

California Water Institute NEWSLETTER



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Celebrating 25 Years of Water Innovation and Impact

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the California Water Institute, a moment to reflect on our legacy and renew our commitment to serving the people

and communities of California. From our earliest days, CWI has stood at the intersection of research, education, and collaboration—working to ensure our state's water future is both resilient and inclusive.

To commemorate this milestone, we're proud to unveil a new 25th Anniversary graphic that symbolizes not just our history, but the momentum we are building for the next 25 years. It's more than a logo—it's a reminder of the partnerships, the science, and the shared purpose that continue to define our work. Go to the Upcoming Events section of this newsletter to see our special anniversary logo and learn about our 25th anniversary celebration in October.

This issue of the newsletter reflects the breadth and depth of CWI's mission. You'll read about our Water Bootcamp, where we're educating the public on water fundamentals, and our Legislative Bootcamp, which equips elected officials and their staff with the knowledge to make informed water decisions. You'll also find highlights from the JARC Research Showcase, where CWI staff presented timely research addressing real-world challenges.

We're also celebrating our engagement in campus-wide events like Dog Days, where we introduced new students to the water minor, and sharing kudos from recent features in campus and professional publications. And as always, we take pride in spotlighting the people behind our mission, including one of our own team members, and providing updates on events like the CWI-hosted Water Book Club.

Thank you for being part of our story. As we honor the past and look ahead to the future, we remain committed to listening, learning, and leading, together.

Water Bootcamp Virtual Education Series

The California Water Institute held its annual Water Bootcamp in May for Water Awareness Month. The virtual series aligned with CWI's mission to educate members of the public about water issues. Each online session was free and open to the public. Three sessions were offered in English on May 2, 9, 16, and one in Spanish on the 30th. Each focused on the complex water system in California, addressing topics such as hydrology,

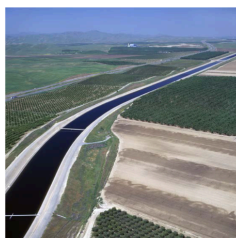


watersheds, climate change, groundwater management, surface water rights, and more.

Leading the presentations were CWI's leadership team, including director Laura Ramos, and assistant directors Thomas Holyoke and Cordie Qualle. The team brought decades of combined knowledge of water management, policy and engineering to the educational series. Following each presentation, participants took part in a live Q&A session that provided the opportunity to ask questions about their community.

In the News: Irrigation Leader

The California Water Institute at Fresno State: Working for a Sustainable and Economically Vibrant Central Valley



Irrigated orchards along the California Aqueduct in the Central Valley.



The CWI centers have done significant research on sprinklers and other efficient irrigation technology.

Drought is affecting California's Central Valley, which produces about 25 percent of the nation's fruit, vegetables, and nuts. The California Water Institute (CWI) at California State University, Fresno, is uniquely positioned to help the area's growers weather the uncertainty that the changing climate brings. As the umbrella organization for three Fresno State water centers, CWI provides outreach, education, testing, and interdisciplinary research to develop solutions for agricultural water use. The Division of Research and Education (DRE) tests products and agricultural methods, the Water Energy and Technology (WET) Center helps innovative ag tech businesses get established in the Central Valley, and the Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT) advances irrigation technology and other water smart practices. In this interview, principals from the three CWI centers talk with Irrigation Leader about the need for better-integrated irrigation automation and other solutions that address growing concerns in the Central Valley.

Irrigation Leader: Would you each tell us about your background and how you came to be in your current position?

Laura Ramos: I am currently the director of the DRE at CWI. I came to be in this position after working for 25 years at all three of Fresno State's water centers.

Eric Hadden: I am the executive director of the WET Center at Fresno State. We are a business incubator and accelerator that focuses on ag tech, water, and energy companies. I joined the WET Center just about a year ago. Before that, I was in the private sector, in the water technology space. That's where I started my career after graduating from Fresno State with an MBA in 2014.

Charles Hillyer: I am the director of CIT. We are a third-party testing laboratory, research center, and education program at Fresno State. We are in our 43rd year of operation. I've been here since 2019. My background is in irrigation management, software development, and technology in general.

Irrigation Leader: Please introduce CWI.

Laura Ramos: CWI was established in 2000 to research scientific solutions to some of the water issues in California. CWI focuses on sustainable water resource management solutions through outreach, entrepreneurship, education, testing, and interdisciplinary research. CWI is the umbrella department for Fresno State's three water centers—the DRE, the WET Center, and CIT—and other water-related activities at the university.

The California Water Institute (CWI) at Fresno State and its three principal directors were featured in a recent article for *Irrigation Leader* magazine. CWI is the umbrella organization for three water centers at the university. **Laura Ramos**, director of the Division of Research and Education (DRE), **Eric Hadden**, director of the Water Energy Technology Center (WET), and **Charles Hillyer**, director of the Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT), talked about their innovative research, plus the products, technology, and trends leading the future of development in irrigation and agriculture today.

Read the full article (pg. 34-36) here:

<https://irrigationleadermagazine.com/volume-16-issue-5-may/>

CWI Participates in Fresno State Dog Days

The California Water Institute engaged students at a resource fair for the annual Dog Days orientation. CWI students and staff ran an information booth to promote the new water minor offered at Fresno State, the only minor of its kind in the CSU system. Students learned about the requirements to complete the



water minor and how it could benefit their area of work and study, including networking and learning from water professionals.

All incoming freshmen and transfer students attending Fresno State must attend a Dog Days orientation before beginning their first semester on campus. “I had no idea there were so many career and research opportunities in water,” said a computer science student who visited the booth. “I’m excited to explore ways I can use my skills to help the public, like developing an API for a recharge basin calculator for landowners.”

Jordan Agricultural Research Center Project Showcase



The California Water Institute contributed three poster presentations to the 4th annual Research Showcase at the Jordan Agricultural Research Center, which kicked off [Research Week](#) at Fresno State. CWI’s staff and students attended the showcase in April to present three projects that best represented CWI’s most current and impactful research projects. Poster presentations include;

[Shallow Subsurface Artificial Groundwater Recharge \(SSAGR\)](#), a system to deliver recharge water to an aquifer; [Groundwater Recharge Feasibility Study](#), to evaluate the feasibility of groundwater recharge in an effort to improve groundwater conditions; and the [Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley in partnership with Water Blueprint](#), working to develop a comprehensive report for the San Joaquin Valley.

Legislative Staff Learn About California Water



The Legislative Water Bootcamp held in August concluded with a successful turnout. The California Water Institute in partnership with the Maddy Institute, hosted the event for a second year. Legislative staff members were invited to gain more in-depth knowledge of the

state's complex water systems.

"I counted 28 legislative staffers representing 17 different offices in attendance. Another major success was showcasing how CWI and Fresno State can serve as valuable resources for their offices when they need background information," said Blake Zante, executive director of the Maddy Institute.

Attendees sat in to learn about fundamental topics such as groundwater, watersheds, water rights, and essential infrastructure projects. In addition, CWI director Laura Ramos presented an overview of California's most pressing water management challenges. She detailed CWI's extensive water research and development projects and how they align with CWI's mission of working towards solutions for sustainable water resource management.

CWI work highlighted included on-farm recharge and cover crop research projects, the Unified Water Plan, climate resilience study and collaborations with groups such as Water Blueprint.

"Our water bootcamp equipped legislative staff with key insights into California's complex water issues, from drought resilience to innovative solutions for our state's water future. Engaged participation and thoughtful questions reflected a strong commitment to tackling these challenges collaboratively," said CWI Director Laura Ramos.

Employee Spotlight: Dhun Attri



As a recent graduate at the Craig School of Business at Fresno State, Dhun Attri originally thought that her emphasis on studying data analytics would bring her into corporate finance. But answering the call for a data analytics student assistant position at the California Water Institute last October changed that trajectory. Dhun found herself thrust into the world

of water and a whole new learning curve.

"It was definitely challenging at first," said Dhun. "I was given this big amount of data, and it was measurements I had never seen before."

In sifting through surface water measurements and nitrogen levels, Dhun soon found patterns, trends, and most importantly, stories emerging. CWI was a way for her to use her skills in a new industry.

“I really like numbers and I like mixing finance with data analytics and seeing the outcomes,” she said.

Since graduating in May 2025, Dhun has started a new full-time position at CWI as a project assistant. She’s still working with numbers and data, but now applying it to accounting for CWI’s projects and overall budget. Dhun credits CWI director Laura Ramos’ interest in technology for pushing her to use data in new ways to improve operations.

“Now I like to challenge myself. I like to put a little bit of technology in every single thing,” she said.

When Dhun isn’t crunching numbers and visualizing data sets, she enjoys cooking for other people.

Upcoming Events

Water Book Club

The [California Water Institute](#)’s Water Book Club kicks off this fall semester with the new featured book, “*Science be Dammed: How Ignoring Inconvenient Science Drained the Colorado River*” by Eric Kuhn and John Fleck.

The book examines the planning decisions that led to the mismanagement of the water in the Colorado River. The authors argue that historical and scientific evidence were ignored in favor of ambitious dreams. In the age of climate change, *Science Be Dammed* emphasizes the importance of learning from past mistakes by using the best scientific knowledge to inform our decisions today.

The virtual Water Book Club will meet weekly on Wednesdays starting September 17 - November 12 over Zoom. Fresno State faculty, staff, and students and community members will take part in discussions about the reading.

If you would like to join the discussion, please register at:
<https://www.californiawater.org/event/cwi-water-book-club-virtual/>

Save the Date: 25th Anniversary Celebration October 24th



Join us for our 25th Anniversary Celebration on Friday, October 24, from 4:30–6:30 p.m. at Fresno State in the Jordan Agricultural Research Center building. The California

Water Institute (CWI) is celebrating 25 years of advancing research, education, and collaboration to address California's most pressing water challenges. Since its founding in 2000, CWI has led projects on water reuse, groundwater recharge, infrastructure financing, precision agriculture, and regional water planning, while also studying the social and economic impacts of water scarcity. Our 25th Anniversary event is opportunity to celebrate past accomplishments and the future vision for CWI.