

2025 IMPACT REPORT



CALIFORNIA FARM
WATER COALITION



PROGRAMS AND
ACTIVITIES



EDUCATING
POLICYMAKERS



REINFORCING
PARTNERSHIPS

FOOD GROWS WHERE WATER FLOWS



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INTRODUCTION

IT IS THE MISSION of the California Farm Water Coalition to be the principal source of factual farm water information for consumers, the media, government, and the agricultural industry.

THE CALIFORNIA FARM WATER COALITION (CFWC)

(CFWC) is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to increasing public awareness about the importance of adequate and dependable supplies of water for California's agricultural industry.

OUR GOALS

Our long term goals are to ensure farmers have the water they need to sustain agriculture while fostering urban understanding and support in California for the critical link between food production and agricultural water supply.

We aim to educate younger generations about the water required for food and fiber, elevate farmers' visibility and acceptance to equal that of urban and environmental water users, and achieve balance among these three groups. Additionally, we seek to build a positive "culture" of farm water through ethos-driven branding, ensuring regulatory agencies and the public recognize agriculture's vital role.

Founded in 1989 during a severe drought, CFWC's aim is to educate consumers, policymakers, and the media about the critical connection between farm water and food production. CFWC represents a diverse group of stakeholders, including farmers, water suppliers, and agricultural businesses from across California. Its mission focuses on serving as a voice for agricultural water users, representing irrigated agriculture in the media, and educating the public about the benefits of irrigated agriculture. CFWC is

the only statewide organization dedicated to helping the public understand the direct connection between water and the availability of a safe, healthy, affordable, food supply. CFWC's membership includes a diverse group of small and large farmers, agricultural business members, agricultural organizations, and public water agencies that deliver the water that grows our food. Our 20-member board of directors representing all corners of the state oversees the policies that guide and direct our programs and activities.

**CALIFORNIA RECEIVES
64.6 TRILLION
GALLONS OF WATER
IN PRECIPITATION
ANNUALLY**

**CALIFORNIA FARMS USE
8.2 TRILLION
GALLONS OF WATER
TO PRODUCE FOOD &
FIBER ANNUALLY**

**CALIFORNIA CONSUMES
11.3 TRILLION
GALLONS OF WATER
IN FOOD PRODUCTS
ANNUALLY**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greg Johnson

This past year has been one of tremendous accomplishment and meaningful transition for the California Farm Water Coalition. As I complete my second year as president, I am struck by how much we have achieved together and how strongly the organization continues to represent the interests of California's farmers, irrigation and water districts, and business members. Thanks to the hard work of our board, staff, and members, CFWC remains the trusted voice we envisioned when this organization was formed 36 years ago—clear, credible, and unwavering in its mission.

One of our most important accomplishments this year has been the successful search for and selection of our next executive director, Michelle Paul, who will step into the role in mid-January. Michelle brings nearly two decades of experience in agricultural communications, public affairs, and industry leadership. Her deep commitment to California agriculture and her proven ability to elevate the voices of farmers make her an exceptional choice to lead the Coalition into its next chapter. We are fortunate to welcome someone with her vision, energy, and expertise.

This transition also marks a moment to express gratitude for Mike Wade, whose leadership has shaped the Coalition into the respected statewide organization it is today. For 27 years, Mike has guided CFWC with integrity, strategic insight, and an unwavering commitment to telling agriculture's story. He helped build the Coalition that its founders imagined—an organization capable of communicating complex water issues with clarity and driving meaningful understanding among policymakers, the media, and the public. His legacy sets a strong foundation for the future.

Our success is also the direct result of the remarkable dedication of our staff. Brandon Souza, our Assistant Executive Director, has become truly irreplaceable to this organization. His deep knowledge of California water issues, his steady leadership, and his ability to build trusted relationships across agencies, stakeholders, and partner organizations have elevated CFWC's impact in ways that cannot be overstated. Brandon's commitment,

insight, and work ethic are invaluable, and the Coalition is immeasurably stronger because of him.

Deja Coke-Lo, our Administrative Assistant, brings consistency, organization, and heart to everything she does, keeping our operations running seamlessly even during times of transition. And Morgan Elia, our Social Media Director, has elevated CFWC's online presence, helping us reach millions of consumers with compelling, fact-based content that resonates in today's digital landscape. Their collective work is indispensable—and deeply appreciated.

I also want to thank our Board of Directors for their steadfast leadership and commitment to the industry we serve. Your engagement, insight, and willingness to tackle difficult issues ensure that CFWC remains focused and effective. A special note of appreciation goes to Vice President Gina Dockstader, Chairwoman of the Imperial Irrigation District, whose guidance and partnership have been instrumental in navigating the priorities and opportunities of the past year.

Looking ahead, I am incredibly optimistic about the Coalition's future. With strong leadership, a talented staff, and a dedicated board, CFWC is well-positioned to remain a leader in agricultural communications and championing the need for reliable, adequate water supplies for California farmers to continue to produce safe, healthy food that California and the rest of the country depends on. Together, we will continue to share agriculture's story with clarity, conviction, and purpose.

Thank you for your support, your trust, and your commitment to this vital work.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Mike Wade

As I reflect on the past 27 years of work with the California Farm Water Coalition, I am struck by the strength of the people who make this organization what it is. From the early days of explaining the value of irrigated agriculture to a skeptical public, to today's sophisticated campaigns that reach millions across California, CFWC's mission has always remained the same — to tell the story of how farm water sustains us all.

Over the years, we've built something remarkable together. We've earned a reputation as a trusted, fact-based voice in the conversation about California's most precious resource. We've led public outreach that connects urban consumers to the farmers who feed them, and we've forged partnerships with agencies, academics, and advocates to create real understanding — not division. That legacy of success belongs to every member, director, and staff person who has shared this journey.

I want to especially recognize our outstanding team. Brandon Souza, CFWC's Assistant Executive Director, has been an invaluable member of our team, bringing unparalleled technical skills and a true heart for agriculture. His ability to build relationships with many of our members helped keep the Coalition relevant and important to their operations. Deja Coke-Lo, our Administrative Assistant, keeps the organization running with efficiency, good humor, and genuine care for our mission. And Morgan Elia, our Social Media Director, has infused new energy and innovation into CFWC's outreach, engaging new audiences and strengthening our digital presence. Their combined talent ensures that CFWC's work will continue to thrive well into the future.

To the many former employees who have served CFWC over the years — Dan Macon, Linda Blakemore, Sarah Foley, Mike Henry, Nena Silva, Clare Clancey, Rylin

Lindahl, Lisa Maloney, and others — your dedication built the foundation on which today's successes stand. Each of you contributed to shaping an organization that has not only endured, but excelled, through decades of change in California's water and agricultural landscape.

I am also deeply grateful to our Board of Directors. Your support, insight, and commitment have guided CFWC through challenges and opportunities alike. Your leadership has kept the Coalition at the forefront of agricultural communications in California, and your vision continues to remind us that informed dialogue and collaboration are the keys to progress.

As I prepare to pass the baton at the end of February, I do so with great confidence in CFWC's future. Michelle Paul will bring fresh perspective, energy, and a deep passion for agriculture to the role of Executive Director. She inherits a talented team, an engaged Board, and a community of supporters who understand the value of clear, honest communication about water and farming. I wish her every success as she leads this terrific organization into its next chapter.

It has been an honor to serve alongside each of you. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this extraordinary journey — and for continuing the vital work of ensuring that California's farmers have the water they need to feed the world.



"The CFWC's mission has always remained the same-- to tell the story of how farm water sustains us all."

CFWC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Johnny Amaral – Friant Water Authority

Johnny Amaral represents the Friant Water Authority, headquartered in the Friant region of California's San Joaquin Valley. In his role, he works at the intersection of water conveyance, storage and agricultural supply infrastructure that support the Valley's farming future. His leadership underscores the crucial role Friant plays in ensuring dependable water flows for Eastside farms while navigating regulatory, environmental and infrastructure challenges. Amaral's voice strengthens the coordination between local water districts and statewide advocacy efforts.

Robyn Black – Anderson Farms

Robyn Black, representing Anderson Farms, brings frontline agricultural enterprise experience to the leadership of the California Farm Water Coalition. With 25 years in public policy, Black helps bridge the perspectives of Sacramento policymakers with the statewide farm water community. Her role supports CFWC's mission to translate farm-water issues into clear, accessible policy and educational messages for both urban and rural stakeholders.

Don Bransford – Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District

Don Bransford, a rice farmer and member of the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District Board of Directors near Willows in the Northern Sacramento Valley, stands out as a veteran district leader engaged with local water management policy and infrastructure. Bransford's steady presence highlights the importance of irrigation districts in shaping the Sacramento Valley's water future — from local delivery and groundwater sustainability to regional conveyance and collaborative alliances. Through his role, the interests of Northern Valley growers and communities receive formal representation in statewide forums.

Jeff Sutton – Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District

Jeff Sutton serves as General Manager of the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, bringing decades of leadership in Northern California water management. A former General Manager of the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, he also represents Ridge Top Rice Dryer, reflecting his deep ties to the region's agricultural economy. In 2025, Sutton continued contributing to statewide policy discussions, including work on Sites Reservoir. His collaborative, solutions-focused approach makes him a respected voice for Sacramento Valley agriculture and a valued member of the CFWC Board.

Bill Diedrich – San Luis Water District

Bill Diedrich represents the San Luis Water District in Firebaugh on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. With his long-tenured leadership (including previously serving as CFWC president), he continues to be an influential voice in 2025. He plays a key role in Westside water-policy discussions—especially those involving conveyance, ecosystem management and agricultural water reliability. Diedrich's institutional knowledge brings stability and credibility to CFWC's representation of major irrigation and export-region interests.

Gina Dockstader – Imperial Irrigation District

Gina Dockstader is a fourth-generation farmer and serves as Vice President of the California Farm Water Coalition. She is Chair of the Imperial Irrigation District board of directors and President of the Salton Sea Authority. Dockstader's leadership underscores the connection between large-scale farm water systems, water conservation initiatives, and regional economic vitality. Her active public profile strengthens CFWC's reach into the southernmost region of the state.

Becky Hackler Arellano – Turlock Irrigation District

Becky Hackler Arellano represents Division 4 of the Turlock Irrigation District (TID), based in Turlock in the North-Central San Joaquin Valley. A third-generation farmer and former Turlock City Council member, she was sworn in December 2024 as the first female director in TID's history—marking a milestone for representation. Her dual background in local government and farming gives her a distinctive perspective on the convergence of irrigation utility, agriculture and community service.

Greg Johnson – Western Canal Water District / Far West Rice

Greg Johnson is President of CFWC and represents the Western Canal Water District and Far West Rice in the Sacramento Valley. Although his initial election pre-dates 2025, his role continued through 2025 in guiding CFWC's policy and outreach agenda. Johnson brings rice district leadership and statewide advocacy experience to the forefront. His leadership helps ensure that the Coalition remains responsive to both local concerns and statewide farm-water strategic priorities.

**Thank you
CFWC Board
Members.**

Robert Krahm – Neil Jones Food Company

Robert Krahm, based in Firebaugh, represents Neil Jones Food Company and serves as a key voice within the irrigation-district and agricultural processing community on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. His background in food processing brings an added dimension to CFWC's representation—linking upstream water supply to downstream agricultural value chains.

Brett Lauppe – CoBank

Brett Lauppe represents CoBank on the CFWC board, bringing financial-sector insight into public outreach and policy. Lauppe's presence broadens CFWC's perspective—connecting economic capital and farm water reliability.

Mark McKean – Kings River Conservation District

Mark McKean represents the Kings River Conservation District in the Kings River region of the south-central San Joaquin Valley. McKean's participation supports CFWC's multi-dimensional commitment to water reliability, groundwater management, and regional sustainability.

Peter Nelson – Coachella Valley Water District

Peter Nelson serves on the Coachella Valley Water District board of directors and the Colorado River Board of California. His role links Southern California demand, Colorado River policy, and farm water interests in the San Joaquin Valley—reinforcing CFWC's statewide perspective.

Sheridan Nicholas – Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District

Sheridan Nicholas is the general manager of the Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District in Bakersfield and serves as Chair of Region 7 of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) in 2025. His leadership in regional water storage and governance highlights Kern County's strategic place in the Valley's water future. Nicholas helps translate district operations into broader policy engagement—strengthening CFWC's connections into the heart of the southern Valley.

Scott Rogers – Tulare Irrigation District

Scott Rogers represents the Tulare Irrigation District in the Tulare region. His role reinforces the critical link between irrigation district operations, groundwater sustainability implementation, and the broader farm water advocacy agenda. Rogers' presence ensures that CFWC's voices remain grounded in day-to-day district-level realities.

Bill Stone – Upper San Jose Water Company

Bill Stone represents the Upper San Jose Water Company near Lemoore on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. His role supports CFWC's representation of Westside conveyance and farm water delivery issues—a crucial component of California's agricultural water system.

Charles W. "Bill" Wulff – Kern County Water Agency

Bill Wulff represents the Kern County Water Agency in the Bakersfield area. His position on the CFWC's board and his ongoing regional water agency work reflect Kern County's central importance in the Valley's storage, conveyance and agricultural water reliability matrix. Wulff's participation helps ensure that CFWC's strategic voice includes major infrastructure hubs of the southern Valley.

Wayne Western – Hammonds Ranch

Wayne Western represents Hammonds Ranch in the Firebaugh region and serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the CFWC board. His role calls attention to West-Side farm operations and district-level governance as critical components of CFWC's advocacy footprint.

Diana Westmoreland – California Women for Agriculture

Diana Westmoreland represents California Women for Agriculture (CWA) as a member of the CFWC board. Her longstanding leadership in farm water communications and advocacy adds a valuable voice to CFWC's slate of directors. Westmoreland helps connect CFWC to stakeholder networks, grassroots education, and emerging water industry leadership.

Dee Zinke – Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Dee Zinke represents the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and serves on the CFWC board as the demand-side voice of major urban-agriculture interfaces. In 2025, Zinke coordinated CFWC's participation at the MWD Ag & Tribal Partnerships ad-hoc committee, highlighting how agricultural, tribal, and urban water needs integrate. Her role strengthens CFWC's reach into cross-sector dialogues on water reliability, infrastructure investment and inter-regional supply.

- CFWC STAFF



Mike Wade, Executive Director, provides long-standing leadership for the California Farm Water Coalition, guiding its public education, outreach, and communications efforts since 1998. With extensive experience in agricultural advocacy and organizational management, he helps ensure the Coalition delivers clear, accurate information about farm water use to policymakers, media, and the public.

Mike oversees the development of fact-based materials, educational programs, and community outreach efforts, including the Coalition's work at MOSAC and its social media and consumer-focused campaigns. His steady leadership and practical approach have helped build the Coalition's reputation as a reliable source of information on agricultural water issues and a consistent supporter of California's farming communities.

Brandon Souza, Assistant Executive Director, applies two decades of institutional knowledge, a deep understanding of technology and media, and a lifetime of agricultural experience to propel the Coalition's activities. His approach focuses on foresight- anticipating industry, regulatory, and media shifts to keep the Coalition focused on meeting today's challenges and preparing for tomorrow.

Brandon is responsible for rapidly translating complex data into clear, usable resources that form the factual foundation of the Coalition's work. His research and analysis have underpinned the Coalition's social media content, fact sheets, educational efforts like MOSAC, and materials supporting our members and partner organizations. By integrating these insights into the Coalition's daily operations, he ensures it operates with strength and consistency. His focus on accuracy and efficiency enables the Coalition to maintain a consistent, authoritative voice, maximizing its impact in an increasingly complex water landscape.



Deja Coke-Lo, Administrative Assistant, brings more than a decade of experience in administration, client management, recruitment, procurement, and accounting to the Coalition. Her strong organizational skills support every aspect of CFWC's day-to-day operations.

Deja manages the Coalition's core administrative functions, including daily correspondence, mail distribution, office scheduling, and reception duties. She maintains the organization's computer and business systems, membership records, and provides essential support for Board and committee meetings through document preparation, mailings, and logistical coordination.

Morgan Elia, Social Media Director, leads the Coalition's digital communications efforts with a strategic, data-driven approach that strengthens CFWC's presence across social platforms. With a strong background in photography, videography, digital storytelling, content development, and audience engagement, Morgan ensures that the Coalition's messaging reaches consumers, policymakers, media, and stakeholders with clarity and impact. She creates and manages CFWC's online content, develops targeted campaigns, and monitors performance analytics to ensure that key messages about agricultural water, food production, and sustainability are communicated effectively to broad and diverse audiences.



California Farm Water Coalition Announces Selection of Michelle Paul as Executive Director

The California Farm Water Coalition is entering an important new chapter with the appointment of **Michelle Paul** as its next executive director. Michelle will step into the role on March 1, following the retirement of longtime Executive Director Mike Wade, who has guided the organization since 1998. Her selection comes after a comprehensive statewide search that brought forward a wide range of talented candidates committed to California agriculture.

Michelle brings nearly 20 years of experience working directly with farmers, ranchers, and agricultural leaders across California and Washington, D.C. Known for her ability to strengthen relationships between rural communities and policymakers, she has built her career around amplifying the voices of agricultural producers. As Vice President of Marketing and Outreach at AgWest Farm Credit, she led initiatives connecting young and beginning farmers with critical resources and helped position the organization as a highly trusted voice in agricultural policy. Her background also includes public affairs, federal advocacy, and service on the boards of the California Agricultural Council and the Center for Land-Based Learning.

Coalition President Greg Johnson said Michelle's combination of strategic communications experience, agricultural insight, and collaborative leadership made her the clear choice to carry the organization forward. Michelle shares that enthusiasm: "California agriculture is resilient, innovative, and deeply rooted in stewardship of the land and water," she said. "I look forward to strengthening understanding, building relationships, and working together to ensure a secure agricultural future for California."

Michelle joins the Coalition at a time when trusted information, strong partnerships, and clear communication are more important than ever. Her leadership reflects the Coalition's ongoing

commitment to educating the public, supporting producers, and advancing policies that protect the state's agricultural future. When she's not working, Michelle enjoys exploring California's landscapes with her family and spending time with her goldendoodle, bringing the same appreciation for the land that defines her professional life.



"I look forward to strengthening understanding, building relationships, and working together to ensure a secure agricultural future for California."

STANDING UP FOR CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE:

CFWC's Advocacy in 2025



A YEAR OF UNIFIED ACTION FOR WATER RELIABILITY

In 2025, the California Farm Water Coalition (CFWC) deepened its leadership role as a unified voice for California agriculture — working alongside the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley and the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP).

Through coordinated letters to federal and state decision-makers, CFWC helped shape key water policy debates, advance infrastructure funding, and ensure that California's farmers and rural communities are represented where it matters most.

ADVANCING THE HEALTHY RIVERS & LANDSCAPES ALTERNATIVE

CFWC's January and March letters to the State Water Resources Control Board and Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot urged adoption of the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) alternative in the Bay-Delta Plan.

Key Points

- Supports ecosystem restoration with up to 800,000 acre-feet of adaptive environmental flows annually.
- Restores 45,000 acres of aquatic habitat for native fish and wildlife.
- Protects disadvantaged rural communities from the devastating economic losses projected under the Unimpaired Flows proposal — including up to \$672 million in lost economic activity in Merced County alone.

"Healthy rivers and landscapes delivers both environmental gains and community stability -- a solution rooted in balance, not sacrifice."

— CFWC Letter to the State Water Board, January 2025

DRIVING FEDERAL LEADERSHIP AND INVESTMENT

CFWC and the Blueprint pressed for strong federal action under Executive Order 14181 and the One Big, Beautiful Bill Act, aligning national water policy with California's on-the-ground needs.

Highlights

A June 2025 letter to President Trump and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum urged aggressive implementation of E.O. 14181, setting a federal goal to increase available water supply by 9 million acre-feet annually by 2040.

July correspondence thanked Secretary Burgum and congressional leaders for securing \$1 billion in new water infrastructure funding, calling for continued investment in critical conveyance and storage projects such as the Friant-Kern, Delta-Mendota, and San Luis canals.

PROTECTING SCIENCE-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

In April, the Blueprint supported H.J. Res. 78, introduced by Congressman Doug LaMalfa, to overturn the listing of the Longfin Smelt as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The joint letter outlined how the listing — based on flawed data — could cost California up to 200,000 acre-feet of water each year, repeating past regulatory missteps that devastated Delta exports.

This advocacy underscored the Coalition's commitment to science-driven environmental stewardship that safeguards both ecosystems and people.

DELIVERING FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES THROUGH PROPOSITION 4

Through the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP), CFWC helped secure legislative attention on the fair allocation of Proposition 4 bond funds.

An August 22, 2025 letter to legislative leaders called for at least \$694 million to be directed to San Joaquin Valley projects addressing groundwater recharge, conveyance, and safe drinking water.

The letter emphasized that structural underinvestment in the Valley must be corrected through targeted, shovel-ready projects that provide multiple benefits for people, farms, and ecosystems.



Top Funding Priorities Identified by CAP:

- Regional water conveyance: \$75 million
- Multibenefit land repurposing: \$50 million
- Safe drinking water for disadvantaged communities: \$183.2 million
- Groundwater storage and recharge: \$386.25 million

"Strategic federal investment is essential to modernizing California's water delivery system and sustaining our agricultural economy."

CHAMPIONING INFRASTRUCTURE FROM THE VALLEY TO WASHINGTON

CFWC's partnership efforts extended beyond water policy into transportation and flood protection infrastructure, recognizing how integrated systems sustain California's economy.

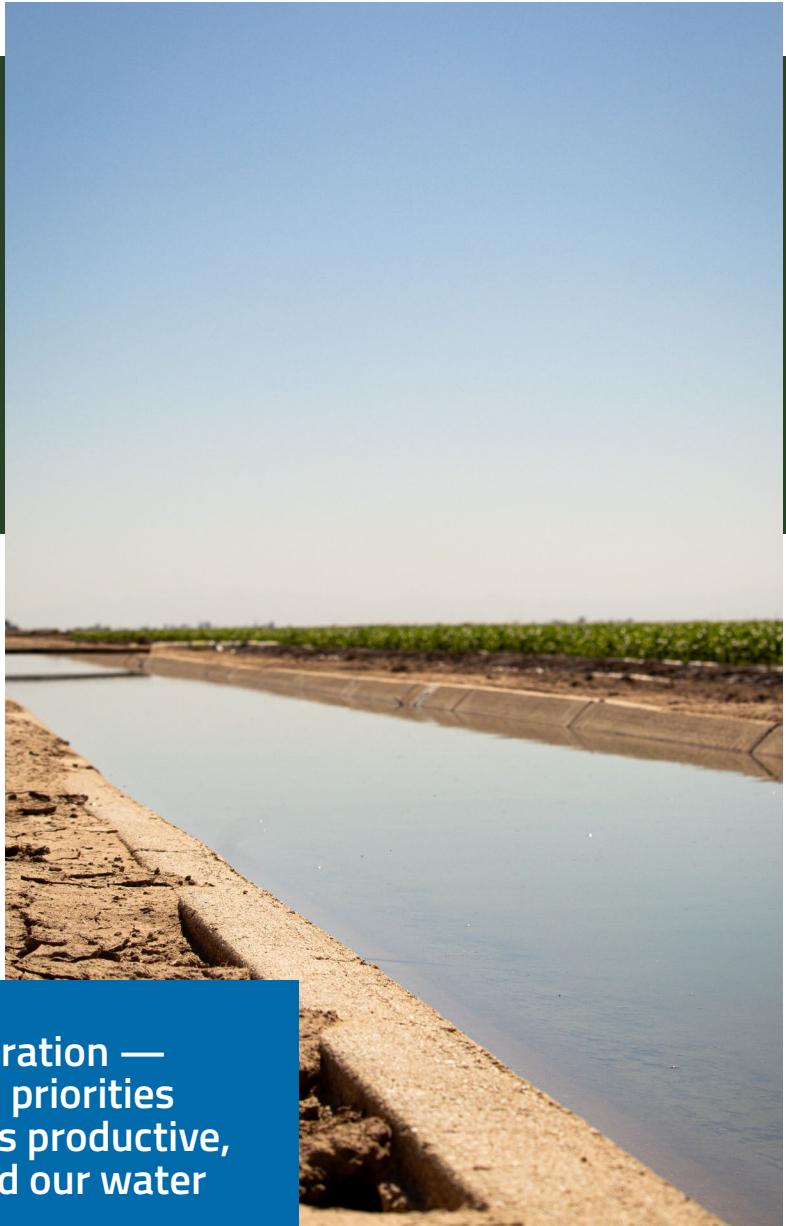
- B.F. Sisk Dam & State Route 152 Improvements – CFWC joined Blueprint letters urging federal and state funding for seismic and safety upgrades, including a \$25 million RAISE grant request and \$400 million SHOPP appropriation. The Coalition stressed that these public-safety costs must not be borne by water ratepayers.
- Success Reservoir Enlargement Project – CFWC supported a \$15 million federal allocation to complete construction, bringing long-promised storage and flood protection to Tulare County.

"Projects like Success Reservoir demonstrate that with leadership, we can deliver water reliability and public safety together."

Unified Leadership, Tangible Results

CFWC's participation in these letters reflects the organization's expanding influence and collaborative strength. By combining advocacy, science, and partnerships, the Coalition is ensuring that California agriculture's voice remains central in every water discussion — from the Delta to Washington, D.C.

"Our strength lies in collaboration — across sectors, regions, and priorities — to keep California's farms productive, our communities strong, and our water future secure."



BY THE NUMBERS: CFWC'S 2025 PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

Category	Impact / Value
Federal investment advocated	\$12.5 billion (One Big, Beautiful Bill Act)
State bond funding requested	\$694 million (Proposition 4 allocations)
Acre-feet of supply goal under E.O. 14181	9 million AF/year by 2040
Ecosystem restoration supported	45,000 acres
Water supply protected	200,000 AF/year (ESA regulatory rollback)
Jobs and economic activity preserved	67,000 jobs, \$14.5B potential benefit

BROADCASTING THE FARM WATER VOICE

CFWC's Editorial & Media Outreach in 2025

The California Farm Water Coalition continues to engage proactively in the public discourse by authoring timely op-eds, letters-to-the-editor and commentary pieces that articulate the perspective of California's irrigated agriculture sector. As part of its broader media outreach work, these editorial interventions serve a dual mission: (1) to correct or clarify misperceptions about farm water use, regulation and supply, and (2) to elevate the voice of farmers and water suppliers in policy debates that affect California's food system, economy and communities.

NOTABLE PUBLISHED PIECES

Several stand-out examples appeared in 2025 in which CFWC directly engaged via op-eds or commentary:

“COLORADO RIVER: KEEP WATER ON CALIFORNIA FARMS”

(co-authored by Mike Wade and Dan Keppen of the Family Farm Alliance) published in the Desert Sun on August 1, 2025. This opinion piece argues for protecting agricultural water supplies as a matter of food security and western economic vitality.

“As domestic farmland disappears, farms shift overseas, where environmental and labor standards often lag behind our own.”

“EFFICIENCY FROM ALL 7 BASIN STATES IS THE PATH FORWARD”

published October 3, 2025 in the Arizona Capitol Times. The piece emphasizes that all seven Colorado River Basin States must pursue meaningful conservation and collaborative solutions—and that water used on farms produces the food we all depend on.

“The water that farmers use doesn’t stay on the farm—it returns in the food we buy at the grocery store.”

“HELPING PEOPLE UNDERSTAND CALIFORNIA WATER AMID VIRAL FALSE CLAIMS”

published March 10, 2025. In this commentary, CFWC addresses widespread misinformation regarding California farm-water use following a viral video falsely suggesting San Joaquin Valley farms contributed to Los Angeles fire-water shortages.

“As water supplies have diminished, growers must be more resourceful and integrate technology to maximize efficiency wherever possible.”

EDITORIAL OUTREACH IN 2025:

Focus & Impact

In 2025, CFWC produced 21 editorial pieces, 16 of which were published, reflecting a publication rate of 76%. These pieces addressed a variety of California water issues, including:

- Persistently low allocation rates for the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) south-of-Delta supply.
- The updated State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan and alternative paths such as the “Healthy Rivers & Landscapes” proposal.
- The need for new water-storage and infrastructure investments, including the proposed Sites Reservoir, multiple canal capacity correction projects, and improving conveyance to facilitate more groundwater recharge.
- The challenge of the Colorado River Basin post-2026, including agricultural demand, conservation, and interstate equity.



STRATEGIC ROLE AND VALUE

CFWC's editorial and letter-writing efforts serve multiple purposes:



Shaping the narrative. In an environment where complex water-policy debates often attract simplistic framing—"farms = water hogs," "agriculture vs. environment," etc.—CFWC steps in to provide factual, industry-grounded perspectives and context. The March 10 commentary is a case-in-point: mis-informed viral claims triggered reputational risk for irrigated agriculture, and CFWC responded swiftly.

Reaching policy makers and the public. By placing commentary in state and regional outlets (e.g., New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Arizona Capitol Times, Desert Sun), CFWC ensures the agricultural-water voice reaches broader audiences beyond technical water-policy journals—thus influencing both policymakers and consumers.

Highlighting farmer and water-district realities. Many of CFWC's pieces connect the dots: reliable water supplies → crop production → jobs, rural communities, food supply chains. The August 1 piece underscores this link by stressing food-security and national-security implications of farm-water cuts.

Building credibility and partnerships. Op-eds and commentary help position the organization as a trusted, go-to source on farm water issues. This visibility complements CFWC's other outreach, including fact sheets, social media, influencer campaigns.

Responding to emerging policy windows. When the State Water Board released its July 24, 2025 Bay-Delta plan update, CFWC timely engaged and provided commentary on its potentially devastating effect on agricultural water supplies.





WHAT THESE ACTIVITIES MEAN FOR CFWC MEMBERS

For CFWC member water districts, growers and agribusiness partners, this editorial work translates into tangible value:

- **It ensures your perspective is heard** in key public forums—often early in policy cycles—rather than after decisions are made.
- **It helps protect and preserve the reputation of irrigated agriculture** by proactively addressing misstatements and framing narratives in factual terms.
- **It reinforces the link** between efficient, modern irrigation/farming practices and the broader societal benefits of California agriculture, including jobs, domestic food production, and rural communities.
- **It complements on-the-ground advocacy and technical work** by delivering messages that resonate with media, consumers and legislators who may not follow technical regulatory hearings.

LOOKING AHEAD

As water-supply, groundwater management and ecosystem protection challenges escalate in California—and as emerging debates around SGMA implementation, Bay-Delta flow standards, Colorado River post-2026 operations and additional storage unfold—CFWC's editorial program is positioned to remain a strategic asset. With 16 or more published pieces in 2025, the Coalition has exceeded its 2024 publication rate of 61%.

CFWC's message—rooted in the fact that "Food Grows Where Water Flows"—continues to drive its editorial work: ensuring that as California debates water policy, the farm water voice is not only present but heard.

CFWC DUES INCREASE

CFWC Board Approves Modest Dues Increase to Strengthen Our Collective Voice

For more than three decades, the California Farm Water Coalition has stood as a trusted, respected voice for California's agricultural water users. We have helped policymakers, media, and consumers alike understand the critical role that reliable water supplies play in keeping our farms productive and our communities thriving. To ensure this work continues without interruption, the Board has approved a modest dues increase—the first in 16 years—to strengthen our collective voice.



Imperial Irrigation District's East Highline Canal near Holtville.

ENSURING STRENGTH FOR THE FUTURE

For the past 16 years, CFWC has maintained its programs without a dues increase — even as costs have risen and the complexity of California water issues has grown. Like the farmers and public water agencies we represent, we've worked hard to do more with less. But to continue expanding our reach, modernizing our communication tools, and investing in strategic initiatives, we now need to modestly adjust our funding model.

The CFWC Board of Directors asked members to approve a gradual dues increase, the first since 2009, from the existing rate of \$0.15 per irrigable acre, to:

\$0.18 per irrigable acre beginning in 2026, and \$0.20 per irrigable acre beginning in

2027, for a total increase of \$0.05 per acre over two years.

This measured adjustment will allow the Coalition to sustain its leadership role, expand educational outreach, and continue delivering credible, effective communication about the importance of farm water use in California.

This year, CFWC's outreach efforts reached more than **5.5 million consumers** through social media and digital campaigns, with almost 25 million views — a powerful testament to how far membership dollars go in **amplifying agriculture's story**.



MOSAC Executive Director Andrea Durham and Mike Wade at the MOSAC President's Reception on November 13.

The Coalition continued its strong partnership with the Museum of Science and Curiosity (MOSAC) in 2025, expanding the reach of its interactive exhibits that help visitors—especially children—understand how much water it takes to produce a nutritious meal and how farmers use advanced technology to grow it. With the Museum having hosted more than 562,000 visitors to date, these hands-on displays, developed with CFWC's fact-based content and visual storytelling, remain a core part of MOSAC's Water Challenge

exhibits, translating complex topics into engaging learning for families and school groups.

To further support this collaboration, Executive Director Mike Wade attended the MOSAC President's Reception for regional leaders to visit the science and learning center and celebrate the commitment to education through STEAM learning, underscoring the Coalition's dedication to inspiring the next generation through science-based agricultural education.

TOGETHER, WE CAN ENSURE THAT CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE CONTINUES TO HAVE A STRONG, UNITED VOICE — ONE THAT SPEAKS CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY ABOUT THE VALUE OF WATER FOR THE FARMS THAT FEED OUR NATION.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MAKES A MEASURABLE IMPACT



CFWC's efforts highlight just how effective our programs have become:

Media Outreach: Opinion pieces, letters-to-the-editor, blogs, and guest articles achieved a publication rate of over 76%, ensuring that agricultural perspectives are part of the statewide and national dialogue on issues like groundwater management, salmon recovery, and Colorado River operations.

Consumer Outreach: Through initiatives such as Cultivate California and social media influencer farm tours, we reached millions of consumers, policy-makers, and members of the media — building trust and awareness with the people who depend on California farms for fresh, healthy food.

Educational Outreach: More than 562,000 visitors have engaged with our farm water exhibits

at Sacramento's SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity (MOSAC), inspiring the next generation to understand the connection between water and food.

Industry Leadership: Partnerships on major initiatives like Healthy Rivers and Landscapes, Sites Reservoir, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Water Plan, and the B.F. Sisk Dam Raise have elevated CFWC's voice in shaping sensible, long-term water policies.

Industry Communication: CFWC's publications, including the Sustainability & Imports, Sample Daily Menu, and Farm Water Café fact sheets, have become widely used resources throughout California's agricultural community.

We were pleased that the membership voted this past summer to approve the two-step rate increase, beginning in 2026.

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE



Powering the Voice of Agriculture

“To truly serve as the voice of agriculture, our advocacy must be as precise as it is passionate; we cannot educate the state without accurately understanding the resources we defend, nor reach consumers without understanding their perspective. We have to be accurate, and we have to be audience-aware.”

-Mike Wade, CFWC Executive Director

In the noisy world of California water policy, being loud isn't enough. We have to be right. While passion drives our mission, facts drive our impact. At the California Farm Water Coalition we believe that educating the public, connecting the water on a farm to the food on their plate, requires more than just experience. It requires cold, hard **data**.



ERROR CORRECTION: CALIBRATING INTUITION

“In high-stakes outreach, experience is invaluable, but relying solely on intuition for strategic direction is a liability,” notes Assistant Executive Director Brandon Souza. “We are all susceptible to cognitive biases, like confirmation bias, where we subconsciously seek to validate what we already believe, and the tendency to overvalue our most recent personal experiences.”

Even the most seasoned experts are limited by their immediate geography and network. To ensure our instincts align with statewide reality, CFWC validates professional judgment with a specialized methodology of external verification.

THE INTAKE ASSEMBLY: FILTERING THE FLOW

This commitment to accuracy requires a constant pulse on the industry. Daily, it requires a scan of every news story on the topic each morning, but that is just the beginning. The Coalition maintains a strategic intelligence framework that looks beyond the daily headlines to synthesize data streams across every level of the industry. However, the system is defined by its discipline, not just its volume.

“In developing the Coalition’s monitoring protocols over the last twenty years, it is clear that a disciplined review of sources and a regular pruning of distractions is essential,” Souza explains. “It required cultivating a methodology that functions as a precision tool for strategy, rather than a runaway exercise in collecting information.”

This prudent, curated approach ensures that the data monitored is high-yield and relevant, covering:

- **Media Trends:** Analyzing how water stories are being told across regions, mediums, and platforms to tailor our response better.
- **Policy and Political Environment:** Monitoring the actions of major voices in water, agricultural, and natural resources, as well as those legislative currents that determine water availability.
- **Public Perception:** Tracking changes in how California’s families feel about agriculture, water management, and what knowledge they express across feedback channels.
- **Audience Segmentation Dynamics:** Connecting trends in various segments of the public to effectively deliver messages in the places and ways best suited to different audiences.
- **Agricultural Production:** Aggregating crop reports from local irrigation districts, state yield reports, national USDA stats, and international markets. Maintaining awareness and understanding of changes in production technologies and methods.
- **Water Management:** Monitoring water supply and use data, peer-reviewed research on global and local water efficiency, while tracking technological developments in irrigation and conveyance, to ground our narrative in the physical and technical realities of California’s water systems.



2025 READOUTS

These five sources are among the more than three dozen that CFWC monitors regularly.

- Center for Food Integrity (CFI)
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
- OpenTable
- Pew Research Center
- USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)

THE GREASE WORK OF STRATEGY

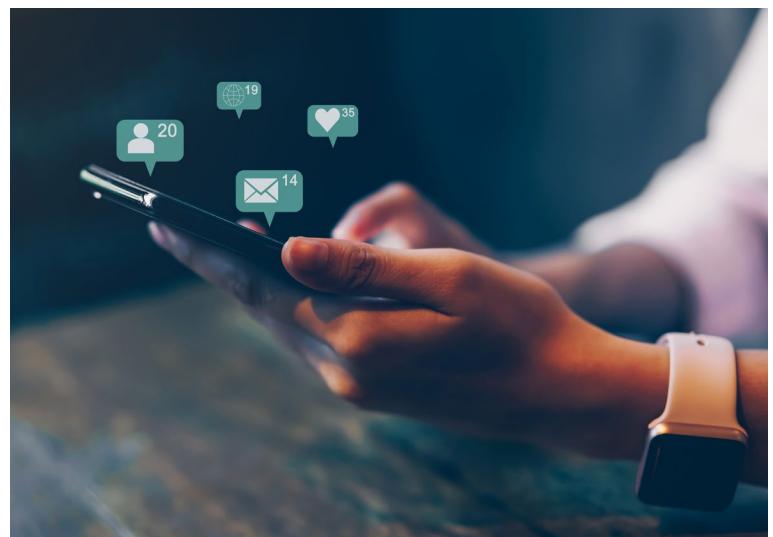


With such a massive volume of information coming in, the challenge is separating the signal from the noise. Souza characterizes this operational synthesis as the Coalition's "grease work", the invisible labor that helps ensure our message is delivered smoothly.

This capability is not a software tool that can be automated; it is a practice of vigilance relying on deep institutional context. The value lies in the translation of this data into immediate direction. The process generates a continuous stream of internal intelligence, rapid analyses of polling shifts or alerts on emerging survey trends, that informs the creative process in real-time.

"Social media is all about relevance. You can't just guess what people care about; you have to know," says Morgan Elia, the Coalition's Social Media Director. "The strategy intel gives us a head start, so we aren't posting blind. Then, I track the engagement numbers to show the team what's clicking with people and what isn't. It helps us prove that the message actually landed."

"When we start with factual, sound data, it better informs how we approach audiences and engage with trending conversations, and by validating our effort with our engagement metrics, we can keep a quick pulse on the efficacy of our efforts- allowing us to iterate quickly, if not outright predict, the best strategies rapidly. Our communications aren't based on what feels right in the room; they are grounded in data that stands up to scrutiny." Souza adds.



HOW EVIDENCE-BASED INSIGHTS SHAPE THE COALITION'S PUBLIC MESSAGING STRATEGY

To connect effectively with the public, the Coalition relies on highly credible media and sentiment research to guide its messaging. We use data from sources like Pew Research Center, the Reuters Institute, and the Edelman Trust Barometer to gauge public sentiment and focus on shared values. By monitoring insights from sources such as Morning Consult and OpenTable we are better able to tailor efforts like the "Cultivate California" campaign to younger audiences, ensuring our narrative resonates personally rather than getting lost in the noise. We monitor conversations across print, broadcast, and social media daily to stay attuned to the narrative surrounding California farm water.

Our content is developed with sound economic and policy analysis from the highest levels of government and academia. Reports from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture, United Nations, The World Bank, and universities across the planet to provide the global and federal context needed to validate local needs. We combine this with state-level data from local universities, independent organizations like the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) and state agencies like the Department of Water Resources to demonstrate the realities of water management to policymakers and the public, supporting our positions with rigorous, third-party validation.

To combat misinformation, we use advanced statistical methods for production, trade, and resource management. We leverage definitive data from sources including the Bureau of Reclamation, USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to prove the economic and productive vitality of California agriculture. Furthermore, we cite peer-reviewed science from California's universities including CSU Fresno, CalPoly San Luis Obispo, UC Davis, UC Berkeley, UC Merced, and UCLA to refute claims of waste and highlight the global-leading nature of California agriculture.

Ultimately, this diverse mix of high-value intelligence powers our strategy, turning raw information into a clear message. Food Grows Where Water Flows. We filter through everything from federal audit reports to global trust surveys to anticipate industry shifts. As Assistant Executive Director Brandon Souza notes, this bespoke capability is the result of long-term needs-based design: "Off-the-shelf tools can't capture the complexity we face; it took two decades to engineer a system that could. We monitor the entire ecosystem—from global economic indicators, to urban California food trends, to local water supplies—because the narrative defining California water is being written everywhere at once."

"We monitor the entire ecosystem—from global economic indicators, to urban California food trends, to local water supplies—because the narrative defining California water is being written everywhere at once."



SYSTEM INTEGRITY: THE RETURN ON RIGOR

For our sponsors and members, this approach offers a clear return on investment: **Trust**. By grounding our work in verifiable data, the Coalition ensures that when we speak, people listen. "In this political climate, credibility is our only currency," Wade affirms.

"We cannot afford to be wrong. The factual foundation built through this rigorous monitoring ensures that our materials are unimpeachable. It allows us to show the public the true value of water for farming, not as an abstract concept, but as a critical part of their daily lives."

For our partners and allied organizations, they can rely on Coalition content as a verified asset within their own strategic messaging, eliminating the need for duplicative vetting. This reliability transforms our work into a shared resource that strengthens the collective voice of the entire industry.

CFWC SOCIAL MEDIA

From
California
Farms to Your
Social Feed



Andrew Leimgruber

Did you know...
California rice fields
feed people **AND**
wildlife?



**Social
Media
Views:
27.5m**

CONNECTING CONSUMERS TO THE SOURCE OF THEIR FOOD

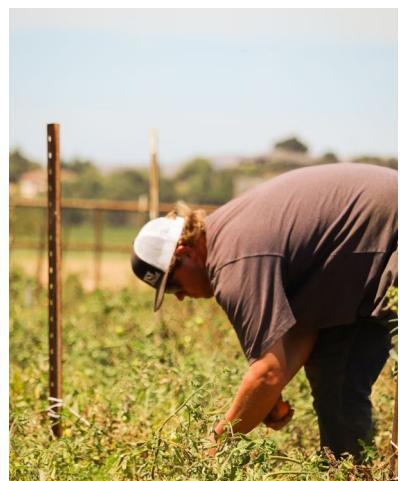
The California Farm Water Coalition runs an active and robust social media program—including our consumer-focused brand, Cultivate California—designed to help people understand where their food really comes from and why California-grown products matter. In 2025, our online presence continued to bring the story of California agriculture to life, connecting everyday consumers with the farmers, fields, and water supplies behind the foods they love.

By showing what happens beyond the grocery store shelves, our social feeds help bridge the gap between the meals people enjoy and the farms that make them possible. Across X (@farmwater), Facebook (@foodgrowswherewaterflows), and Instagram (@farmwater and @cultivateca), we use a mix of clear facts, eye-catching visuals, and engaging stories to highlight why California-grown food stands apart.

Our approach centers on four key pillars: showing the link between water and our food supply, sharing regional stories from across the

state, partnering with food-minded influencers, and promoting the value and sustainability of choosing California-grown products. Together, these themes help build trust and encourage consumers to support the smart use of California's water resources.

In 2025, CFWC's social media efforts made the farm-to-table journey more relatable and real for our audiences—helping people understand not just what they eat, but where it comes from and why California agriculture deserves their support.



Randy Romero

INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS: EXPANDING REACH THROUGH TRUSTED VOICES



Throughout the year, the CFWC partnered with a diverse group of food, lifestyle, and wellness **influencers** who share a commitment to transparency in food sourcing and supporting California-grown products. These partnerships helped bring the story of California agriculture directly into the everyday routines of consumers—through recipes, behind-the-scenes farm visits, and conversations about the role of water in producing high-quality, nutritious food.

Influencers remain a vital part of Cultivate California's strategy because they bring authenticity, creativity, and personal connection to the message. By partnering with creators who value fresh, local ingredients and who are highly engaged with their audiences, we were able to translate complex agricultural issues into relatable, easy-to-understand content.

WHO WE WORKED WITH

- **Morgan Cooney** - @coops.kitchen_
- **Danielle Kartes** - @rusticjoyfulfood
- **Liren Baker** - @kitchconfidante
- **Josie Scherer** - @injoskitchen
- **Emily Schaapman** - @dairygirlfitness
- **Gabriela Monsalve** - @sizzlewithgaby
- **Shawna Leatherman** - @downhome_shawna
- **Maryanne Cabrera** - @littleepicurean
- **Vy Tran** - @beyondsweetandsavory
- **Anthony Contrino** - @anthonyissaucy
- **Lauren Grier** - @thecurious_plate
- **Denise Favela** - @hechovistocomido
- **Alli Powell** - @grocerygettinggirl



Emily Schaapman, @dairygirlfitness



Shawna Leatherman, @downhome_shawna

PARTNERING WITH IVH2O TO ELEVATE IMPERIAL VALLEY AGRICULTURE



In 2025, the California Farm Water Coalition strengthened its storytelling in the Imperial Valley through a new collaboration with IVH2O, a grassroots project sharing authentic, local water and agriculture narratives. Together, we produced Instagram content—including short videos, grower profiles, and field footage—that highlighted the value of irrigated agriculture and the people who make it possible.

By combining IVH2O's on-the-ground perspective with our statewide water expertise, we created engaging content for audiences who increasingly look to visual platforms for trustworthy information. The result was a stronger digital presence and a better-informed public—one that more clearly sees how Imperial Valley farmers use Colorado River water efficiently and support year-round food production in California.



STRATEGIC OUTREACH

The California Farm Water Coalition provides concise, timely water information to farmers and agricultural partners, ensuring the industry has the facts it needs to respond to ongoing water challenges.

Our **Cultivate California** program extends this work to a broader audience: everyday consumers who may feel far removed from farming. Cultivate California uses approachable storytelling—short videos, simple graphics, farm profiles, and food-focused posts—to explain how water shapes the foods people rely on and how California farmers steward their resources. By showing

the care, efficiency, and innovation behind the state's food production, the program gives consumers a clearer picture of the people and practices that keep their grocery baskets full.

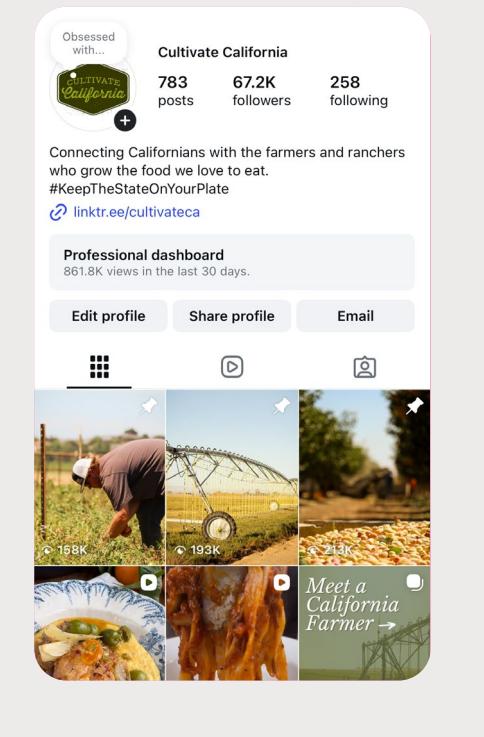
Most importantly, Cultivate California encourages consumers to actively support California agriculture—by choosing locally grown products, sharing accurate information, and recognizing the value of reliable water supplies for the state's food security. Through relatable content and real-world examples, the program builds trust and empowers consumers to stand behind the farmers who feed them.



Helping consumers understand and support California agriculture.

PERFORMANCE

- Reels / Short-form video became our most powerful format: they delivered more reach and generated higher engagement than static posts. This validates our strategic pivot toward video content.
- A partnership with The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) and elevated investment in content allowed us to scale up our social media program significantly.
- Reels / short-form video content consistently outperformed static or text-based posts – not only in reach, but in engagement metrics. This underscores a clear audience preference for dynamic, visual storytelling when it comes to agriculture and water issues.
- Our Cultivate California Instagram, in particular, has seen steady and significant follower and engagement increases. This shows that consumers are interested in learning and getting involved in the story of California agriculture.



177k
Profile
Visits

90.3k
Followers
Gained

142.2k
Link
Clicks

174.7k
Interactions

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

DON BRANSFORD RECEIVES NCWA'S WILL S. GREEN AWARD

CFWC Director Don Bransford was awarded the prestigious "Will S. Green Award" at the Northern California Water Association (NCWA) Annual Meeting in March. Don represents Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District on the CFWC Board of Directors, bringing decades of leadership in California's farming community.

The Will S. Green Award is presented by NCWA to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of irrigation and regional sustainability in the Sacramento Valley.



Don Bransford

Named after Will S. Green, a pioneering figure in Northern California's water management and agricultural development, the award celebrates his legacy of innovation and dedication to the region's water resources.

Recipients are selected based on their:

- **Lifetime dedication** to improving water resource management in the Sacramento Valley.
- **Leadership** in fostering collaboration among water users, agencies, and stakeholders.
- **Impact** on the region's agricultural, environmental, and economic sustainability.

The award pays tribute to those who continue to advocate the principles of irrigation and sustainability that Will S. Green pioneered, ensuring the ongoing prosperity of Northern California's agricultural heartland.

MIKE WADE HONORED WITH THE JOHN W. KEYS III AWARD



Dan Keppen, Mike Wade, and incoming FFA Executive Director, Samantha Barncastle.

At the Family Farm Alliance Conference on October 31 in Reno, CFWC Executive Director Mike Wade was honored with the prestigious John W. Keys III Award, recognizing his "decades of leadership and tireless advocacy on behalf of farms and rural communities." The award was presented by outgoing FFA Executive Director Dan Keppen, who highlighted Mike's commitment to clear communication, factual public education, and elevating the voices of agricultural water users throughout the West.

The award's namesake, John W. Keys III, served for more than 30 years with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, including as Commissioner from 2001 to 2006. He was widely respected for his integrity, fairness, and deep dedication to western water users—values that the Family Farm Alliance seeks to honor through this recognition.

"Decades of leadership and tireless advocacy on behalf of farms and rural communities."



ACWA president, Cathy Green, and Mike Wade

On December 3 in San Diego, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) presented Mike Wade with its Lifetime Achievement Award, honoring his decades of service, leadership, and commitment to advancing thoughtful, fact-based water policy in California. The award recognizes individuals who have made **exceptional and lasting contributions to the state's water community**—work Mike has embodied throughout his tenure with the California Farm Water Coalition.

In presenting the award, ACWA leaders expressed appreciation to Mike for elevating public understanding of California's complex water issues, strengthening relationships between growers and water agencies, and championing reliable water supplies for the farms and rural communities that depend on them.

WADE RECEIVES ACWA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

“Mike Wade has been a steadfast and visionary leader in California’s agricultural water community,” said ACWA President Cathy Green. “His decades of dedication to public education, outreach, and fostering understanding about the importance of reliable water supplies have made a lasting impact on the industry.”



“His decades of dedication to public education, outreach, and fostering understanding about the importance of reliable water supplies have made a lasting impact on the industry.”

RECOGNIZING OUR 2025 PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH

In 2025, the California Farm Water Coalition continued to amplify the voice of California's irrigated agriculture through partnerships with growers, industry leaders, and communicators across the state. Their contributions—whether through on-farm storytelling, policy messaging, or community outreach—strengthened our public education efforts and helped ensure that consumers, media, and decision-makers understand the essential role of water in growing our food. The following individuals made notable project-specific contributions that advanced our mission this year.

DAN KEPPEN – FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

Dan Keppen collaborated with the Coalition on public education campaigns that underscored the importance of irrigating productive farmland across the West. His expertise helped ensure our messaging reflected the shared challenges facing growers from California to Wyoming, emphasizing the national importance of Western agriculture.

KIM GALLAGHER – SACRAMENTO VALLEY RICE FARMER

Kim Gallagher recorded an Instagram reel highlighting the Floodplain Forward program and how multi-benefit projects strengthen both farms and ecosystems. Her clear and approachable explanation helped broaden public understanding of habitat restoration efforts driven by agricultural leadership.



Ryan Mamer

DON BRANSFORD – SACRAMENTO VALLEY FARMER & WILL S. GREEN AWARD RECIPIENT

Don Bransford partnered with the Coalition to film an Instagram reel showcasing Sacramento Valley rice farming and responsible water management. His work received added recognition this year as he was honored with the prestigious Will S. Green Award for leadership and service in advancing Northern California water issues.

ANDREW LEIMGRUBER – IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMER

Andrew Leimgruber contributed to a water-conservation video reel demonstrating on-farm efficiency practices that are lowering water use in the Imperial Valley. His participation helped the Coalition showcase real examples of agricultural stewardship tied directly to Colorado River sustainability.

RYAN MAMER – IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMER

Ryan Mamer appeared in a water-conservation reel that illustrated how growers are adapting and investing in improved irrigation methods. His comments helped convey the long-term commitment of farmers to protect water supplies while maintaining productive farmland.

SUTTON MORGAN – IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMER

Sutton Morgan supported the Coalition's social media efforts by sharing firsthand how conservation practices are implemented on his family's operation. His interview helped humanize complex policy discussions by connecting them to real families working the land.

ALEX JACK – IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMER

Alex Jack joined the Coalition's Colorado River content series by demonstrating the everyday field decisions farmers make to conserve water. His contribution reinforced the message that long-term river sustainability depends on practical, on-the-ground actions already underway.



Andrew Leimgruber

JACK VESSEY – IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMER

Jack Vessey participated in a conservation-focused Instagram reel highlighting the investments growers have made over decades to improve water-use efficiency. His perspective helped viewers understand the scale and significance of these efforts in the nation's largest vegetable-producing winter region.

BILL DIEDRICH – SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY FARMER

Bill Diedrich collaborated with the Coalition by providing harvest-season footage and commentary on pistachio and prune production. His contribution helped illustrate the economic and community importance of specialty crops that rely on secure, reliable water supplies.

CORISSA KING – TRES PINOS FARM STAND

Corissa King partnered with the Coalition to produce a direct-to-consumer Instagram reel showcasing her farm stand and the role water plays in bringing fresh, local produce to families. Her story strengthened our outreach to urban audiences interested in where their food comes from.



Corissa King

RANDY ROMERO – BIG GUY ORGANICS

Randy Romero participated in a social-media feature highlighting the challenges and rewards of direct-marketing organic produce. His reel provided an authentic look at how dependable water supplies support small-farm entrepreneurship and consumer access to healthy food.

GREEN DESERT FILM



THE GREEN DESERT

In 2025, the California Farm Water Coalition proudly supported the documentary *The Green Desert*, a powerful film by director Leo Zahn that highlights the critical link between water and food production in the arid Southwest. By underwriting this project, CFWC helped bring a compelling narrative to public television audiences nationwide — aligning our mission of communicating the vital role of agricultural water resources with a wide-reaching media platform.

The Coalition's decision to sponsor *The Green Desert* reflects our commitment to elevating the story of water for agriculture — not just as a technical or policy issue, but as a human and culture story that resonates.



On screen, the connection becomes personal: farm families, irrigation canals, date palms, bell pepper fields, and the ticking clock of reservoir decline. As the film's website explains:

America's harshest desert is home to the nation's breadbasket... a system on the brink of collapse. By placing this narrative on PBS stations, we amplified the message that the health of the Colorado River system isn't just a Western concern — it connects to national food security, supply chains, and community resilience.

ABOUT THE FILM

The Green Desert is an 85-minute feature-length documentary that follows farmers in the Imperial and Coachella valleys who depend on the Colorado River system for winter vegetable production. The film takes viewers to some of the most productive farm regions in the country and illustrates how the looming threat of decreasing Colorado River supplies threatens the nation's supply of winter vegetables and the beef and dairy industries access to efficiently-grown alfalfa.

BROADCAST REACH & IMPACT

Thanks to CFWC's sponsorship and the partnership with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliates, *The Green Desert* reached audiences in Southern California and across the United States in cities including Denver, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Tacoma, Phoenix, New Orleans, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and many more. The *Green Desert* is available for streaming on the PBS website at <https://pbs.org/show/the-green-desert?source=social>.

ADVANCING WATER RELIABILITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP



The Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley

In 2025, the California Farm Water Coalition continued its communications role within [the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley](#), a broad coalition of farmers, water agencies, business leaders, and community organizations committed to securing a sustainable water future for the region. As a member of both the Blueprint board of directors and its Communications Work Group, the Coalition helped refine the Blueprint's message to policymakers, stakeholders, and the public. This work included coordinating outreach materials, shaping communications strategy, and helping unify a diverse group of partners around a shared set of priorities for water reliability.

Building on that foundation, the Blueprint acted this year to support the implementation of President Trump's Executive Order 14181, an initiative focused on restoring water supply reliability to the San Joaquin Valley. Through high-level correspondence with federal and state leaders and a detailed memorandum outlining stakeholder priorities, the Blueprint advanced a unified call for urgent action to address the region's worsening water crisis.

LETTERS TO FEDERAL AND STATE LEADERS

On June 18, 2025, the Water Blueprint issued letters to President Trump, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, and Governor Gavin Newsom, calling for rapid and coordinated implementation of Executive Order 14181. The letters express strong support for the Administration's water-management vision and emphasize the need to modernize infrastructure, increase water deliveries, and elevate interagency coordination.

Central to the Blueprint's message is a shared goal of increasing available water supply by **9 million acre-feet per year (MAF/yr) by 2040**, with near-term progress driven by regulatory reforms and expedited infrastructure development. The Blueprint urged the federal government to adopt the 9 MAF/yr target as an operational benchmark, accelerate project permitting, and appoint experienced leaders capable of navigating

the complexities of California's regulatory environment. The letter to Governor Newsom calls on the state to embrace the same 9 MAF/yr goal, streamline permitting, and to partner with federal agencies to reduce policy conflicts that hinder water-supply improvements. This partnership, the Blueprint emphasized, is essential to overcoming decades-old legal and regulatory obstacles that constrain supplies for farms, communities, and ecosystems.

These communications underscore the stakes for the San Joaquin Valley, where declining water supply reliability threatens agricultural production, local economies, and community stability. Aligning state and federal efforts is a cornerstone of restoring the certainty that Valley residents and businesses depend upon.

BLUEPRINT MEMORANDUM: ESTABLISHING STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES

To support implementation of Executive Order 14181, the Blueprint developed a comprehensive memorandum titled “Implementing Executive Order 14181 – Establishing Stakeholder Priorities for Federal Action and Leadership.” This document provides a clear roadmap for achieving the 9 MAF/yr supply increase by 2040, focusing on four actionable priorities:

1. Modernize CVP and SWP Operational Rules

The memo recommends updating operational criteria for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project to unlock at least 1 MAF/yr in additional water deliveries. This includes real-time operational adjustments, flexible reservoir management, and rebalancing environmental objectives to better reflect current science.

2. Eliminate Nonessential Regulatory Barriers

The Blueprint calls for revising flow constraints that exceed Endangered Species Act requirements—changes that could restore up to 300,000 acre-feet per year of system flexibility and increase water availability for farms and communities.

3. Accelerate Permitting for Infrastructure Projects

The memo prioritizes fast-tracking storage, recharge, conveyance, and multi-benefit projects, with the goal of establishing a federal implementation schedule by mid-2026 to ensure momentum on long-delayed investments.

4. Ensure Adequate Resources and Coordination

Effective implementation requires dedicated staff, strong interagency coordination, and regular progress reporting. The memo emphasizes that leadership with deep experience in CVP/SWP operations and state-federal regulatory dynamics is essential to success.

Together, these priorities aim to reverse years of chronic water shortfalls and create a path toward long-term sustainability for agriculture, communities, and the regional economy.

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

The Water Blueprint’s actions in 2025 offer a bold, practical plan for restoring water reliability at the scale required.

By advocating for a 9 MAF/yr increase in water availability and driving alignment between federal and state agencies, the Blueprint is working to turn a once-in-a-generation opportunity into meaningful, lasting progress. These efforts help safeguard the Valley’s agricultural heritage while supporting the region’s workforce, environment, and long-term economic resilience.

Copies of the letters and the full Stakeholder Priorities memorandum are available at waterblueprintca.com/news.



UNIFIED WATER PLAN

For the
San
Joaquin
Valley

The Coalition is proud to be an active participant in the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley, which is partnering with the California Water Institute (CWI) at Fresno State to develop a comprehensive **Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley**. This two-year project, supported by a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, represents an unprecedented effort to bring together the region's many water management entities under one cohesive strategy for long-term water sustainability.

The Unified Water Plan will draw on the expertise of local agencies and stakeholders throughout the Valley. Today, water management in the region is guided by a patchwork of individual plans — from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and Nitrate Management Zones to local water districts and municipal systems.

While these plans each address important regional needs, they often operate independently.

The goal of the Unified Water Plan is to synthesize these diverse efforts into an overarching approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of the Valley's surface water and groundwater systems. By identifying opportunities, aligning strategies, and leveraging existing data and infrastructure, the project will provide a roadmap for managing water supplies that serve both people and agriculture.



WHEN COMPLETED, THE UNIFIED WATER PLAN WILL INCLUDE:

- **A detailed assessment** of regional water needs and potential opportunities.
- **Measures and strategies** to address the most critical challenges facing the San Joaquin Valley.
- **Portfolios of projects** tailored to meet identified objectives and improve regional water resilience.
- **An implementation framework** defining the roles of key partners, including the Blueprint, GSAs, the Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Water Resources, and other state and federal agencies.

The final report will be submitted to Congress, providing a clear, science-based foundation for future investment and policy decisions that can help stabilize water supplies in one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions.

As a Blueprint partner, the Coalition continues to bring the perspective of farmers and agricultural water users into this process. Our participation helps ensure that the Unified Water Plan helps protect the working landscapes and food production capacity that make the San Joaquin Valley essential to California and the nation.

More information on the Unified Water Plan is available at: <https://www.californiawater.org/wp-content/uploads/2Unified-Water-Plan-for-the-SJV-Flyer.pdf>



CFWC REPRESENTS A DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS WHICH INCLUDES FARMERS, WATER SUPPLIERS AND AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES.

With members from Redding to the Imperial Valley, we address farm water issues at the local, regional and statewide levels.



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