



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

Summary

This report highlights activities of the Chair of the Board during the month of June 2023 on matters relating to The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's business. [The portion under "Notable Correspondence" has been edited to accurately reflect events.](#)

Monthly Activities

Speaking Engagements/Events

- Served as a luncheon speaker at the Pasadena Optimist Club, where I discussed the status of water supply management and long-term planning efforts under Metropolitan's Climate Adaptation Plan (CAMP4Water), to mitigate future drought impacts.
- Participated in a special Hoover tour and Colorado River Inspection trip hosted by Water Education for Latino Leaders (WELL). We were joined by Water Education for Latino Leaders executive director Paul Hernandez, General Manager Adel Hagekhalil, Manager of Colorado River Resources Bill Hasencamp, Program Manager Jason Rollo, and elected officials from California cities. In my remarks to the group, I emphasized the importance of land use decisions for managing climate change and water scarcity.



- Served as a panelist at the California Water Law and Policy Conference in Santa Barbara, California, where I was asked to address "The Age of Climate Adaptation and Water Security" along with Genevieve Johnson from the United States Bureau of Reclamation. I emphasized that climate change is having a significant impact on the operations of water systems by affecting water availability, quality, infrastructure, and resilience, among other factors. I discussed the current and future state of the Colorado River and Metropolitan's Climate Adaptation Plan (CAMP4Water), which will inform regional and local water project development and long-term financial planning.

- Served as a virtual panelist at the Sonoran Institute’s California Growing Water Smart workshop held in Ontario, California, along with Heather Dyer, General Manager of San Bernadino Valley Municipal Water District. I emphasized the need for greater integration of water with land use policies to develop solutions for climate change impacts. I also pointed to various programs by Metropolitan to help cities including those representing underserved communities implement conservation and other conservation methods. I also engaged in a robust question-and-answer session addressing climate change impacts, service costs, water quality, and Delta conveyance. Approximately 50 community leaders attended, including elected officials from Baldwin Park, El Monte, Indio, and Rialto.



- Served as a luncheon speaker at the Groundwater Resources Association of California Law & Legislation Forum in Sacramento, California, where Senator John Laird introduced me. I addressed Metropolitan’s climate adaptation measures and related issues about the Colorado River, and took various questions from the audience, about the lack of access to proposed stored supplies surrounding the proposed Sites Reservoir. –I was joined by Vice Chairs Gail Goldberg and Michael Camacho, General Manager Adel Hagekhalil, and Chief Sustainability Resilience and Innovation Officer Liz Crosson. Directors Nancy Sutley and Juan Garza also attended the conference and spoke on panels related to groundwater planning and reliability.



- Participated in a virtual “meet-and-greet” with the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Business Federation (BizFed). I encouraged members to engage with Metropolitan on planning for regional resiliency and water affordability. I also urged BizFed members to share their business and economic perspectives on jobs and the economy when they advocate on water issues to lawmakers. The board expressed appreciation for Metropolitan’s General Manager Adel Hagekhalil’s work with CalTrans to develop new stormwater capture programs for development and future presentation to the Metropolitan’s Board as part of a dialogue that was initiated by former Metropolitan Board Vice Chair Heather Repenning
- Met with the Board of Directors of Re-Build SoCal, a group comprised of business and labor organizations to promote infrastructure development. During the meeting, I addressed Metropolitan’s CAMP4Water process and the need to develop a new class of infrastructure to deal with climate change. I emphasized last year’s Project Labor Agreement that is groundbreaking because it makes provisions for local hiring and training programs; small business participation; and a range of projects covered under the agreement. The board expressed appreciation for our General Manager Adel Hagekhalil’s role in negotiating the Project Labor Agreement as well as former Metropolitan Board Vice Chair Heather Repenning.

Interviews, Correspondence, and Other Activities

- Interviewed with the San Fernando Valley Sun editor Diana Martinez about water quality, conservation, and climate change. I focused on affordability, outdoor native landscaping and encouraged careers in the water industry.
- Took part in a Podcast recording with Rebuild SoCal Zone, where I discussed the history and mission of Metropolitan in providing water delivery to millions of Southern Californians. I emphasized the need for continued efforts to develop solutions for the future, like Metropolitan’s Pure Water Southern California Program to address climate impacts and vulnerabilities facing the region’s water system and the communities served to advance strategies for an equitable and resilient water future.
- Acknowledged outgoing Vice Chair Heather Reppening for her leadership, dedication, and expertise around climate change.



Delegation of Activities

- Given my diagnosis with COVID from which I have since recovered, I asked Director Miguel Luna to provide welcoming remarks on behalf of the board at a reception held at Metropolitan sponsored by the Water Replenishment District and Mujeres De La Tierra, recognizing the remarkable achievements of Latina and Latino leaders for their pioneering efforts in water management, policy, and conservation. Many distinguished honorees, including Metropolitan Water District board members Desi Alvarez, Michael Camacho, Art Chacon, Gloria Cordero, David De Jesus, Brenda Dennstedt, Juan Garza, Miguel Luna, Marsha Ramos, and Nancy Sutley were recognized for their contributions to water. Also recognized were former Metropolitan General Manager Ron Gastelum and former Board member Charles Trevino. In attendance were General Manager Adel Hagekahalil and leaders from Metropolitan's Hispanic Employees Association.



Notable Correspondence (Please Note Revisions Below)

In June, I received a letter (distributed to the Board) from the general managers of two member agencies (“the sub-agencies”) of the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) who in 2020 applied to San Diego LAFCO for a simultaneous detachment and annexation to Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD). The letter was in reaction to the discussion by the Finance, Audit, Insurance, and Real Property Committee (FAIRP) about the potential policy implications from the precedent of forced changes to boundaries within Metropolitan’s service area imposed by entities such as San Diego LAFCO, and perhaps other governmental entities; as well as by my previous communication to San Diego LAFCO’s Executive Officer.

In their letter, the San Diego sub-agencies admonished me for not subscribing to the culture of personal hostility that erupted from litigation between MWD and SDCWA. In their view, I should regard people associated with SDCWA with apprehension. The letter included references to conspiracy theories about my motives and thinly veiled threats. In recognition of free speech rights, but to avoid the festering and seemingly personal animosities apparently still in play, I will not reply in kind. To be constructive, I have asked staff to ensure that the San Diego sub-agencies are engaged through SDCWA as we discuss affordability in our Climate Adaptation Master Planning Process.

I have acted to protect and promote our Board’s policy prerogative on issues affecting boundary changes and their potential precedents impacting Metropolitan’s planning, finance, and governance. The consensus at FAIRP as proposed by Director Michael Camacho was that the Board Chair form an ad hoc committee to weigh the policy implications after Director Jeff Armstrong suggested that such discussion might be warranted.~~The consensus at FAIRP as proposed by Director Jeff Armstrong was that an ad hoc committee should be formed to~~

~~weigh the potential precedent and policy implications.~~ I am consulting with our General Counsel and staff as well as the Board's Vice Chairs about forming the ad hoc committee consistent with the FAIRP committee's discussions. As an alternative, I am also discussing with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair Tana McCoy and staff about the possibility of weighing the related affordability issues in that committee instead, probably at the Committee's August meeting in order to inform CAMP4Water.

While we stretch to- expand supply alternatives to the State Water Project dependent areas, we would be pretending that an involuntary detachment and annexation driven by third parties to secure *sole* reliance on cheaper imported water for its proponents is inconsequential to our planning efforts. Moreover, it would be an effective reconsideration of our current policies that endorse integrated resources planning, not sole reliance on imported water.

Regularly Scheduled/Ongoing Meetings

I continue to meet regularly to review issues and coordinate activities with the Board Vice Chairs, Department Heads, and Directors.