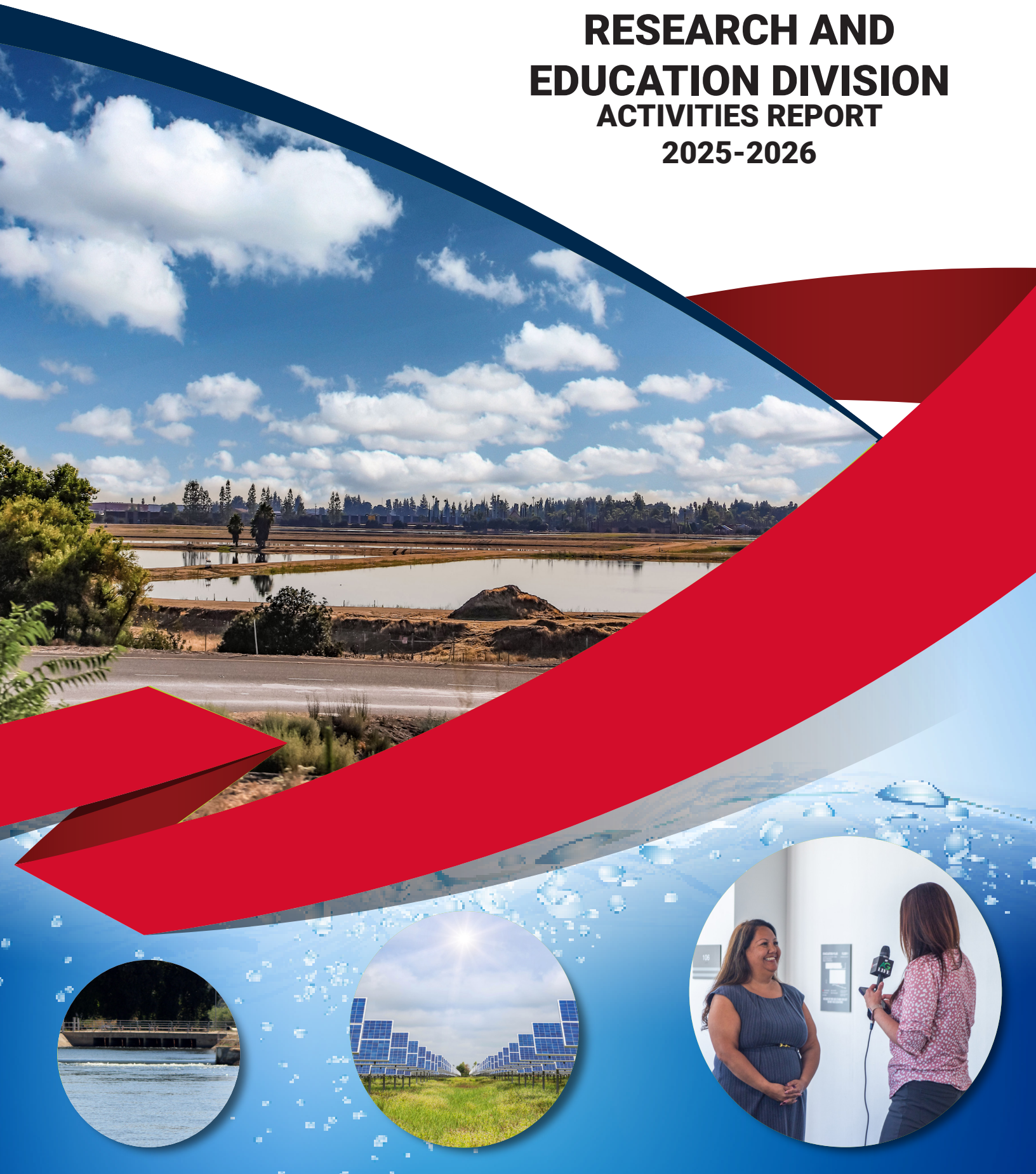
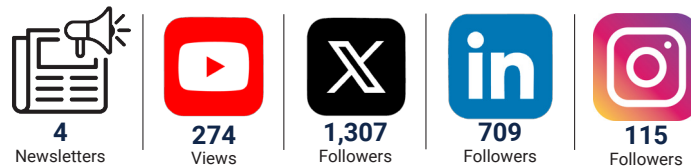


RESEARCH AND EDUCATION DIVISION ACTIVITIES REPORT 2025-2026



Impact in Numbers

At the California Water Institute, impact is more than a concept—it's measurable, visible, and growing. This snapshot highlights the depth and breadth of CWI's work across research, education, outreach, and collaboration. From cross-disciplinary faculty expertise and student engagement to public outreach, media presence, and community partnerships, these numbers tell the story of a research institute driving solutions for California's complex water challenges. Every project, event, and connection reflects our commitment to informed water management, equity, innovation, and resilience.



Faculty Fellows and Advisory Board Areas of Expertise

- Viticulture and Enology
- English
- Civil Engineering
- Plant Science
- Finance and Business law
- Mechanical Engineering
- Library and Information Technology
- Sociology
- Communications
- Liberal Studies
- Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Physical Therapy



Topics of Proposed Research Projects

- Carbon Capture and Agricultural Water Management
- Groundwater Stewardship Education in Disadvantaged Communities
- Resilient Agricultural Water Management
- Water Equity and State Water Project Impacts
- Multilingual Water Education
- AI-assisted Water Literacy
- Potable Water Reuse Implementation
- GenAI Applications for Small and Rural Water Utilities
- Water Workforce Development and Student Experiential Learning
- Household Water and Septic System Safety

Director's Message



Dear Colleagues and Partners,

This year marked a milestone for the California Water Institute: our 25th anniversary. On October 24, we celebrated 25 years of advancing collaborative, science-based solutions to California's water challenges with a public gathering at the Jordan Agricultural Research Center. It was a moment to reflect on how far CWI has come since its founding, and it also proved to be a launching point for the next chapter of our work.

This past year, we grew our capacity to meet the scale of the challenges facing the San Joaquin Valley. We welcomed the inaugural members of CWI's External Advisory Board, bringing together leaders from state agencies, local government, nonprofits, and private industry to help guide our strategic priorities. Our Faculty Fellowship Program supported two concurrent cohorts for the first time, expanding opportunities for Fresno State faculty across disciplines to apply their expertise to real groundwater, water quality, and water policy challenges. In May, CWI hosted the San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit, convening state leaders, water agencies, and regional stakeholders to translate years of planning into coordinated action.

Our research and facilitation portfolio remained as active as ever, spanning regional groundwater recharge planning, on-farm recharge trials in pistachio orchards, the Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley, supporting the SJV Water Collaborative Action Program, and the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley, among other efforts. Through our translation work with the Water Education Foundation, we helped make water education more accessible to Spanish-speaking Californians.

We also continued to invest in the next generation of water professionals. Through the Water Minor, campus events like Dog Days and Launchpad, our Faculty Fellowship Program, and our second and third annual Legislative Water Bootcamps with the Maddy Institute, we introduced students and policymakers alike to the complexity and the possibility of California's water future. Our growing digital presence, including a new Instagram account, and features in outlets from the Fresno Bee to GV Wire to Maven's Notebook, reflect CWI's expanding role as a trusted, go-to source on water issues in the Valley and across the state.

None of this happens alone. I'm grateful to our Campus Advisory Committee, our new External Advisory Board, our Faculty Fellows, our partners at the Maddy Institute, the SJV Water Blueprint, and the SJV Water Collaborative Action Program, and the entire CWI team for their dedication this year. As we look ahead to our next 25 years, I'm proud of what we've built together and energized by the work still in front of us.

Laura Ramos

A stylized, cursive signature of Laura Ramos in blue ink, with a small decorative flourish at the end.

Director

Advisory Committee

The Campus Advisory Committee brings together one faculty member from each college to provide multidisciplinary guidance and expertise to CWI. We are grateful for their continued collaboration and support in advancing CWI's mission.



Florence Cassel Sharma
Jordan College of Agricultural Science and Technology



David Drexler
Library Services



Andres Jauregui
Craig School of Business



Andrew Jones
College of Social Science



Robert Lull
College of Arts and Humanities



Beth Weinman
College of Science and Math



Fayzul Pasha
Lyles College of Engineering



Fred Nelson
Kremen School of Education



Monica Rivera
College of Health and Human Services

External Advisory Board

CWI's inaugural External Advisory Board brings together leaders from state agencies, local government, nonprofit organizations, and private industry to provide strategic guidance and strengthen collaboration. The board reflects CWI's commitment to ongoing engagement with leaders addressing California's most pressing water challenges, including groundwater sustainability, infrastructure, and access to safe drinking water. We are grateful for the expertise and partnership they bring to our work.



Kassy Chauhan
North Kings Groundwater
Sustainability Agency



Dorene D'Adamo
State Water Resources Control Board



Rain Emerson
Bureau of Reclamation



Austin Ewell
The Ewell Group



Melissa Frank
The Wonderful Company



Aaron Fukuda
Tulare Irrigation District



Paul Gosselin
California Department of
Water Resources



Ann Hayden
Environmental Defense Fund



Nathan Magsig
Fresno County Board
of Supervisors



Eddie Ocampo
Self-Help Enterprises

Faculty Fellows

The Faculty Fellowship Program supports interdisciplinary research and innovation addressing the San Joaquin Valley's most critical water challenges. Open to faculty across all Fresno State schools and colleges, the program provides structured opportunities for applied research, cross-sector collaboration, and professional development.

The 2025–2026 academic year included two Faculty Fellows cohorts operating concurrently, rather than the customary single cohort. One cohort completed its interdisciplinary deliverables in December 2025, while the second cohort continued through July 2026.

2025–2026 Cohort Members



George Rozsa
College of Arts and Humanities



Paula Durette
College of Arts and Humanities



Aric Mine
College of Science and Mathematics



Jai Choi
College of Science and Mathematics



Jorge Pesantez-Sarmiento
Lyles College of Engineering



Harry Xia
Craig School of Business

Team 1 – Project Proposal Scope of Work

Team 1 was composed of George Rozsa and Paula Durette. The team developed a comprehensive outreach and communication strategy proposal to engage groundwater-dependent small farmers who may have limited familiarity with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), recharge practices, and permitting requirements. The work emphasized trust-building and two-way dialogue. The resulting framework outlined a structured, multi-month engagement approach designed to strengthen farmer–agency relationships, support informed groundwater management decisions, and position the initiative for future implementation and external funding.

Team 2 – A Project White Paper

Team 2 was composed of Aric Mine, Jai Choi, Harry Xia, and Jorge Pesantez-Sarmiento. The team produced an interdisciplinary white paper examining nitrate contamination in San Joaquin Valley groundwater and proposing an AI-driven predictive modeling framework integrated with economic analysis. Findings highlighted the potential for AI-enabled decision-support tools to improve monitoring efficiency, guide nitrogen management, reduce remediation costs, and support agricultural sustainability, while positioning CWI for future research partnerships and competitive funding.

Second 2025–2026 Cohort Members

Alison Mandaville
College of Arts and Humanities



Fayzul Pasha
Lyles College of Engineering



Yuanyuan Xie
Lyles College of Engineering



Luca Brillante
Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences
and Technology



Ranjit Riar
Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences
and Technology



Harry Xia
Craig School of Business

Team 1 – Understanding the Ripple Effects of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act: Policy, Agricultural Adjustment, and Farmworker Food Security in the San Joaquin Valley

Team 1 is composed of Alison Mandaville, Harry Xia, and Fayzul Pasha. The team developed a white paper examining the economic impacts of water policy in the San Joaquin Valley. The proposed research will analyze employment, compensation, wages, and cost-of-living data to better understand how water availability and agricultural trends affect regional economic conditions. It will also examine historical relationships between water-year conditions and unemployment rates to provide a broader assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of water policy.

Team 2 – Using Central Valley-scale GIS data to develop a decision support system for predicting groundwater recharge rates and ground water quality before and after recharge events

Team 2 is composed of Ranjit Riar, Luca Brillante, and Yuanyuan Xie. The team refined its research direction by exploring three potential areas of focus: groundwater recharge, water quality, and soil organic matter. The selected topic will form the basis of an interdisciplinary project designed to address key challenges affecting water resources and agricultural sustainability in the San Joaquin Valley.

RESEARCH, STUDIES & CONVERSATIONS FACILITATION PROJECTS

Climate Resiliency through Regional Water Recharge in the San Joaquin Valley

Funded by the Regional Resilience Grant Program managed by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, the CWI team, along with North Kings GSA, Mid-Kaweah GSA, Madera County, and Self-Help Enterprises, is working to harness extreme runoff events to recharge the groundwater supply. By mapping existing and potential recharge locations, including strategically selected new basins and Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge (FloodMAR) sites, CWI is developing a regional water management plan that includes coordinating operations among Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), local irrigation and water districts, and flood control agencies during excess runoff events. Four key activities support this work: recharge mapping, empowering water users, informing rural and disadvantaged communities, and forming a collaborative regional response team.



Community members playing Lotería at a community education workshop.

CWI advanced groundwater literacy and regional collaboration this fiscal year through two complementary efforts. CWI completed five community education workshops in Merced, Madera, Fresno, and Tulare counties, using an interactive bilingual Lotería game and educational presentations to reach disadvantaged communities. CWI also convened two roundtables that brought together GSAs, irrigation districts, water agencies, and state partners to identify shared priorities for flood water management.

Improving Water Quality and Soil Health Outcomes for On-Farm Recharge in California Pistachio Orchards



Managed flood irrigation replenishes groundwater beneath orchard trees during dormant season.

Funded by the California Department of Food and Agriculture through a grant to Sustainable Conservation, in partnership with CWI, this project aims to expand On-Farm Recharge (OFR) in the San Joaquin Valley while researching one promising strategy for improving OFR outcomes. The project is deploying six OFR pilots in pistachio orchards with extensive technical assistance; quantifying cover crop impacts on OFR outcomes related to nitrate leaching, hydraulic function, soil health, and yield; developing a recharge methods manual; and conducting outreach and technical assistance to growers. CWI, working with Fresno State researchers and students, is leading the analysis of soil samples to determine changes in the soil before and after OFR events.

Preliminary Year 1 findings demonstrated that cover crops improved water infiltration, reduced soil compaction, increased nitrogen retention, and minimized nitrate leaching compared to bare soil. Based on these promising results, the study will expand to five additional farms in 2026 to further evaluate the practice across the Valley.

Ag-Bond Less Leaky Pathways – USDA

Funded by the USDA, this program was specifically designed to help students make the most of their first year at Fresno State. Students in the program had the opportunity to engage in relevant project-based learning, research, and mentorship centered on authentic, locally relevant, and globally significant urban-agricultural-climate challenges. CWI provided assistance with internship coordination, sharing success stories, creating a social media presence, and maintaining the Ag-Bond website.

Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley

CWI and the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley are working together to develop a Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley. In consideration of the range of ongoing, at times disconnected, work to identify water management solutions for areas of the Valley, the Unified Water Plan leveraged available information and assets to describe an approach for the development of comprehensive regional solutions. The report did not focus on reviewing or evaluating individual projects or efforts, but instead on coordinating and integrating San Joaquin Valley subregions in the development of a unified plan that enables and is consistent with local projects and efforts. At the conclusion of the report, recommendations will be provided to the United States Bureau of Reclamation for funding, policy, and infrastructure needs to coordinate regional efforts.



Canal running through agricultural land in the San Joaquin Valley.

During this reporting period, CWI completed the final review of the Unified Water Plan, which is currently undergoing ADA compliance before its planned public release in early August 2026.

San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program



CAP tour participants visit the San Luis Reservoir.

CWI is part of the facilitation and coordination team for the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP), developing recommendations for more resilient water and land management. CAP is a coalition of over 70 leaders from agriculture, water agencies, environmental justice organizations, environmental organizations, academia, and state and federal agencies. Multiple public and private organizations at the local, state, and federal levels are working to address the Valley's water challenges through on-the-ground actions and collective efforts. In Phase 1, CAP participants agreed on a problem statement, identified desired outcomes, an initial solution set necessary to achieve long-term sustainability, and a term sheet outlining guiding

principles. In Phase 2, CAP developed actions (e.g., policies, funding, projects) to achieve more resilient water and land management for Valley communities, agriculture, and ecosystems, benefiting all five interest groups and the greater Central Valley community. In Phase 3, which took place during this fiscal year, the focus was on developing a vision document for the Valley, as well as a project prioritization tool.

Throughout the fiscal year, CWI facilitated multiple in-person and virtual meetings with stakeholders and special interest groups, strengthening collaboration and advancing the Collaborative Action Program's shared vision for resilient water and land management.

Cropping System Transitions for Multi-Benefit Stewardship of Water-Limited Farmland

The Public Policy Institute of California partnered with the Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT) and CWI to conduct a two-year experiment at the Fresno State University Agricultural Laboratory (UAL) to determine the water needs of cover crops under different constraints. CWI assisted with reporting and facilitation for this project. A final report, titled "SGMA-Ready Crops as a Low-Water Alternative to Fallowing," was produced and [published on the PPIC website](#).

Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley

The Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley is a coalition of San Joaquin Valley community leaders, businesses, water agencies, local governments, and agricultural representatives working together to advance common-sense water solutions for the region. The Blueprint serves as a united voice to champion water resource policies and projects that maximize accessible, affordable, and reliable supplies for sustainable and productive farms and ranches, healthy communities, and thriving ecosystems in the San Joaquin Valley. The CWI Team works with the Blueprint to provide administrative and technical services.

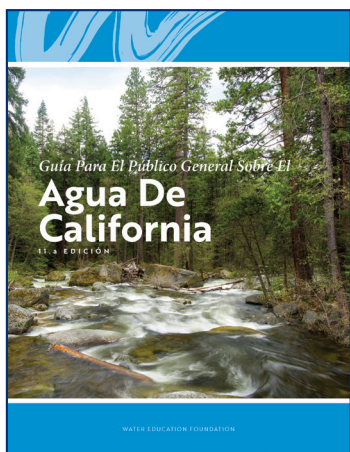


Water Blueprint Board of Directors meeting in the Jordan Agricultural Research Center.

Ripple Effect Initiative – Kings Water Alliance

CWI is supporting the Ripple Effect Initiative, a community-driven effort focused on helping to ensure a strong local water workforce for generations to come, by refining, administering, and analyzing surveys designed to capture workforce development needs, perceptions, and barriers across multiple stakeholder groups. CWI delivered actionable insights to inform workforce development strategies and help ensure rural communities are prepared to sustain their water workforce into the future. A final survey report was created and published on the CWI website.

<https://www.californiawater.org/wp-content/uploads/KWA-Survey-Report-Final.pdf>



Spanish Layperson's Guide to California Water.

Water Education Foundation Translation Services

Water touches every community in California, but not every Californian has had the chance to understand it in their own language. To close that gap the Water Education Foundation worked with CWI to bringing their Layperson's Guide to California Water: to life in Spanish, ensuring that millions of Spanish-speaking residents have the same clear, accessible window into how the state's water systems work. The project goes far beyond a simple word-for-word translation: every sentence, caption, and diagram is being carefully adapted to preserve accuracy and meaning while speaking naturally to a Spanish-speaking audience. The result will be a beautifully designed, fully bilingual resource that empowers Spanish-speaking Californians to engage more confidently with water policy, conservation, and management decisions that shape their communities.

Water Workgroup

This project is strengthening regional collaboration among eight San Joaquin Valley county GSAs through monthly coordination meetings, stakeholder engagement, and development of an outreach toolkit to improve communication with underrepresented groundwater users, including small growers, private well owners, and disadvantaged communities. This fiscal year's activities included conducting stakeholder interviews, and will follow the next fiscal year with developing communication strategies and multilingual outreach materials, facilitating consensus-building on groundwater management and demand-reduction approaches, and documenting lessons learned through a final recommendations report. The overall objective is to improve stakeholder engagement, promote informed implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and provide practical tools that support long-term, collaborative groundwater sustainability throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Fresno State Students Engagements

CWI Connects with Incoming Fresno State Students at Dog Days and Launchpad

CWI staff spent the summer introducing incoming Fresno State students to the Water Minor through two campus orientation programs. At Dog Days, the mandatory orientation for all incoming freshmen and transfer students, CWI hosted an information booth for 13 days as part of a broader resource fair connecting students with campus programs. Staff also participated in Launchpad, a free five-day summer success program that helps incoming freshmen, particularly those from Fresno Unified School District, get familiar with campus resources and prepare for the transition to college. At both events, CWI staff engaged students on how the interdisciplinary Water Minor complements a variety of majors, deepens knowledge of critical water issues, and opens pathways to careers.



CWI staff at Dog Days.



Director Ramos presenting in classroom.

CWI Promotes Water Minor to Fresno State Students

Throughout the academic year, CWI staff presented to multiple classes to promote the Water Minor and introduce students to career opportunities in the water industry. Presentations were given to freshman-level courses, which provided students with information about the interdisciplinary Water Minor and highlighted the growing demand for professionals with water-related knowledge and skills.

Director Shares Leadership Journey with Students

Director Laura Ramos was invited to speak to the Hispanic Business Student Association at Fresno State. During her presentation, "From First-Generation Beginnings to Research Center Director," Ramos shared her journey, discussing the challenges she faced throughout her education and career. Students gained insight into leadership development, overcoming obstacles, and pursuing opportunities in higher education and public service.

CWI World Water Day Photo Contest

In celebration of World Water Day, CWI hosted a photo contest inviting Fresno State students to capture the theme, "Water in Your World." The contest encouraged students to reflect on how water shows up in their daily lives, from routines on campus to experiences in their communities. The contest provided an engaging way to raise awareness about water while encouraging creativity and participation.

CWI Supports Student Learning Through Agricultural Leadership Education

As part of Fresno State's Agricultural Business Leadership course, Laura Ramos presented on the future of California's water supply system and the challenges facing water management throughout the state. The presentation introduced students to critical water issues affecting agriculture, communities, and the environment while encouraging future leaders to consider the role of water policy, sustainability, and innovation in addressing California's water needs.

Presentations & Appearances

Director Laura Ramos made numerous presentations and appearances throughout the year, sharing expertise on California water management, groundwater sustainability, recharge, climate resilience, and water policy. Through conference presentations, panel discussions, and stakeholder engagement events, Ramos promoted the work of CWI, highlighted ongoing research and grant-funded projects, and strengthened connections among academia, government agencies, industry leaders, and community partners.

Conference Presentations and Panel Discussions

Director Laura Ramos brought CWI's expertise to conferences and panels across the state this year, speaking on groundwater sustainability, recharge, infrastructure, and water policy. At the Western Groundwater Congress, she took part in a panel on incorporating environmental justice, outreach, and community engagement into Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation. She went on to moderate recharge-focused discussions at the Flood-MAR Forum, the ACWA Fall Conference & Expo, the Southwest Groundwater & Sustainable Agricultural Systems Conference, and the Southwest Groundwater CAP Symposium, covering policy, regulatory considerations, and incentives for recharge projects.

Ramos lent her perspective to two additional panels this year. At the WELL Conference, she discussed strategies for rebuilding California's aging water infrastructure and securing funding for long-term system resilience. At the Veterans Water Forum, she joined leaders from federal, state, and industry organizations for a panel titled "How Do We Solve Our Water Supply Problems," examining the state's water future.

Beyond panel appearances, Ramos presented at several major industry events, including the World Ag Expo, the SGMA Summit, and the San Joaquin Catalyst Convening Workshop, where she highlighted the success of CWI's Regional Water Resilience Planning Project and shared lessons learned from regional collaboration. She also presented research on groundwater recharge and cover crops at events hosted by the American Pistachio Growers and Sustainable Conservation, emphasizing strategies that support both agricultural productivity and groundwater sustainability.



Director Ramos on panel at the Veterans Water Forum.

Stakeholder and Leadership Engagement

Ramos continued to strengthen relationships with key decision-makers and stakeholders through presentations and briefings on CWI's mission, projects, and research initiatives. She presented to the Fresno State Academic Affairs Leadership Team on the practical applications of artificial intelligence in higher education and research. Ramos also spoke to members of the Kiwanis Club regarding CWI's work and current projects.

During a visit to Fresno State by California State Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, Ramos provided an overview of CWI's mission, research portfolio, and grant-funded activities. She also presented to the Jordan College Administrative Council, highlighting CWI's role in advancing water research, education, and stakeholder engagement throughout California. Additionally, Ramos participated in the MLRP Block Grantee Meeting, where she showcased Fresno State faculty expertise and opportunities to support reporting and analysis efforts.

Education & Outreach

Legislative Water Bootcamp (August 7, 2025)

CWI, in partnership with the Maddy Institute, hosted the second annual Legislative Water Bootcamp, welcoming legislative officials and staff from across California to deepen their understanding of the state's complex water systems. Participants explored key topics including watersheds, groundwater, water rights, infrastructure, and the evolving challenges of water management in California. Through presentations from water experts and researchers, attendees gained practical insights into the policies, science, and solutions shaping California's water future.



Director Ramos presenting at Legislative Water Bootcamp.

Participant feedback highlighted the value of the program's accessible and comprehensive approach. Attendees praised the knowledgeable speakers, engaging discussions, and ability to present complex information in a clear and digestible format. The bootcamp provided valuable learning opportunities for participants with varying levels of water knowledge and strengthened CWI's role as a trusted resource for policymakers and their staff.

Water Book Club, Fall 2025

CWI hosted its fall Water Book Club, which provided Fresno State faculty, staff, and students with an opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions on complex water challenges and their broader social, scientific, and policy implications. Through the shared reading of *Science Be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River* by Eric Kuhn and John Fleck, participants engaged in a small-group setting that fostered deeper discussion and personal reflection on the lessons of the book. The book club furthered CWI's mission by creating a space where members of the Fresno State community could engage with water issues through conversation and shared learning.



CWI team at the 25th Anniversary celebration.

CWI 25th Anniversary Celebration (October 24, 2025)

CWI celebrated its 25th anniversary by reflecting on the people, partnerships, and milestones that have shaped the institute since its founding in 2000. Throughout the evening, guests explored a visual timeline that followed CWI's journey through major research initiatives, educational programs, community partnerships, and key milestones. The displays sparked conversations as attendees shared memories and reflected on the accomplishments that have defined CWI's history.

The program continued with remarks from Representative Jim Costa, who reflected on CWI's founding and presented a Congressional Proclamation recognizing the CWI's contributions to California's water community. Fresno State President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval also spoke about CWI's role in advancing research and service to the region. The evening concluded with the sealing of a time capsule to be opened in 2050. The capsule captured a moment in CWI's history and created a lasting connection between the CWI's past and its future.

JARC Research Showcase (April 20, 2026)

CWI participated in the 2026 JARC Research Showcase, highlighting applied water research to the academic community. During the showcase, CWI presented the City of Fresno Regional Consolidation Feasibility Study, which examined provided an opportunity to share ongoing research efforts, engage with attendees, and demonstrate how CWI research supports community-focused outcomes.

San Joaquin Valley Water Summit (May 20-21, 2026)

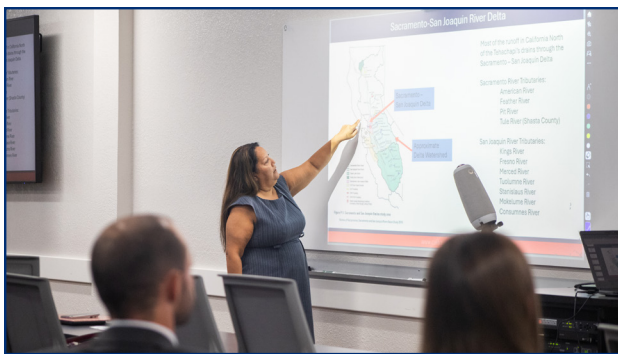
CWI convened a two-day Summit in partnership with the California Department of Water Resources to advance a coordinated regional approach to long-term water resilience. The summit brought together water agencies, policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and community stakeholders to examine findings from recent Department of Water Resources studies and the Unified Water Plan, identify areas of regional alignment, and establish shared priorities for future action.

Structured as a working convening rather than a traditional conference, the summit focused on translating research and planning efforts into implementable strategies.

Discussions addressed groundwater sustainability, flood-managed aquifer recharge, conveyance, infrastructure, land use, ecosystem health, and water reliability while recognizing the interconnected nature of the Valley's water challenges. Following the summit, CWI synthesized participant input into a [summary report](#) and recommendations for state leadership that outlined regional priorities, policy considerations, pilot project opportunities, and actions to strengthen long-term water resilience in the San Joaquin Valley.



Guest asking the panel a question.



Director Ramos presenting at Legislative Water Bootcamp.

Legislative Water Bootcamp (June 30, 2026)

CWI, in partnership with the Maddy Institute, hosted the third annual Legislative Water Bootcamp, which brought together legislative officials and staff from across California for an advanced exploration of the state's most pressing water challenges. The 2026 program built on the success of previous years and expanded beyond foundational water concepts to include more in-depth discussions of groundwater management, aquifer systems and their influence on land subsidence, and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) process and implementation timeline.

The curriculum shifted toward a solutions-oriented approach by framing discussions around current water management challenges and potential policy responses. Topics included SGMA compliance pressures, drinking water reliability, rural economic impacts, public trust and transparency, and the need for proof-point projects that demonstrate effective water management strategies.

California Water Collaborations Blog

Launched in 2024, the California Water Collaborations: Stories of Shared Success blog series continued this year with three new stories highlighting collaborative solutions to California's water challenges. Featured stories explored floodplain restoration in the Central Valley, community-driven groundwater resilience in Fairmead, and habitat restoration through the Capinero Creek Restoration Project. Through this series, CWI shared real-world examples of successful partnerships and promoted knowledge exchange that can inspire future water solutions.

Weekly Water Insights Radio Show

Weekly Water Insights is a radio segment developed in partnership with KMJ's Farm Report with Don York that brings CWI's water expertise to listeners across the region. Through weekly discussions on California's water systems, infrastructure, and current challenges, the segment translates complex topics into accessible conversations. Listener feedback, including from water professionals who tune in during their daily commutes, highlights the segment's value as a trusted and anticipated source of water information.

CWI on Social Media

In March 2026, CWI launched its official Instagram account to expand its digital outreach and strengthen engagement with students, faculty, researchers, water professionals, and community partners. The account debuted with a student-only photo contest celebrating World Water Day, inviting Fresno State students to capture and share what water means in their communities, work, and everyday lives. The campaign encouraged participation while introducing audiences to CWI's newest social media platform. Throughout its first months, Instagram served as a space to highlight research, educational opportunities, events, and community impact, gaining 97 followers and establishing a foundation for continued audience engagement.

CWI utilized social media as an outreach tool to share research updates, promote events, and communicate water issues with diverse audiences. During the fiscal year, CWI gained 208 followers on LinkedIn, 97 followers on Instagram following its March 2026 launch, and 3 followers on X. LinkedIn remained CWI's primary platform for professional engagement, while Instagram expanded opportunities to connect with students and broader audiences, and X provided a consistent presence across social media channels.

In the News

Throughout the year, CWI was featured in local, regional and national media for its leadership on water education, research, and policy engagement. The following highlights showcase CWI's continued efforts to inform decision-makers, support community-based solutions, and advance sustainable water management across California.

- **Using Floodwaters to Combat Groundwater Loss in Fresno and the Central Valley | Opinion**

<https://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/readers-opinion/article310788240.html?tbref=hp>

CWI's leadership team, Director Laura Ramos and Assistant Director Tom Holyoke, published an opinion piece in the Fresno Bee to advocate for a proactive effort to capture future floodwaters to replenish groundwater across Central Valley counties.

- **2025 Water Book Club**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/july-21-2025/2025-water-book-club>

A Fresno State Campus News article announced the return of CWI's Water Book Club for the fall 2025 semester, featuring "Science Be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River" by Eric Kuhn and John Fleck. The book examines historical water management decisions that contributed to the mismanagement of the Colorado River and underscores the importance of science-based policy in the context of climate change.

- **China is Kicking Our Ass at Our Own Game**

<https://legal-planet.org/2025/08/05/china-is-kicking-our-ass-at-our-own-game/>

A Legal Planet commentary examining global clean energy competition also referenced research from CWI within its broader roundup of environmental and climate developments. CWI was cited for its work highlighting the importance of regional approaches to capturing and recharging floodwater in the San Joaquin Valley.

- **Applications Open for California Water Institute's Faculty Fellowship Program**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/september-2-2025/applications-open-for-california-water-institutes-faculty-fellowship-program>

A Fresno State Campus News article announced that applications were open for CWI's Faculty Fellowship Program, with a deadline of September 22. The program sought faculty from all schools and colleges committed to addressing critical water challenges in the San Joaquin Valley.

- **Kudos to Campus Employees**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/october-6-2025/kudos-to-campus-employees>

Campus News recognized Dr. Thomas Holyoke, professor of political science and assistant director of CWI, for teaching a water politics and policy course that fall at the Central California Women's Facility. The course provides incarcerated individuals the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in social science.

- **California Water Institute Celebrates 25 Years**

<https://waterwrights.net/california-water-institute-celebrates-25-years/>

The online newsletter WaterWrights.net announced that CWI was commemorating its 25th anniversary with a public celebration on October 24 at the Jordan Agricultural Research Center. According to WaterWrights.net, the milestone marks a quarter-century of advancing collaborative solutions to California's complex water challenges.

- **New California Law Will Set Valley Water Targets. Can We Meet the Goal? | Opinion**

<https://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/readers-opinion/article312686424.html?tbref=hp>

Director Laura Ramos and Assistant Director Tom Holyoke published an opinion piece in the Fresno Bee about the need to take a regional approach to increase the capture and recharge of floodwater.

- **The California Water Institute Celebrates 25 Years**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/november-17-2025/the-california-water-institute-celebrates-25-years>

A Fresno State Campus News article highlighted CWI's 25th anniversary celebration with an open house event on October 24, celebrating its longstanding role in advancing science-based solutions to California's water challenges.

- **California Water Institute Releases Report on Building a Sustainable Water Future**

<https://today.fresnostate.edu/california-water-institute-releases-report-on-building-a-sustainable-water-future>

Today at Fresno State announced that CWI released a new report detailing how its applied research, education initiatives, and strategic partnerships are advancing solutions to California's water challenges. The publication coincided with renewed federal attention to water infrastructure investment, underscoring the need for data-driven planning and collaboration. CWI leaders emphasized their commitment to bridging research and practice to support equitable, long-term water security for San Joaquin Valley communities.

- **In California Water News Today ...**

<https://mavensnotebook.com/2025/12/23/daily-digest-12-23-ca-braces-for-brutal-week-of-christmas-storms-lake-oreville-sees-significant-rise-in-water-levels-snowmaking-a-necessity-not-a-backup-for-the-wests-ski-resorts-stani/>

CWI was featured in a Daily Digest roundup published by Maven's Notebook, which highlighted recent developments in water and climate issues across California. CWI was noted for its report on building a sustainable water future, emphasizing its applied research, education, and partnerships that support long-term water resilience. The mention reflected CWI's continued role in contributing to statewide discussions on water management, particularly in the context of drought, climate variability, and evolving infrastructure needs.

- **California Farm Water Coalition – News Line**

<https://mailchi.mp/farmwater/cfwc-news-line-11-16-1957099a-1961428-dbg2usfom0-1961940-il7sa1sdo6-4748385?e=452a39aaa5>

CWI was featured in the Water Policy section of the California Farm Water Coalition's News Line newsletter. The mention highlighted CWI's report on building a sustainable water future, which emphasizes the role of applied research, education, and strategic partnerships in addressing California's water challenges. The inclusion reflected CWI's visibility in statewide water policy discussions and its contributions to advancing long-term resilience amid drought, climate variability, and increasing demands on water resources.

- **From Golden Mussels to Land Conservation, Ag Expo Seminars Offer Plenty of Water-Related Information**

<https://sjvwater.org/from-golden-mussels-to-land-conservation-ag-expo-seminars-offer-plenty-of-water-related-information/>

An article from SJV Water highlighted water-focused programming at the World Ag Expo, including participation from CWI at Fresno State. The presentation reflected CWI's broader efforts to advance research and collaboration aimed at addressing regional water challenges, particularly in agricultural and groundwater-dependent areas.

- **'We Need the Snowpack': Fresno County Farmers Welcome More Fog and Precipitation**

<https://www.yourcentralvalley.com/news/local-news/fog-rain-fresno-county-welcome/>

A local news report from KSEE/KGPE highlighted perspectives from agricultural leaders and water experts on recent weather conditions in Fresno County, including commentary from Director Laura Ramos. Ramos emphasized the importance of sustained precipitation and snowpack for long-term water supply, noting that short-term improvements in drought conditions do not eliminate the risk of future shortages.

- **Allensworth Breaks Ground on Water System**

https://www.recorderonline.com/gallery/allensworth-breaks-ground-on-water-system/article_598b584c-f59c-4251-bd11-6072f40e8268.html

The Porterville Recorder highlighted the groundbreaking of a new public water system in Allensworth, California, marking a significant milestone in securing safe and reliable drinking water for the historic community. CWI was recognized as one of the partner organizations contributing to the effort, alongside community groups and technical agencies.

- **Kudos to Campus Employees**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/february-9-2026/kudos-to-campus-employees>

Campus News recognized Director Ramos presented at the Association of California Water Agencies 2025 Fall Conference. Ramos' session, "Regional Consolidation: A Pathway to Reliable, Safe Drinking Water," highlighted a feasibility study CWI prepared for the City of Fresno to address challenges facing small water systems.

- **Experts in the News**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/january-26-2026/experts-in-the-news>

A Fresno State Campus News article highlighted media coverage featuring Director Ramos in connection with her presentation on flood management and water supply issues. Ramos was quoted in a January 12 KSEE24/CBS47 segment, “We need the snowpack”: Fresno County farmers welcome more fog and precipitation,” and in a January 13 SJV Water article, “From golden mussels to land conservation, Ag Expo seminars offer plenty of water-related information.”

- **California Water Institute and Maddy Institute Launch Legislative Bill Summary Series**

<https://today.fresnostate.edu/california-water-institute-and-maddy-institute-launch-legislative-bill-summary-series/>

Today at Fresno State announced the launch of the Legislative Bill Summary Series by CWI in partnership with the Maddy Institute. The Legislative Bill Summary Series provides accessible, nonpartisan overviews of recently enacted California legislation related to water and natural resource policy. The collaboration aims to strengthen public understanding of state policy and support informed civic engagement across the San Joaquin Valley.

- **San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit Coming to Fresno State**

<https://today.fresnostate.edu/san-joaquin-valley-water-resilience-summit-coming-to-fresno-state/>

Fresno State Today announced that CWI would host the San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit on May 20–21, convening state leaders, water agencies, policymakers, and regional stakeholders to advance coordinated water management strategies. According to Fresno State Today, the summit would focus on translating recent state-led studies into actionable outcomes, addressing challenges such as climate variability, groundwater sustainability, land-use changes, and flood management.

- **California Water Institute Establishes Inaugural External Advisory Board**

<https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/april-6-2026/california-water-institute-establishes-inaugural-external-advisory-board>

Fresno State Campus News announced that CWI established its inaugural External Advisory Board to strengthen collaboration and engagement with California’s broader water community. Composed of representatives from state agencies, local government, nonprofit organizations, and private industry, the board provides guidance on CWI’s strategic priorities, research initiatives, and partnerships.

- **California Water by the Numbers: Do You Know What They Mean?**

<https://gvwire.com/2026/04/28/california-water-by-the-numbers-do-you-know-what-they-mean/>

In an opinion article published by GV Wire, Fresno State professor and CWI Assistant Director Tom Holyoke and Director Ramos highlighted the complexity of California’s water system and the challenges many residents face in understanding key water-related data and policies. The authors discussed issues such as drought conditions, reservoir storage, snowpack levels, water allocations, and the interconnected nature of statewide water management.

- **The San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit Was a Success**

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/The-San-Joaquin-Valley-Water-Resilience-Summit-Was-a-Success-.html?soid=1142001418071&aid=i0ndUiYZhiA>

The San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit convened state leaders, water agencies, policymakers, researchers, and community stakeholders to discuss major water challenges facing the region and review new studies from the California Department of Water Resources. A featured initiative was the rollout of the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley’s Unified Water Plan, which outlines a coordinated regional strategy to address projected water supply shortfalls, groundwater sustainability, flood management, and long-term economic resilience. Summit discussions emphasized the importance of regional collaboration, consensus-building, and coordinated action among local, state, and federal partners. Participants highlighted the plan’s role in supporting practical, science-based solutions that strengthen water reliability, protect communities, sustain agriculture, and advance long-term resilience across the San Joaquin Valley.

Mission

We connect academia to the water community to solve water management challenges through education and research. To achieve this, we engage faculty and students in developing interdisciplinary, inclusive, research-based solutions to water challenges for a sustainable water future.

Vision

Be the premier research and education institute for water challenges in California.

Values

Community. Exploration. Inclusion.

Contact:

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