



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

External Affairs

- **Monthly Activity Report for March 2026**

Summary

This report provides a summary of External Affairs activities for February 13, 2026, through March 16, 2026.

Purpose

Informational

Attachments

Detailed Report – External Affairs Group’s Monthly Activities for February 13, 2026, through March 16, 2026

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Activities Supporting the General Manager's Business Plan Goals

Develop Post-2026 Guidelines and Negotiate Implementation Agreements

- **Educate legislators so they will champion the District's interests**

Federal Legislative staff provided updates to congressional staff on the status of discussions on post-2026 Colorado River operations, the comments submitted by various parties in response to the Draft Environment Impact Statement, and Metropolitan's priorities for future River operations.

The Press Office coordinated interviews between CalMatters reporter Rachel Becker and GM Deshmukh and Bill Hasencamp regarding the status of Colorado River negotiations and how the uncertainty could affect Metropolitan.

The Press Office coordinated interviews with LA Times reporter Ian James, Voice of San Diego reporter Mackenzie Elmer, GM Deshmukh and Bill Hasencamp regarding the San Diego County Water Authority's proposed MOU on interstate exchanges and cross-border investments in large local supply projects in the Lower Basin.

Complete EIR and Planning for Board to Consider Pure Water Southern California

- **Complete EIR analyses and public process**

Community Relations staff continued engagement and coordination efforts supporting the Pure Water Southern California program. Staff provided an in-person presentation to the community-based organization Strength Based Communities for Change and hosted several tours at the Grace F. Napolitano Pure Water Southern California Innovation Center, including a tour for an Australian delegation and representatives from the City of Commerce.

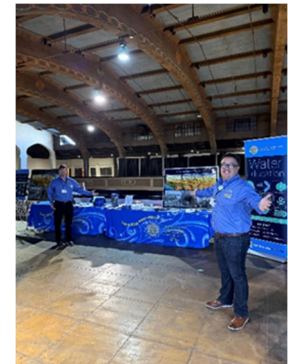
Staff attended the WaterReuse Symposium and supported a joint tour for WaterReuse California leadership at the Innovation Center and the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts' A.K. Warren Water Resource Facility. During the symposium, staff delivered a presentation on "*Developing a Community Benefits Program Framework for Potable Reuse Projects*," highlighting Metropolitan's efforts to develop a community benefits program for Pure Water Southern California and sharing lessons learned from the program's framework development.



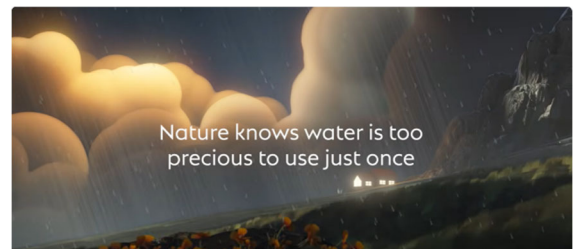
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The Education team organized the 2026 Water Reuse Youth Summit with cosponsors West Basin Municipal Water District, the Water Replenishment District, and WateReuse. Hosted by Metropolitan, nearly 100 students from across the Los Angeles region participated in the event and presented innovative solutions addressing engineering, water quality, and public acceptance challenges related to water reuse. Volunteer judges evaluated the student presentations, and three winning teams from Oxford Academy, Lennox Academy, and Downey High School earned top honors. The winning teams later presented their projects at the Water Reuse Symposium in Los Angeles, generating interest among agencies seeking to replicate similar youth engagement programs.



External Affairs partnered with the Southern California Water Coalition in their efforts to produce, release, and amplify an informational and educational video focused on water recycling. Metropolitan is sharing the video across our social media channels and continuing to amplify the campaign for widespread understanding of the importance of water recycling.



<https://youtu.be/evHCEcChKyq?si=7H-e3VL3U7MNI2NJ>

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Improve the Workplace and Promote START Values

- Promote START values (Safety, Trust, Accountability, Respect, Teamwork)**
 Media Services highlighted four employees on our social media channels as part of our Water Champions series highlighting staff and promoting teamwork across the District, including two of our environmental specialists and two of our aqueduct and power dispatchers.



Water Champions
 Pure Water Southern
 California Environmental
 Impact Report



Water Champions
 Aqueduct & Power
 Dispatchers



Media Services held a media pop up at Soto Street as part of our outreach for internal communications to both promote our new staff newsletter, Inside Met, and to seek input and story ideas from staff in the field.

Provide Organizational Stability and Deliver Operational Excellence

- Support a smooth and efficient transition to the next GM**
 The Press Office coordinated a Q&A-style written interview with GM Deshmukh and Water Smart magazine for a profile of the general manager. The interview appears in the [March 2026 issue](#).



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Other Activities Supporting the General Manager’s Strategic Priorities

Empower the workforce and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

Media Services promoted a variety of Employee Resource Group events across our social media channels throughout the month which highlight the diversity of our District, including Black History Month events, Lunar New Year celebrations, and Women’s History Month activities.



Protect public health, the regional economy, and Metropolitan’s assets

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 831, the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Amendment Act (March 16). The bill will allow the federal government to collect interest on the non-federal contributions to the MSCP program. It is estimated to raise about \$2 million per year. The bill has already passed out of Committee in the Senate, and Metropolitan’s Federal Legislative staff is actively advocating for Senate passage of the bill.

AGM Zinke joined staff and State Water Contractors General Manager Pierre for meetings with congressional offices in Washington, February 25-26, to share concerns about the impact of subsidence on the State Water Project, among other SWC priorities. The meetings were scheduled to

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align with ACWA's DC conference and included California's Senate offices as well as Representatives Calvert, Costa, Min, Peters and Rivas.

The State Legislature passed a key step in the legislative process with the February 20, 2026, bill introduction deadline. A total of 1,918 bills were introduced this year, and policy committees will begin hearing bills in March.

Metropolitan adopted a support position on SB 872 (McNerney) which seeks to increase state investment in subsidence and Delta levee repairs. The proposal calls for \$300 million annually from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and would ensure California has access to stable water supplies, while also preserving affordability of drinking water.

Metropolitan staff are currently reviewing bills for positions. Updates on key bills of interest will be provided at the Legislation and Communications Committee meetings.

The Press Office issued a press release on Metropolitan winning a silver medal for the best-tasting tap water in the United States as part of the 36th annual Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting competition, which included more than 100 entries of water sourced from five continents. The impressive achievement was also highlighted across our social media channels.

The Press Office responded to questions and provided background data to SJV Water reporter Lois Henry and LA Times reporter Ian James regarding our groundwater banking program with Arvin-Edison, for stories on that agency's settlement agreement regarding 1,2,3 TCP contamination.

The Creative Design Team's videography/photography unit documented shutdown activities this winter to compile into an informative program for the board as well as to use on different platforms, including our website, to promote infrastructure improvements, resiliency-focused projects and workforce excellence.

Partner with interested parties and the communities we serve

Legislative Services

The Legislative Services team participated in legislative briefings, regional policy discussions, and interagency meetings with member agencies, local governments, business organizations, and regional partners, tracking policy developments and coordinating on issues affecting water supply reliability and infrastructure.

Legislative Services staff attended the Calleguas Municipal Water District regional legislative meeting, where regional partners discussed wildfire preparedness and emergency response proposals affecting Ventura County water agencies. The meeting also included updates on the implementation of AB 367, inverse condemnation, the emerging threat of golden mussels, and issues related to the Colorado River.

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Staff presented Metropolitan's Public Participation Guide, which explains how stakeholders can participate in Metropolitan's public meetings and decision-making processes.

Legislative Services staff also visited the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District Pure Water Demonstration Project, where agency representatives provided an overview of the potable reuse program and discussed the District's priorities related to water recycling and long-term water supply reliability.

Legislative Services staff participated in a legislative briefing and facility tour hosted by the West Basin Municipal Water District at the Edward C. Little Water Recycling Facility. During the briefing, West Basin discussed its request for federal funding in the FY 2027 Interior-EPA Appropriations bill for its Modernized Operational Security and Automation Integrated Control Project, which is intended to address operational cybersecurity needs and improve system resilience.

Legislative Services staff also met with leadership and external affairs representatives from several Metropolitan member agencies to discuss legislative priorities, water supply conditions, and regional projects. Meetings were held with Anaheim, Beverly Hills, Burbank Water and Power, Calleguas Municipal Water District, Foothill Municipal Water District, Fullerton, Glendale Water and Power, Inland Empire Utilities Agency, Three Valleys Municipal Water District, Santa Ana, and Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. These discussions provided an opportunity to better understand each agency's policy interests and identify areas for coordination on legislative and regulatory issues affecting Southern California's water system.

In addition to these meetings, staff participated in government affairs and policy committee meetings with regional organizations across Southern California. These included the South Bay Association of Chambers of Commerce, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles County Business Federation, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, North San Diego Business Chamber, Western Riverside Council of Governments, Southern California Water Coalition, League of California Cities – Los Angeles County Division, Gateway Chamber Alliance, and the Inland Empire Economic Partnership.

Staff also participated in meetings with water industry and infrastructure organizations, including the Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County, Construction Industry Association on Water Quality, Building Industry Association of Southern California, and the Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce. Participation in these meetings allows staff to monitor policy discussions related to water quality regulations, infrastructure investment, and regional economic development.

Media Services

The Press Office conducted an interview and issued a press release on the opening of the Judy Abdo Wildflower Trail at Diamond Valley Lake which reopened for the season on Friday, Feb. 27. The

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Media Services team also promoted the opening of the wildflower trail on social media, website, and prepared graphics for the sign at DVL.

Member Services and Public Outreach

Member Services and Public Outreach staff coordinated a tour of the F.E. Weymouth Water Treatment Plant in La Verne for engineering students from California State University, Long Beach. Led by our Operations and Engineering teams, the visit provided students with an up-close look at the facility and its operations, offering an opportunity to connect with the next generation of engineers.

Staff also coordinated a tour and presentation at the Mills Water Treatment Plant for representatives from Eastern Municipal Water District and Western Water. The operations staff provided an overview of plant operations and facilitated a discussion on treatment processes and regional collaboration.

Education Program

The Education team connected with students, educators, and community members through field trips, STEM programs, events, and member agency partnerships aligned with Metropolitan's priorities of conservation education, regional collaboration, and career awareness.

The Water Engineering 4 Good (WE4G) program continues to expand, with 11 student teams representing partners such as the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Municipal Water District of Orange County. Weekly sessions, technical reports, and AI competitions engaged approximately 120 students this month, as teams developed engineering solutions related to infrastructure and sustainability.

Community engagement continued through the traveling student calendar art gallery, hosted at the Otay Water District and Rowland Water District. Staff participated in the LA County Science and Engineering Fair, hosting an interactive exhibit demonstrating aqueduct systems. Staff also hosted a resource table at the Girls Empowerment Summit at the California Endowment.

Staff supported career awareness initiatives, including career day events with K–12 school partners, participated in a workforce development event at the University of Southern California, and cosponsored and staffed a booth at the college career expo hosted by the Water Replenishment District.

Regional collaboration remained strong through the bi-monthly meeting with Member Agency Education Coordinators, participation in a Department of Water Resources partner meeting of water education coordinators, and involvement in the Water and Energy Education Alliance Roundtable.

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Community Partnering Program

The Community Partnering Program sponsored five water education and conservation partnerships this period:

- Niguel Botanical Preserve's Earth Day 2026 for a California native public planting activity and development of a Water Conservation Gardens Around the World educational resource.
- Tarzana Community & Cultural Center's Tarzana Native Plant Fair for water conservation workshops and educational activities for community members.
- Monte Vista Water District's Water Conservation Mascot & Education Program for a new water-themed mascot costume, branding, curriculum development, and activities to be showcased at their Waterwise Expo.
- Westwood Greenway's Water Conservation Habitat Transformation for the development of a California-friendly planting session and water conservation education activities.
- Olivenhain Municipal Water District's Native Plants and Waterwise Landscaping to support a waterwise landscape educational program that will feature California native plants, free public workshops, and share the importance of reducing outdoor water usage.



Tarzana Community & Cultural Center's Tarzana Native Plant Fair

Inspection Trips Program

The Inspection Trips Team organized and led inspection trips to the F.E. Weymouth Water Treatment Plant for Directors Faessel and Phan, and to Diamond Valley Lake for Directors De Jesus and Fellow. The team also provided a tour of Diamond Valley Lake for the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District and a tour of the W.P. Whitsett Intake Pumping Plant for the Water Education Foundation.

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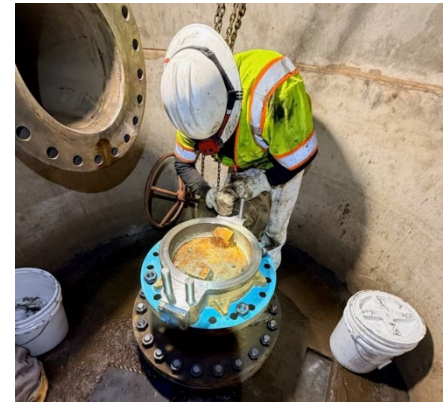
Inspection trip of the F.E. Weymouth Water Treatment Plant with Directors Faessel and Phan



Inspection Trip of Diamond Valley Lake with Directors DeJesus and Fellow

Construction Outreach

The Community Relations team continued proactive communications and coordination to support operational activities and system maintenance. Staff coordinated communications related to the Diemer Water Treatment Plant shutdown and mailed notifications to residences and businesses regarding the upcoming South Coast Feeder shutdown. The feeder will be removed from service to allow internal visual and electromagnetic inspection of the pipeline. The outage will also allow several faulty valves to be replaced and maintenance to be performed on service connection meters.



Community Relations staff also supported Engineering Services during a presentation to the Monterey Park City Council regarding the Garvey Reservoir project.