



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# Board Report

## Sustainability, Resilience, Innovation Group

### • Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation GM Report

#### Summary

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To report on Sustainability, Resilience and Innovations activities for the month of March 2025

#### Purpose

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Informational

#### Detailed Report

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##### SRI Core Activities

SRI and the Core Planning Team for the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water (CAMP4W) presented the initial draft of the CAMP4W Implementation Strategy to the Finance, Affordability, Asset Management and Efficiency Committee on March 11, 2025. With comments received from the board and member agencies, refinements to the Implementation Strategy were discussed with the Task Force at the March 26, 2025, meeting. A new information sheet on CAMP4W is being developed along with messaging points. These will be used for public outreach and engagement as the implementation strategy is adopted and implementation moves forward.

On March 20, 2025, Metropolitan hosted a hybrid lunch discussion with environmental and community-based organizations. Chief Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation Officer Crosson shared updates on CAMP4W, the implementation of the Climate Action Plan, and the upcoming release of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for Pure Water Southern California.

##### Sustainability and Resilience

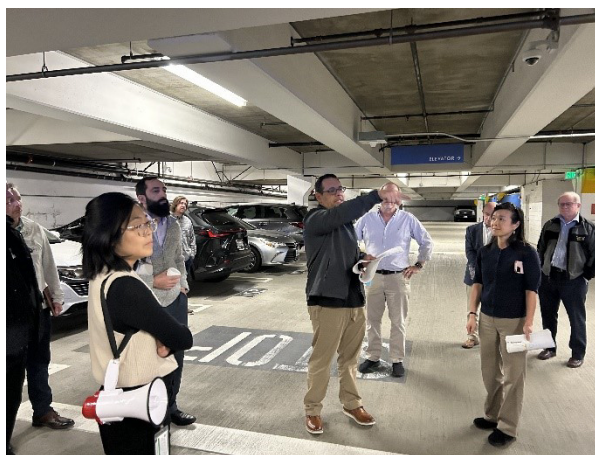
Ursula Schmidt, Metropolitan's new Climate Action Plan Program Manager, joined Metropolitan on March 3, 2025. Ursula worked for 22 years at Pasadena Water and Power as a manager for Environmental Programs, Water Conservation, Sustainability and Climate Action Planning. She will lead implementation of the CAP and the upcoming 5-year update. Ursula was introduced to the CAP Implementation Working Group, with staff from across the district leading CAP strategies and other sustainability efforts.

SRI continued coordinating Metropolitan's transition to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) with Fleet Services, the Engineering Services Group, and regulatory staff. Metropolitan joined the Advanced Clean Transportation Fleet Forum, which provides educational opportunities for staff involved in the ZEV project. On March 20, 2025, and March 27, 2025, SRI and External Affairs visited the Jensen and WTPs to photograph Operations, Water Quality, and Engineering staff who have been driving Fleet ZEVs to perform their everyday jobs. These photos will be used to build a library of photos that document Metropolitan's transition to ZEVs.



**Staff at Weymouth with zero-emission chargers vehicles and forklifts**

SRI staff participated in ESG's four-day ZEV infrastructure workshop held at Union Station. The purpose of the workshop was to review infrastructure design for vehicle charging at Union Station that will be used by fleet, employees, and Metropolitan board members. At the end of the workshop, employees presented potential design improvements that included cost estimates. The infrastructure construction is scheduled to begin in early 2026.



**Staff reviewing charging infrastructure design in Union Station Parking Garage**

### Centralized Grants Management Office

Chris Foley is now the newest Centralized Research & Grants Management Office (CRGMO) member. Chris joins us from External Affairs, where he has developed communications and engagement materials supporting Metropolitan's CAMP4W, Pure Water Southern California, ZEV transition, and other sustainability initiatives since 2023.

As a former professor of Environmental Literature and Sustainability Studies at the University of Southern Mississippi, Chris brings extensive experience writing, administering, and collaborating on state and federal grants to support regional climate and sustainability initiatives, STEM education programs, community engagement programming, and research proposals.

### Innovation, Pilots, and Emerging Technologies

This month, the Innovation staff hosted the Spring Western Water Technology Approval Group (TAG), which convenes regional water and wastewater utilities to learn about novel technologies, identify project opportunities, and share experiences. With more than 300 participating utilities worldwide, the TAG program is a regionally focused technology scouting and peer collaboration resource that leverages a global utility network to de-risk new

## Board Report Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation GM Report

technology and promote best practices. This month's meeting featured a guided trip to areas impacted by the Altadena fires.

Innovation staff also hosted the second internal Met Data Group meeting, a monthly workshop for staff across business groups to show excellent data work. The goal is to help enable cross-organizational collaboration and build capacity to advance existing priorities like the ongoing enterprise data analytics initiative. Innovation staff also collaborated with Dr. Seyoum Gebremariam in Water Quality to present his excellent work providing real-time remote sensing detecting cyanobacteria blooms in Metropolitan's reservoirs to the utility innovation network, a monthly working group sharing best practices across water utilities.

### Environmental Planning Services

Environmental Planning Section staff continued to prepare the final screen check draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Pure Water Southern California program ahead of the release of the draft EIR for public review in spring 2025. Staff continued finalization of the state Incidental Take Permit application for impacts to sensitive species resulting from the project in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. For the Webb Tract Wetland Restoration Project, staff submitted the draft Statutory Exemption Restoration Program application package to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for review in advance of the official submittal to request concurrence on the exemption finding for the proposed project. Environmental monitoring of construction activities continued for the Rialto Pipeline Rehabilitation, Perris Valley Pipeline Interstate 215, Prestressed Concrete Cylinder Pipe Second Lower Feeder Reach 3B, Weymouth Basins 5 to 8 Rehabilitation, Weymouth Asphalt Rehabilitation, and La Verne Shops Upgrades projects. Finally, Environmental Planning management presented at the ESG Project Management Training module on partnering and collaboration to educate ESG staff on environmental planning regulations and the coordination process.

Critical operations and maintenance activities were supported by the Environmental Planning Section. Staff provided California Environmental Quality Act and regulatory clearances and conducted pre-construction biological resource surveys and construction monitoring for activities throughout the service area. Environmental Planning dedicated staff and consultants to provide field support for the annual Colorado River Aqueduct shutdown. Specifically, staff conducted environmental and desert tortoise clearance surveys of work sites and staging areas and provided environmental awareness and biological resources training for Metropolitan staff and contractors working on the shutdown. Staff provided subject matter expert reviews of legislative bills, including Assembly Bill (AB) 66 (Tangipa), AB 404 (Sanchez), AB 623 (Dixon), AB 846 (Connolly), AB 734 (Schultz), AB 763 (Ward), Senate Bill (SB) 2552 (Valladares), SB 426 (Alvarado-Gill), SB 607 (Wiener), and SB 64 (Stern). In addition, staff reviewed and analyzed CEQA notices for three external projects to determine the potential impacts on Metropolitan and protect Metropolitan's right-of-way and facilities; comments letters were prepared and submitted for those projects that had the potential for impacts.



## Board Report Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation GM Report



**Burrowing Owl**



**Desert Tortoise**



**Eagle Mountain Rainbow**

Environmental Planning Section continued oversight of reserve management activities to protect valuable natural resources and meet Metropolitan's mitigation obligations. Security patrols were conducted throughout the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Reserve and the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (MSR) to prevent trespassing, vandalism, poaching, and theft and to protect the reserves' natural and cultural resources, facilities, and equipment. Specific activities at the Lake Mathews Reserve included application of pre-emergent herbicide to mowed areas to prevent regrowth of noxious weeds in the 2025 growing season, servicing wildlife cameras at burrowing owl mounds north of Lake Mathews to document burrowing owl/wildlife activity, and repairing patrol roads and fencing. Activities at the MSR included vegetation maintenance at artificial burrowing owl sites, planting in Tualata Creek and Riversidian sage scrub restoration sites, and installing perimeter fencing to prevent trespassing. The Alamos Schoolhouse interpretive center hosted 93 visitors during the month.

### **Land Management**

Metropolitan recently entered into an option to lease agreement with a subsidiary of AES Corporation (AES) for a long-term lease of up to 6,742 acres of Metropolitan's Palo Verde Mesa property to be used for carbon-free energy production and storage contingent upon further project permits, approvals and environmental clearances under CEQA. If AES successfully obtains the permitting and approvals and exercises its option to lease, Metropolitan and AES would execute a long-term for all or a portion of the 6,742 acres.

Lease amendments were executed to extend the tenancy of Dinelli Farms and Sierra Cattle on Bouldin Island West for an additional one-year period and the option to renew for a second, one-year extension. Staff is continuing to assess the feasibility of rice farming and other uses on the islands with intentions to publish an RFP in 2025 or 2026.

Bouldin Farming Company was granted a short-term lease to occupy all of Webb Tract for the cultivation of a winter wheat crop and participation in the Bird Returns Farmlands Habitat Program.