

California Water Institute

NEWSLETTER



Director's Message

Dear friends,

Some quarters remind you exactly why this work matters — this was one of them.

Across every story in this issue, I see the same thread: water solutions

don't happen in isolation. They happen around a table. Whether it was groundwater sustainability agencies and irrigation districts working through real-world case studies at our *From Flood to Recharge* roundtables, or legislative staff tracing the path of water through California's landscape at our Legislative Water Bootcamps in Fresno and Sacramento, this quarter was a reminder that our most valuable role isn't just producing research — it's building the trust and the room where research becomes action. That same spirit carried through to Fresno State, where two days of honest, cross-jurisdictional conversation at the San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit turned into a published roadmap for what comes next.

I'm especially energized by the work we're doing to grow the people behind this work. The Ripple Effect Initiative gave us a clearer, more honest picture of California's water workforce, where the gaps are, and where the opportunity is to connect the next generation to careers they may not even know exist yet. I see that same spark up close every week in Samantha, one of our student volunteers, who came to us curious and is leaving us confident, having discovered that water isn't just infrastructure, it's people, working together. That's exactly the kind of impact I hope this —CWI has on everyone who walks through our doors.

And because meaningful water education should feel welcoming, not intimidating, I'm proud that our Groundwater Recharge Lotería is now available to communities across the Valley, proof that some of the most technical conversations we have can also happen around a kitchen table.

On a personal note, I was deeply honored to be named Fresno State's 2026 President's Graduate Medalist this quarter. I want to be clear about something: that honor belongs to this team and my family. Every strategic framework, every new program, every idea I've had room to pursue has only been possible because of the people I get to work alongside every day. Thank you for that.

As we look ahead, I hope you'll join us, whether at the Walk for Water on October 17, or at our ICARP Landowner Workshop this November. There is so much more to build together.

With gratitude and momentum,

Laura Ramos

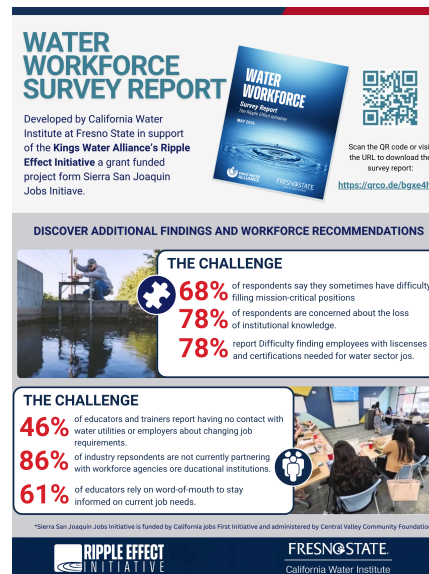
Ripple Effect Initiative Examines the Future of California's Water Workforce

Meeting California's future water needs requires more than reliable infrastructure. It also depends on a skilled workforce prepared to manage increasingly complex water systems. To better understand the challenges and opportunities shaping that workforce, the Kings Water Alliance (KWA) partnered with California Water Institute (CWI) to complete the *Ripple Effect Initiative Water Workforce Development Survey Report*, bringing together perspectives from water agencies, educators, workforce trainers, and job seekers across the Central Valley.

The project team developed two

surveys to better understand the region's water workforce. One survey gathered input from water agencies and employers about hiring needs, workforce challenges, and future priorities. The second surveyed students and job seekers to better understand career interests, awareness of water professions, and factors influencing career decisions. Together, these perspectives created a clearer picture of the opportunities and challenges shaping the future water workforce.

The completed report found that many employers continue to face challenges filling mission-critical positions. It also revealed that many students and job seekers are interested in careers that serve their communities but often have limited awareness of opportunities in the water sector. These findings represent only part of the story. Explore the full [Ripple Effect Initiative Water Workforce Development Survey Report](#) to discover additional insights into workforce trends, hiring challenges, and opportunities to strengthen connections between education and industry across the Central Valley.



San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit: From Reports to Results



Water leaders, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners gathered at Fresno State for the San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit to identify shared priorities for strengthening water resilience across the region. Hosted by the California Water Institute, the summit focused on bringing regional perspectives

together to identify where priorities align and what comes next.

The two-day summit was intentionally designed to move participants from understanding to action. Day 1 explored the technical foundation for regional water resilience through presentations on major Department of Water Resources studies, the Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley, and panel discussions that connected research with local perspectives and implementation challenges. On Day 2, participants built on those conversations through collaborative workshops that identified shared priorities and developed a near-term action roadmap for the region. Discussions focused on issues that extend across jurisdictions, including groundwater sustainability, flood management,

water infrastructure, land use, and ecosystem health. Participants worked to identify opportunities for greater regional alignment, potential pilot projects, policy priorities, and implementation pathways that can help guide future action.

Those discussions have since been captured in the newly published [San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit Proceedings and Strategic Action Report](#). The report synthesizes the summit's key discussions, consensus priorities, and strategic recommendations into a resource that will help inform state leadership and legislative conversations about the future of water resilience in the San Joaquin Valley.

Legislative Water Bootcamp Strengthens Understanding of California Water Issues

California's water decisions are shaped by many perspectives, including those who support the legislative process. To provide practical context for that work, the California Water Institute (CWI), in partnership with The Maddy Institute, hosted two Legislative Water Bootcamps in Fresno and Sacramento. These educational



programs brought together legislative officials, staff, and water experts to examine the science, infrastructure, and management practices that influence California's water system.

Centered on the theme *Replenishing Our Aquifers: The Why, With What, and How*, the bootcamp followed the interconnected path of water through California's landscape. Participants explored how watersheds, groundwater, water rights, conveyance, and reservoir operations influence aquifer replenishment, while discussions connected these topics to the decisions and tradeoffs that shape water management.

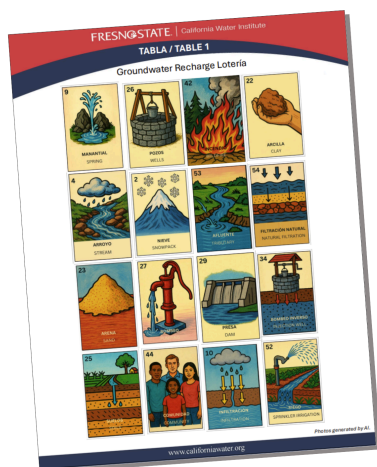
The Bootcamp gave participants the opportunity to build on foundational concepts while continuing conversations with water experts. By combining technical expertise with open discussion, the Legislative Water Bootcamp continues to strengthen practical understanding of the issues that shape state water policy.

CWI Convenes Regional Water Management Leaders to Discuss Long-term Water Resiliency

As California continues to experience increasingly extreme weather, communities face the challenge of managing both devastating floods and persistent groundwater shortages. The California Water Institute (CWI) is hosting a series of roundtables, *From Flood to Recharge: Turning Challenges into Regional Solutions* to bring together groundwater sustainability agencies, irrigation districts, state agencies, agricultural water users, and technical experts to move beyond identifying barriers and focus on practical, proven solutions.

The roundtables are designed as interactive forums. Rather than emphasizing the obstacles to groundwater recharge, the discussion centers on what is already working. Through real-world case studies and collaborative problem-solving, attendees explore ways to improve regional coordination, reduce regulatory and operational barriers, and prepare for future flood events before they occur. This solutions-first approach reflects CWI's commitment to connecting research with practice and helping communities translate knowledge into action.

Water Lotería Now Available for Community Use



Some of California's most important water topics can also be the most difficult to communicate. To make those conversations more accessible, the California Water Institute (CWI) created a Groundwater Recharge Lotería, an educational adaptation of traditional board game of change that transforms technical groundwater concepts into an engaging learning experience.

Inspired by the traditional Mexican game, Groundwater Recharge Lotería was designed to make water education feel welcoming from the moment participants sit down to play. The game can be enjoyed on its own,

but it also serves as a flexible educational tool when guided by a facilitator. As water terms are introduced throughout the game, participants connect new vocabulary to local experiences, creating a natural opportunity to explore the issues that affect their communities.

After using groundwater recharge Lotería in community workshops across the San Joaquin Valley, CWI is now making the complete toolkit available for purchase. Each kit includes 20 boards and a deck of cards. Whether used in a classroom, at a community event, or around the kitchen table, Groundwater Recharge Lotería helps create a shared language for conversations about water while honoring a game that has long brought generations together.

Did You Know? The California Water Institute Does More Than Research

When people think of the California Water Institute (CWI), they often think of research. While applied research is central to our mission, it's only part of what we do. CWI provides a wide range of services to help agencies, organizations, and communities address complex water issues

As California faces growing water challenges, from groundwater sustainability to climate resilience, successful solutions require collaboration, technical expertise, and trusted partnerships. As a university-based institute at Fresno State, CWI connects partners with interdisciplinary expertise to support applied research, technical studies, GIS mapping, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, policy analysis, and regional planning. Working alongside Fresno State's Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT) and Water, Energy and Technology (WET) Center, CWI helps transform research into practical solutions that can be implemented in the field.

CWI's work has supported groundwater recharge studies, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation, regional planning initiatives, and efforts to improve access to safe drinking water. More than a research institute, CWI serves as a neutral convener, bringing together water agencies, policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and community stakeholders to develop science-based solutions that strengthen California's water resilience.

Explore our services, partnership opportunities, and examples of projects making a difference across California. Visit californiawater.org/about/capabilities-and-services to discover how CWI can help support your next water initiative.

Kudos to Director Laura Ramos

The California Water Institute is proud to congratulate Director Laura Ramos on being named Fresno State's **2026 President's Graduate Medalist**, the university's highest academic honor for a graduate student. While earning her MBA, Ramos put her coursework straight to work at CWI — sharpening strategic planning, updating organizational policies, building a long-term financial sustainability framework to grow research and partnership opportunities, and launching the Weekly Water Insights radio segment to bring water issues to a wider public.



Her MBA capstone project further reinforced this vision by outlining a strategic direction that expands the CWI's capacity to serve California's evolving water community.



Employee Spotlight: Samantha Briano

For Samantha, one of the biggest lessons she has learned hasn't come from a classroom, it has come from stepping into her first professional workplace. As a high school student volunteering at the California Water Institute, every project has become an opportunity to build confidence, develop new skills, and discover how meaningful work happens through collaboration. As a student volunteer,

Samantha helps edit audio segments for *Weekly Water Insights*, supporting CWI's efforts to educate the public about California's water challenges and future solutions among other projects. "Being trusted to contribute has made me feel confident," she said. "It's inspired me to continue exploring opportunities where I can learn and contribute."

Joining CWI marked Samantha's first experience in a professional setting. While she expected to learn technical skills, she was surprised by the collaborative culture, where staff regularly share ideas, support one another, and encourage professional growth. Along the way, she has developed skills using Adobe Audition, PowerPoint, and Canva while strengthening her communication and organizational skills as well as time management.

Volunteering at CWI has also changed the way Samantha thinks about water. What once seemed like an everyday resource has become a complex challenge that requires researchers, educators, agencies, and communities working together. Seeing those partnerships firsthand has shown her how collaboration and communication can create meaningful impact.

Outside the office, Samantha enjoys playing tennis, horseback riding, spending time with friends and family, and seeking new experiences that help her grow. As she looks ahead, she plans to carry the confidence, curiosity, and practical skills she has gained at CWI into her education and future career.

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendars for a Series of Water Events Coming This Fall!

Join us for Walk for Water, a national event benefiting [Water Mission](#), hosted by Grundfos on Saturday, October 17 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. starting at the Water Fountain on the Fresno State campus. The Walk for Water is a community walk that raises funds and awareness to help provide clean, safe water to 4,000 people around the world. Together, we walk so others don't have to. *Hosted at Fresno State with logistical support from the California Water Institute.*

Save the Date: Landowner Groundwater Recharge Workshop on November 17, 2026. Designed for Central Valley growers, this workshop explores how groundwater recharge can become a practical tool for supporting long-term farm viability under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Through field-based insights and real-world experience, participants will come away with ideas they can apply directly to their own operations — including the different types of recharge, the advantages and disadvantages of each, return on investment, among other topics. Additional details and registration information will be announced soon.

If you would like to no longer receive CWI email updates, please [click here](#).