



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

Summary

This report highlights my activities as Chair of the Board during the month of December 2023 on matters relating to The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's business.

Monthly Activities

Key Activities

- For the first time since the surveying and constructing the Colorado River Aqueduct in almost 100 years, Metropolitan's Board of Directors convened a special board meeting at Metropolitan's Gene Camp field headquarters at the start of the Colorado River near Parker Dam. A quorum of the Board convened at our downtown Los Angeles headquarters in compliance with state laws. Amelia Flores, Chairwoman of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, gave the invocation at the board meeting. "We're now at a point where people, tribal nations need to be involved as we go forward planning out the river and having solutions to keep this river flowing," she said. "We have a lot of work to do together." The Board also received an update on housing developments at Metropolitan's desert facilities and toured the housing at Gene Camp.



- Attended the Celebration of 100 SAFER Consolidations, marking the successful completion of over 100 water system consolidations initiated by the State Water Resources Control Board's Safe and Affordable Drinking Water for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) program. The event at West Side Elementary School in Thermal highlighted the program's achievements since its inception in 2019. The school, connected to the water district in 2021, stands as one of the completed consolidations. In attendance were Vice President of Coachella Valley Water District Cástulo Estrada, State Water Resources Control Board President E. Joaquin Esquivel, and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 Administrator Martha Guzman Aceves.



Speaking Engagements/Events

- As the City of San Fernando's Representative on the Board of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, I was invited to make brief remarks at San Fernando's Holiday Tree Lighting Event. I weaved in the topic of water for the holiday season in English and Spanish by expressing gratitude for the abundant water supply that nourishes our trees delivered through rivers and aqueducts. I encouraged a collective appreciation for this essential resource, emphasizing the importance of water for sustaining life, nurturing gardens, and supporting the natural environment in which the trees thrive. I gave a special thanks to San Fernando Mayor Celeste Rodriguez and City Manager Nick Kimball.



Other Activities

- Participated in the 2023 Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) Annual Conference in conjunction with Metropolitan Board Directors and Staff. Engaged in substantive meetings and fostered connections with esteemed professionals within the water industry, thereby cultivating and fortifying collaborative relationships.
- Metropolitan and the Quechan Tribe extended through 2026 their partnership to conserve water. Through the agreement, Metropolitan pays interested farmers not to grow crops in the hot summer months, and the conserved water is made available for urban needs and to boost water levels in Lake Mead. General Manager Adel Hagekhalil and Quechan Indian Tribe President Jordan Joaquin signed the agreement.



- Witnessed the California Conservation Agreements Signing Ceremony, where we joined forces with California water agencies and the Bureau of Reclamation in our shared commitment to conserve 1.6 million acre-feet of Colorado River water by 2026. Our combined endeavors are significantly contributing to conservation initiatives in the Lower Basin.



- I joined General Manager Adel Hagekhalil in welcoming over 300 guests to the first Metropolitan co-hosted reception with the Central Arizona Project (CAP). CAP Board President Terry Goddard and I also welcomed United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) Commissioner Camille Touton and were joined by CAP General Manager Brenda Burman as well.
- On our last night at CRWUA, Directors Tana McCoy, John Morris, and Board Vice Chair Michael Camacho joined me at a dinner with the leadership of the Palo Verde Irrigation District.



- During CRWUA, I also had the opportunity to meet individually with Imperial Irrigation District President Alex Cardenas, Coachella Valley Water District President John Powell Jr., and Palo Verde Irrigation District President Bart Fisher. As a group, we also met with the leadership of the Pechanga Tribe.
- Needless to report in detail given numerous news articles, our General Manager Adel Hagekhalil made a great impression at CRWUA with his appeal for creativity and innovation to break the mentality of conflict that comes with a single focus on scarcity. I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful work of Metropolitan's staff, including Dee Zinke and Sue Sims, in preparing for the meetings we held at CRWUA. It also seemed that at every panel discussion and meeting, our counterparts from other California and Colorado River Basin organizations went out of their way to praise our Colorado River experts, Bill Hasencamp and Meena Westford, and their colleagues. As I observed the room, I saw our General Manager and colleagues from the Board present at CRWUA beam with pride at such references, which speaks for itself. Thank you, Adel and Staff!



- About a dozen Metropolitan Directors attended CRWUA. I would like to particularly acknowledge Directors Gloria Cordero, who represents Metropolitan on the Colorado River Board, and Marty Miller, who chairs the Ad Hoc Committee on the Colorado River. It was evident from my interactions and observations that Director Cordero has done a great job at forging contacts and friendships with many people throughout the Colorado River watershed, which is key to the final outcome in the post-2026 negotiations. Ad Hoc Committee Chair Miller attended sessions with tribal leaders and participated in the signing ceremonies, interacting with many leaders from throughout the Basin States. Thank you, Directors Cordero and Miller, for being able, personable, and strategically representing Southern California's interests on the Colorado River.

Internal Activities

- I joined General Manager Adel Hagekhalil to witness the signing of the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) extension with American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSME) Local 1902 President Alan Shanahan, which was overwhelmingly ratified by its members.
- Staff has been informing me of the work of artist Eloy Torres, who is painting the portrait of Former Board Chair Phillip J. Pace for an upcoming dedication event marking the official naming of the board room at Metropolitan in his honor. We are estimating that the portrait and signage will be ready for unveiling in April 2024.

Regularly Scheduled/Ongoing Meetings

I continue to meet regularly to review the Board's organizational issues and coordinate activities with the Board Vice Chairs and Department Heads.