



External Affairs

- External Affairs Monthly Activities Report for December 2024

Summary

This report provides a summary of External Affairs' group activities for December 2024.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Highlights



From left: Chair Ortega and Metropolitan directors with USBR Commissioner Touton at the CRWUA Conference; Governor Newsom and DWR Director Nemeth met with Chair Ortega, Vice Chair Goldberg and Interim GM Upadhyay to discuss state and regional water issues, Two of the winning student artists with Admiral Splash.

Chair Ortega, Vice Chair Camacho, Directors Alvarez, Cordero, DeJesus, Kurtz, Miller, and McCoy, and executive staff attended the Colorado River Water Users Association Conference. Highlights of the event included panel discussions by representatives of the Upper and Lower Basin states and a reception hosted by Metropolitan, Southern Nevada Water Authority, and the Central Arizona Project honoring retiring Colorado River Board of California Executive Director Harris and outgoing USBR Commissioner Touton. (December 3–6)

Vice Chair Camacho and Director Bryant, Interim Executive Officer Bednarski, Chief SRI Officer Crosson and Bay-Delta Group Manager Hawk and other Metropolitan staff attended the Association of California Water Agencies fall conference. (December 3-5)

Governor Newsom and DWR Director Nemeth met with Chair Ortega, Vice Chair Goldberg, and Interim GM Upadhyay to discuss a range of issues including those related to the Delta Conveyance Project, Colorado River, and climate change impacts to water supplies. (December 6)

Metropolitan hosted the Student Art Calendar event celebrating the work of 37 students that is featured in the 2025 calendar. Chair Ortega, Vice Chair Camacho, Directors Alvarez, Dennstedt, and Faessel attended the event along with AGM Zinke. (December 12)

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Local

This month, staff presented, monitored, and/or participated in 31 webinars, meetings, and events with community organizations on Metropolitan activities and issues. Metropolitan also sponsored and Director Dick attended the regional holiday reception hosted by the League of California Cities Orange County Division. (December 11)

Media and Communications

Press Releases:

- Metropolitan Board approves \$142 million in additional funding for remaining planning of Delta Conveyance Project
- Metropolitan Board of Directors censures a board colleague for racist remark

Coordinated an interview between National Public Radio/KUNC reporter Alex Hager and Interim GM Upadhyay regarding federal Inflation Reduction Act funding.

Oversaw the response to the Public Records Act request and questions from LA Times reporter Ian James regarding a letter from Chief of Staff Mortada to Metropolitan board and equal employment opportunity investigations.

Arranged an interview between CBS13 Sacramento reporter Madisen Keavy and Chair Ortega regarding the board vote on funding for Delta Conveyance Project planning costs.

Coordinated an interview between LAT's Ian James and Director Kassakhian regarding a board action censuring Director Morris.

Set up an interview between CalMatters reporter Alastair Bland and Bay-Delta Initiatives Manager Hawk regarding the Voluntary Agreements/Healthy Rivers and Landscapes program.

Facilitated an interview between KPCC reporter Jacob Margolis and Interim WRM Manager Goshi regarding initial State Water Project allocation.

Arranged an interview between freelance reporter Daniel Rothberg and Interim Executive Officer Bednarski about wastewater recycling and Pure Water Southern California for the nonprofit online magazine, Reasons to Be Cheerful.

Supervised a photoshoot of the Pure Water Southern California facility by New York Times for a story on the future of water in the region.

Coordinated responses to SoCal Water Wars reporter John Earl regarding the investigation of GM Hagekhalil.

Designed and animated the district's 2024 holiday card.

Social Media

Completed the first phase of the Goodbye, Grass conservation advertising campaign series, which has received more than 7.3 million impressions with nearly 75,000 clicks to bewaterwise.com.

Coordinated with the State Water Resources Control Board on assets to recognize the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Safe Drinking Water Act including debuting a new video highlighting the Water Quality Laboratory on social media platforms.

Highlighted photos from district community outreach events to thank the community for their engagement and honored Native American Heritage Day with a quote from Interim GM Upadhyay.



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Continued to receive good engagement for the weekly Water Champions employee social media series that has featured 18 employees since Labor Day, including Senior Environmental Specialist Alex Marks, Administrative Assistants Daisy Piedra and Stacie Notick, and Associate Resource Specialist Larry Lai in December.

Featured employee activities and outreach events on social platforms, including the Education Program's annual student water art celebration, the CRWUA conference, Pure Water Southern California tours, and photos from district-sponsored inspection trips.

Website

Completed the upgrade of mwdh2o.com content management system.

Posted Spanish landing page on bewaterwise.com for the Goodbye,

Grass advertising campaign.

Generated nearly 26,000 visits to mwdh2o.com with careers, job listings, and board pages being the most popular.

Registered 24,722 views on bewaterwise.com, with the Goodbye Grass campaign landing page. Turf Replacement Program rebate page and California native plants page were the most visited this month.

Community Outreach

Directed outreach to residents affected by the upcoming Rialto pipeline rehabilitation project in Upland.

Events

Hosted a bilingual tour of Weymouth and the Water Quality Lab for Council for Watershed Health and several other community-based organizations. (December 3)

The Community Partnering Program provided grant funding to the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden's Native Plant Festival. (December 4)

Provided a tour of Weymouth for the city of San Diego's Alvarado Plant staff members. (December 6)

Chair Ortega hosted a CRA Inspection Trip with representatives from the NAACP. (December 6-7)

Tour of SWP East Branch Facilities for IEUA (December 10); Tour of Lake Matthews and Mills Water Treatment Plant for Riverside County Task Force—requested by Western Municipal Water District (December 13).



Participants from NAACP and MWD staff at Hoover Dam, part of a three-day Colorado River Inspection Trip

Member Agency Managers meeting (December 13); Member Agency Business Model Workshop (December 13)

Hosted webinar with Nature Based Solution Blue Ribbon Panel Workshop (December 17)

Meeting with city of Lakewood on Pure Water alignment (December 10); meeting with LA County Sanitation District's sewer line relocation as part of Pure Water Southern California-Reach 2; Pure Water tour with Metropolitan legal office staff members (December 12), and Presentation to Central Basin MWD (December 16)

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Education

Interacted with over 470 teachers, students, and adults through in-person and online field trips and community events with USC, Pierce College, and the workforce advisory councils.

The Discover DVL field trip game app continues to be the most played on field trips amongst other similar augmented reality games participating in the SoCal Explorer Campaign. (December 1)



Students on a field trip use the Discover DVL online mission activity to learn about the facility, Metropolitan and the region's water issues.