation District as the District Engineer in May 2006 and transitioned to the General Manager in May 2018. Mr. Fukuda started his career with the District by overseeing the District's engineering services, including the design and implementation of District projects. As District Engineer, Mr. Fukuda was also involved in securing grant funds and administering grant projects within the District and with partners throughout the hydrologic basin.

As General Manager, Mr. Fukuda oversees the District's day-to-day operations while continuing to promote the conjunctive use operations of the District and its growers. He also coordinates water activities with surrounding jurisdictions, including the development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Lastly, Mr. Fukuda continues to monitor the myriad of regulations to ensure that the District's functions are following State and Federal regulations.

Mr. Fukuda was recently appointed as the Interim General Manager of the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability (MKGSA) agency on top of his duties as the General Manager of the Tulare Irrigation District. As the Interim General Manager, Mr. Fukuda is responsible for the administration of the MKGSA and the implementation of the MKGSA Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Mr. Fukuda oversees the day-to-day activities of the MKGSA as the entities strive for groundwater sustainability by 2040.

Sara Larsen is the CEO of OpenET, leading efforts to provide accurate, timely, and accessible evapotranspiration data to support sustainable water management across the western United States. With over two decades of experience in water resources and data innovation, she is dedicated to advancing open science and collaborative solutions for water management challenges.

Prior to joining OpenET, Sara was the Deputy Director and Chief Engineer at the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC), where she played a key role in advancing

scientific tools, collaborative modeling efforts, consumptive use estimation, and infrastructure measurement networks to support Colorado River Basin operations. Her expertise in integrating best-available science with water policy continues to drive OpenET's mission to enhance water sustainability through open, actionable data.

Sara earned her Master's degree in civil engineering at the University of Utah and is a licensed engineer in the State of Utah.

State-Level Insights on Leveraging Data to Optimize Climate Adaptation Investments | 1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Allison Harvey Turner serves as the chief executive officer of the Water Foundation, including the Water Table funder collaborative. She oversees the Foundation's strategy, operations, and grantmaking and leads the staff in pursuing its mission to secure clean, reliable water for people and nature. In addition, Allison supports philanthropy's ability to convene, experiment with new ideas, and scale investment in transformative water solutions.

The Water Foundation began in 2011 and has delivered nearly $100 million in funding to the US water field, including over 245 organizations and coalitions to support safe, clean water for people, restored freshwater ecosystems, and climate resilience. To complement its grantmaking and build a broader constituency for water solutions, the Water Foundation also serves as a convener, field builder, and campaign strategist.

Previously, Allison was the environment program director at the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, where she directed water and land conservation strategies, including managing the California Conservation Fund. She was also on the senior management team that grew the organization from ten to thirty professionals, managed a complex endowment, and guided more than $1 billion in grantmaking over ten years. Allison serves on advisory boards for the Public Policy Institute of California's Water Policy Center, Sustainable Conservation, and the Water Solutions Network. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Keali'i Bright joined the California Natural Resources Agency as Undersecretary in November 2024. Keali'i has an extensive background in California natural resources and environmental policy development. Since 2018, Keali'i led the Division of Land Resource Protection at the California Department of Conservation, running multiple programs to build regional capacity to lead protection and stewardship of the state's most valuable agricultural and watershed resources through climate change and land-use challenges. Prior, Keali'i served the California Natural Resources Agency as the Deputy Secretary for Climate and Energy from 2016-18 and the Deputy Secretary for Legislative Affairs from 2011-2016. Keali'I began his career in public services at the California State Assembly where he held several positions in the Budget Committee from 2001 to 2011.

Erik Ekdahl was appointed as Chief Deputy Director at the State Water Board in April 2025, where he oversees the Division of Water Rights, Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management, Office of Research Planning and Performance, and the Division of Administrative Services. Since joining the State Water Board in 2008 he has worked in the Division of Water Quality, Division of Financial Assistance, as Director for the Board's Office of Research, Planning and Performance, and Deputy Director for the Division of Water Rights. He is a licensed Engineering Geologist, with a Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Michigan.

Paul Gosselin was appointed Deputy Director for Sustainable Water Management (formerly Statewide Groundwater Management) on July 9, 2021. In this capacity, Gosselin oversees the Sustainable Groundwater Management Office and the Division of Regional Assistance. SGMO is responsible for the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and other statewide groundwater management activities. DRA supports the management of California's water resource through various assistance offerings. It includes two branches in Sacramento and four regional offices in Red Bluff, West Sacramento, Fresno, and Glendale.

Gosselin joined the Department after serving 13 years as Butte County's Director of Water and Resource Conservation. He managed Butte County's State Water Project Table A allocation, chaired the Butte County Drought Task Force, and oversaw implementation of SGMA in three subbasins.

Previously, Gosselin was Chief Deputy Director at the California Department of Pesticide Regulation from 1999 to 2007 and was Assistant Director for Enforcement, Environmental Monitoring and Data Management from 1993 to 1999. From 1989 to 1993, he was the Director of Regulatory Services for the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture.

Gosselin received a Bachelor of Science degree in biochemistry and a Master of Science degree in chemistry from the University of Massachusetts.

Katie Regan serves as the State Data Services Manager within the California Department of Technology (CDT). CDT's Data Services team is dedicated to product ownership of the State's Open Data Portal, sustainable and accessible data sharing, elevating data management standards, leading the State's AI Community, and implementing strategic data initiatives. Katie's team also supports the State's Generative AI proofs of

concept and other work related to emerging technologies. Before joining the state, Katie led the creation of the Office of Performance and Data Analytics at the City of Stockton, which focused on performance management, data governance, open data, and operationalizing analytics for equitable service delivery to residents. Prior to joining public service, Katie was a management consultant for medical device and pharmaceutical clients. Katie has a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the University of Puget Sound and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law.

Closing Plenary | 2:50 – 3:20 p.m.

Samantha Arthur serves as Deputy Secretary for Water, leading the Agency's initiatives to build water resilience and adapt water systems to climate extremes. Samantha joined the California Natural Resources Agency in April 2023 as the Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy, where she led the State's Salton Sea Management Program to address air quality and ecological threats at the Salton Sea. Prior to joining the Agency, Samantha spent over nine years at Audubon California and held several positions including Working Lands Program Director. She led Audubon's work in the Central Valley with farmers, wetland managers, and environmental justice organizations to advance sustainable water management and expand habitat through incentive programs and restoration. Samantha also served on the California Water Commission from 2020 to 2023. She previously managed the Big Sur Land Trust's conservation easement program from 2010 to 2012 and was a high school biology teacher from 2007 to 2010. Samantha earned a Master of Environmental Science and Management degree from the Bren School at the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology and Environmental Studies from Whitman College.

Robyn Grimm is the CEO & President of the California Water Data Consortium. Robyn's career focuses on bringing diverse perspectives and institutions together to fill critical research, decision-support, and other information gaps to enable more sustainable land and water management practices across the Western United States.

Most recently, Robyn served as Senior Director of Applied Research and Innovation for Climate Resilient Water Systems at Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Before that, Robyn served as a director within EDF's water team, where she helped lead the OpenET consortium, working with partners at NASA, the Desert Research Institute, Google Earth Engine, a dozen other organizations, and a wide range of stakeholders on the development of an online open platform for estimating consumptive water use.

Before joining EDF, Robyn worked at the consulting firm CH2M Hill, where she was a water resources policy analyst and advised California's Department of Water Resources on statewide flood and water planning. Robyn holds a Ph.D. in Hydrologic Sciences from the University of California, Davis, and has contributed to many California flood control and water management studies.