



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

● Chair of the Board Adán Ortega Jr.'s Monthly Activity Report – March 2026

Summary

This report highlights my activities as Chair of the Board for the month of March 2026, as well as highlights about Board Members who have been appointed to represent the agency externally, on matters relating to The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Monthly Activities

Key Activities

- On March 19, 2026, General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh and I attended a ceremony marking the signing of a historic water supply agreement between the San Diego County Water Authority and Western Municipal Water District. The agreement is facilitated by Metropolitan through an exchange mechanism set as part of last year's settlement of litigation with the San Diego County Water Authority. Sales among member agencies of conserved and/or surplus water within the Metropolitan was envisioned through the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water Task Force on business modeling. The new business model presents potential solutions through interstate transfers as well, which may be crucial in mitigating impacts from serious hydrological shortages on the Colorado River.



- Visited legislators in Sacramento with fellow Metropolitan board members Mel Katz, Gretchen Shepherd Romey, and Ardy Kassakhian, along with General Manager Deshmukh, Metropolitan staff and advocates. We urged the legislature to support SB 872 (McNerny) to fund levee and subsidence repairs as well as other measures crucial to supply reliability. We met with Assemblymembers Jeff Gonzalez, Tasha Boerner, Isaac Bryan, Steve Bennett, Lisa Calderon, and Senators Robert Archuleta and Shannon Grove.



- Reciprocated a visit with Directors and Staff to the Central Arizona Project (CAP) with Metropolitan Board Vice Chairs Nancy Sutley and Michael Camacho, and Chair Cynthia Kurtz of the Committee on Ag and Tribal Partnerships, General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh, and Colorado River staff experts Bill Hasencamp and Shanti Roset to observe its canal system and facilities. CAP provided an aerial view of their aqueduct system, and we spent several hours discussing potential ways to mitigate fast-approaching impacts from the super-dry hydrology on the Colorado River.



Speaking Engagements/Events

- Served as the featured speaker at the Southern California Water Utilities Association (SCWUA) March luncheon. Before an audience of 100 water professionals and policy-makers, I focused on factors such as subsidence affecting the State Water Project and the dire situation on the Colorado River to describe upcoming budget decisions and priorities by the Board. After my remarks, we had a robust series of questions and answers with members of the audience, where I had an opportunity to expand on the Board's vision through CAMP4W and the future of drinking water reliability in Southern California. SCWUA brings together water professionals and vendors each month, providing a strong platform for industry engagement, education, and collaboration.



- General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh and I participated in the annual meeting of the Northern California Water Association (NCWA), where people from across the state gathered to share perspectives on California's water future. We offered a Southern California perspective, highlighting Metropolitan's priorities and the importance of collaboration across regions to ensure reliable water supplies for all Californians. Our remarks addressed Metropolitan's long-term outlook, including the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water (CAMP4W) and the need for an extended planning horizon to guide critical infrastructure investments while maintaining affordability. We also discussed key challenges facing the region, including rising service costs, the importance of engaged board leadership, maintaining public confidence in tap water, and strengthening interdependence among California's water agencies.



Other Activities

- Attended the oath ceremony of Maria Mehranian, reappointing her to the Delta Stewardship Council. Los Angeles County Supervisor Katherine Barger administered the oath of office, marking Ms. Mehranian's third term reappointment to the Delta Stewardship Council. Maria's reappointment was made by Assembly Speaker Rob Rivas, reaffirming her continued role in guiding the Council's work on long-term water management and Delta preservation.



- Former U.S. Representative Grace Napolitano, who has been my mentor, friend, and political guide for over 30 years, continues to make an impact. My wife, Susan Allen Ed.D., and I caught up with her in March. She sends greetings to Metropolitan's Board of Directors and the staff she worked with and is very fond of. The former Congresswoman asked about PureWater SoCal, a project she championed alongside U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, securing \$180 million for the completion of studies that will define its future construction. On April 9, Rep. Napolitano and I will be in Moab, UT, to celebrate the completion of the removal of uranium tailings from the middle of the Colorado River. She initiated this project during her freshman term in Congress, in partnership with then-Congressman Chris Cannon and then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, in 1999. I have fond memories of road trips with her and members of Congress she enlisted from both parties for this important cause.



Activities and Reports by Board Representatives Appointed by the Chair:

- Our Palo Verde Land Management Committee members, comprised of Directors Cynthia Kurtz, Desi Alvarez and David DeJesus, also serve as Metropolitan's representatives with the Palo Verde Irrigation

District in a joint Community Enhancement Collaborative (CEC). The CEC has been prioritizing and managing a community-oriented grant program. They recently announced the hiring of Valley resident Danelle Alaniz for the role. Congratulations on the opening of a new office resource center in Blythe to facilitate interaction with the Community Advisory Committee. The facility is being shared with the Blythe Cancer Resource Center. Over the last year and into 2026, leadership has been accepting CEC grant program application submittals and is looking to issue its first grant check in the upcoming month. Additionally, folks are encouraged to visit the CEC's official website (cec-foundation.org) for future updates and additional information.



- Summary of the March 24, 2026, Subcommittee on Imported Water – Director Gloria Cordero reported on the following:

At the March 24, 2026, Subcommittee on Imported Water meeting, Director Gloria Cordero reported on the Colorado River Board meetings held on February 18 and March 11, 2026. Discussions focused on deteriorating hydrologic conditions in the Basin, ongoing interstate negotiations, and upcoming funding considerations. Hydrologic conditions remain concerning. Despite near-normal precipitation, higher-than-average temperatures have reduced projected runoff into Lake Powell to approximately 52% of average. As a result, reservoir elevations at Lake Powell and Lake Mead are expected to decline significantly. Federal officials anticipate protective actions, including potential releases from upstream reservoirs and further reductions in releases to Lake Mead. Lake Powell is projected to approach critically low elevations near minimum power generation thresholds, underscoring the severity of current conditions. Negotiations among the Basin States on future operating guidelines remain unresolved. The states did not reach agreement by the federal deadline, and while discussions continue on potential short-term operating rules, it remains unclear what actions the federal government may take in response. Additionally, the Colorado River Board's funding structure will require resolution in the near term. The current agreement among the six supporting agencies expires this year, including the existing structure that divides costs between urban and agricultural agencies. Discussions are ongoing regarding potential changes to cost-sharing among the agencies, and a decision will be needed prior to approval of agency contributions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Regularly Scheduled/Ongoing Meetings

- Continued to meet regularly with the Board leadership, the General Manager, the General Counsel, the Ethics Officer, and the General Auditor to discuss policy and organizational issues.