



## ● Chair of the Board Adán Ortega Jr.'s Monthly Activity Report – November 2023

### Summary

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This report highlights my activities as Chair of the Board during the month of November 2023 on matters relating to The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's business.

### Monthly Activities

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#### Key Activities

- I introduced Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano during a Metropolitan event on November 4, dedicating the Grace F. Napolitano Pure Water Southern California Innovation Center, which is located at the Regional Recycled Water Project we are developing in partnership with Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts at the Joint Pollution Control Plant in Carson, California. We were joined at the ceremony by local and federal leaders, including Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton, who celebrated the congresswoman's achievements and heralded the naming of the Grace F. Napolitano Pure Water Southern California Innovation Center as a fitting tribute to the congresswoman's hard work and dedication to sustainable water solutions. Board Vice Chair Michael Camacho and Board Members Tana McCoy, Karl Seckel, Gloria Cordero, Tracy Quinn, Marty Miller, Tony Fellow, Dennis Erdman, and Larry Dick attended the festivities.



- I met with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton after the dedication event on November 4, honoring U.S. Representative Napolitano, who attended this meeting as well. I was joined by Board Vice Chair Michael Camacho; our Colorado River Board Representative Director Gloria Cordero; and the Ad hoc Committee Chair on Colorado River Negotiations Director Marty Miller. Also in attendance were General Manager Hagekhalil, Executive Officer Deven Upadhyay and Assistant General Manager for External Affairs Dee Zinke, and Metropolitan's Federal Executive Representative Abby Schneider. Commissioner Touton stressed the value of unity between the California parties as we apply for federal funding programs, as well as post-2026 negotiations for Colorado River operations. Our Metropolitan Board colleagues and I emphasized the role that climate adaptation planning is playing in staking out Southern California's federal funding requests that build on our past accomplishments in urban and agricultural conservation and local project funding.

- Addressed Member Agency Managers during their regular CAMP4Water meeting with Metropolitan staff about the formation of the CAMP4Water Task Force. I articulated the need to accelerate progress in coming to an open understanding of member agency needs and plans, as well as the realities faced by Metropolitan through a series of climate adaptation paradoxes based upon our success in stemming demands during the last 25-year planning cycle as we face pressure with growing fixed costs and the need to build massive projects. I also stressed the need for member agencies to work together first through their caucuses and in the task force itself with a structure for Task Force representation that includes alternates with a balance of board members throughout the region.
- Accepted an invitation to speak at the Northern Member Agency Caucus about the paradoxes we face with climate adaptation planning. We exchanged frank views in reference to rate case settlement discussions, where I stressed the need to set aside past rivalries among some member agencies if progress is to be made. I stressed that it is difficult for some Metropolitan Water District Directors to exercise their fiduciary duties on behalf of Metropolitan while some of our member agencies harbor strong feelings in a way that directly affects our decision-making on difficult questions.

### Speaking Engagements/Events

- Provided the keynote address at the Arab American Association of Engineers and Architects – California (AAAEA-CA), where General Manager Adel Hagekhalil served as master of ceremonies. I acknowledged widespread suffering in the Middle East and emphasized empathy. During my remarks, I attempted to connect the world's challenges to California's issues, including adapting to climate change, addressing reduced sales, and enhancing distribution systems. I recognized Honorees Metropolitan's Assistant Group Manager of Engineering Services Mai Hattar and Rania Amen from the City of San Diego for their contributions to water. I emphasized that while climate change presents challenges, it also offers opportunities, referencing the Metropolitan Water District's Climate Adaptation Master Planning Process (CAMP4W). California State Representatives Laura Friedman and Lisa Calderon were in attendance as well as Directors Desi Alvarez, Larry Dick, former Director Heather Repenning, General Manager Adel Hagekhalil, Assistant General Manager Deven Upadhyay, and Engineering Services Group Manager John Bednarski.



- The California Department of Water Resources presented a \$38 million check to Metropolitan officials as part of its Urban Community Drought Relief program. It has awarded over \$217 million to 44 projects to help communities strengthen drought resilience and better prepare for future dry conditions. In attendance were California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth, SoCalGas Vice President of Customer Solutions Don Widjaja, Metropolitan Board Members Michael Camacho, John Morris, Jeff Armstrong, Marsha Ramos, Brenda Dennstedt, Jacque McMillan, General Manager Adel Hagekhalil, and many other staff.



- I recorded a video for Metropolitan's 2024 Water is Life Student Art Calendar virtual event on December 14, 2023. I provided a welcome and congratulatory remarks to honor all the participants and winners. Out of 234 entries received from 26 participating member agencies, 37 winners spanning from kindergarten to high school were selected. Attendees at the event will include teachers, school administrators, family members, water education coordinators, and Directors from member and retail agencies. The artwork will be displayed in the Metropolitan Rotunda in January and will later travel to participating agencies throughout the year. The cover art is by Sophia Doh, a 3rd grader at Monte Vista Elementary School, representing Glendale Water and Power.



- I gave a presentation at the Van Nuys Rotary Club, where I provided an overview of Metropolitan and discussed the challenges and opportunities in California in adapting to climate change. In response, Metropolitan has launched a Climate Adaptation Master Planning Process, CAMP4Water, which will guide Metropolitan as we explore a new class of infrastructure designed to provide flexibility and maintain and introduce redundancy to our distribution system. The opportunity is not only to plan for a future for adequate water supplies. Our planning must lead to prosperity, a good quality of life, sustainable natural systems, and harmony among the people. I also engaged in a robust question-and-answer session.



**Other Activities**

- I issued a statement to the Board of Directors on the passing of former Board Chairwoman Gloria Gray's long-time companion, Mr. Leonard Tibbs. Mr. Tibbs was an entrepreneur who had several businesses in the Los Angeles area. Many of our colleagues who met Mr. Tibbs knew of his steadfast support and affection for Chairwoman Gray as she fulfilled her duties. In the season of giving thanks, let's be thankful for the years Chairwoman Gray and Mr. Tibbs shared. Let's also keep Chairwoman Gray and her family in our thoughts and prayers as she mourns during this Thanksgiving holiday and in the weeks and months ahead. We will be requesting adjournment of the Board Meeting in honor of Mr. Tibbs on December 5 as we assemble for the first time in Metropolitan's history near the Colorado River.
- Attended the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) 2023 Fall Conference, where I met with several water industry professionals, including General Manager of State Water Contractors Jennifer Pierre.

**Regularly Scheduled/Ongoing Meetings**

I continue to meet regularly to review the Board's organizational issues and coordinate activities with the Board Vice Chairs and Department Heads.