

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation Group

## • Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation Group Manager Report

## Summary

To report on Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation activities for February 2025

## Purpose

Informational

## **Detailed Report**

#### **SRI Core Activities**

SRI and the Core Planning Team for the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water (CAMP4W) finalized the 2024 CAMP4W Annual Report providing updates on Signposts, Time-Bound Targets, and Implementation Highlights. The initial draft of the CAMP4W Implementation Strategy and Working Memorandum #10 on the Climate Adaptation Policy Framework were discussed with the Task Force at the February 26, 2025 meeting. An Environmental Listening Session was held on February 3 to seek input on the draft Annual Report and address questions. The Chief SRI Officer participated in an episode of the Talking Water Podcast on California Water issues and attended the *Innovate Locally to Inspire Change Globally Summit*, co-hosted by the Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation, University of California, and Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

#### Sustainability and Resilience

**Sustainability and Resilience** section staff coordinated the Water Energy Climate Sustainability (WECS) team meeting on February 4. WECS meets bimonthly and provides an opportunity for staff in different disciplines across the district to share project updates and collaborate on ideas.

**Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Transition**: On February 13, the ZEV Executive Task Force met to discuss progress on Metropolitan's transition to electric vehicles. The cross-organizational management team and staff discussed the latest vehicle purchases and charger installations, financing options for ZEV purchases, and potential regulatory and legislative impacts resulting from changes implemented by the new federal administration.

## **Centralized Grants and Research Management Office**

Staff developed a Fire Recovery/FEMA resources SharePoint site and held a meeting on February 5, 2025 with Foothill Municipal Water District and sub-agency staff. The meeting agenda included:

Overview of Altadena and Pasadena Water infrastructure

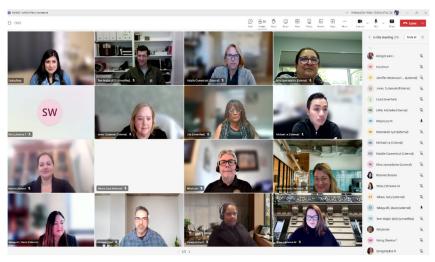
Recovery experience from 2017 Tubbs Fire

- Ben Sherwood, Sonoma Water, Assistant General Manager for Business Services & External Affairs
- Emma Walton, Operations Manager, Sonoma Water

FEMA Fact Sheet and Best Management Practices

- Michelle Little, Witt O'Brien's, Director
- Suzannah Jones, Witt O'Brien's, Associate Managing Director

Suzannah is an Associate Managing Director with our Community and Infrastructure Services Team and focuses on FEMA recovery. She has more than 20 years of experience supporting clients and disasters across the country, including but not limited to Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, etc. She was actively involved with nearly 20 Federal disaster declarations in Texas alone. Prior to joining Witt O'Briens (WOB), she served as the Deputy Chief of Recovery and Mitigation for Texas Department of Emergency Management. She is also a Certified Emergency Manager.



Attendees were reminded of the Request for Public Assistance Submission Deadline: March 9, 2025 (via Grants Portal). WOB is a Metropolitan grants/funding consultant and will support and meet with the Fire Recovery group. A library with reference materials, templates, and sample reports from WOB is now available on the SharePoint site.

#### **Innovation, Pilots, and Emerging Technologies**

**Peer-2-Peer Engagements**: Innovation staff worked with Metropolitan executives and group managers to complete an updated District needs assessment, facilitated by the *Knowledge to Implementation* (K2i). The identified District challenges will be the basis of future K2i peer-2-peer engagements that provide Metropolitan staff the opportunity to learn innovative practices from global leading utilities. Metropolitan has also received requests for peer-2-peer engagements by water agencies interested in learning about the District's investments in emergency management and recent experiences with mutual aid during the Palisades and Eaton Canyon fires.

#### **Environmental Planning Services**

Environmental Planning Section staff continued to prepare the second draft Environmental Impact Report for the Pure Water Southern California program. Staff continued coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the Incidental Take Permit application and mitigation options for species impacts from the Inland Feeder/Foothill Pump Station Intertie Project and continued coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) regarding consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act and the State Historic Preservation Office under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. For the Webb Tract Wetland Restoration Project, staff continued preparation of the Statutory Exemption Restoration Program application for submittal to CDFW and supported the public outreach meeting held on February 11, 2025. Environmental monitoring of construction activities continued for the Rialto Pipeline Rehabilitation, Perris Valley Pipeline, Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) Conveyance System Flow Sensors Installation, Weymouth Asphalt Rehabilitation, and La Verne Shops Upgrades projects.

## Board Report Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation Group Manager Report

Critical operations and maintenance activities were supported by the Environmental Planning Section. Staff provided California Environmental Quality Act and regulatory clearances and conducted pre-construction biological resource surveys and construction monitoring for activities throughout the service area, including upcoming shutdowns (CRA, Yorba Linda Feeder, San Diego Pipeline Nos. 1 and 2, and Rialto Feeder). EPS staff provided subject matter expert reviews of legislative bills, including AB 295 (Macedo), AB 300 (Lackey), AB 362 (Ramos), AB 367 (Bennett), AB 372 (Bennett), SB 231 (Seyarto), and SB 232 (Seyarto). In addition, staff reviewed and analyzed CEQA notices for four external projects to determine the potential impacts on Metropolitan and protect Metropolitan's right-of-way and facilities; comments letters were prepared and submitted for those projects that had the potential for impacts.

**Environmental Planning Section** continued oversight of reserve management activities to protect valuable natural resources and meet Metropolitan's mitigation obligations. Security patrols were conducted throughout the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Reserve and the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (MSR) to prevent trespassing, vandalism, poaching, and theft and to protect the reserves' natural and cultural resources, facilities, and equipment. Activities at the Lake Mathews Reserve included the application of pre-emergent herbicide to prevent the regrowth of noxious weeds in the 2025 growing season, servicing wildlife cameras at artificial burrowing owl mounds north of Lake Mathews to document burrowing owl/wildlife activity, and repairing patrol roads and fencing. Activities at the MSR included processing the 2024 Christmas Bird Count data from the event at Diamond Valley Lake (117 species and 4,911 individual birds were observed, including 11 of 12 of the species covered by the MSR's Multi-Species Habitat Protection Plan), coordinating with researchers conducting Quino checkerspot butterfly and northern harrier surveys, approving a herpetology/small mammal project, and planting in the Tucalota Creek restoration site and in upland restoration sites across the reserve.



Burrowing owl and artificial burrow at the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve

#### Land Management

A new lease has been executed with Bouldin Farming Company comprising the entirety of Webb Tract in the Bay Delta. The lease is for an eight-month term to allow the farming of a winter wheat crop and to offset Metropolitan's land maintenance costs. Staff is working towards securing a long-term lease through an RFP process.