

The Water Solutions Network

# Collaborating for California

Collaborative action toward  
equitable and sustainable land  
and water stewardship



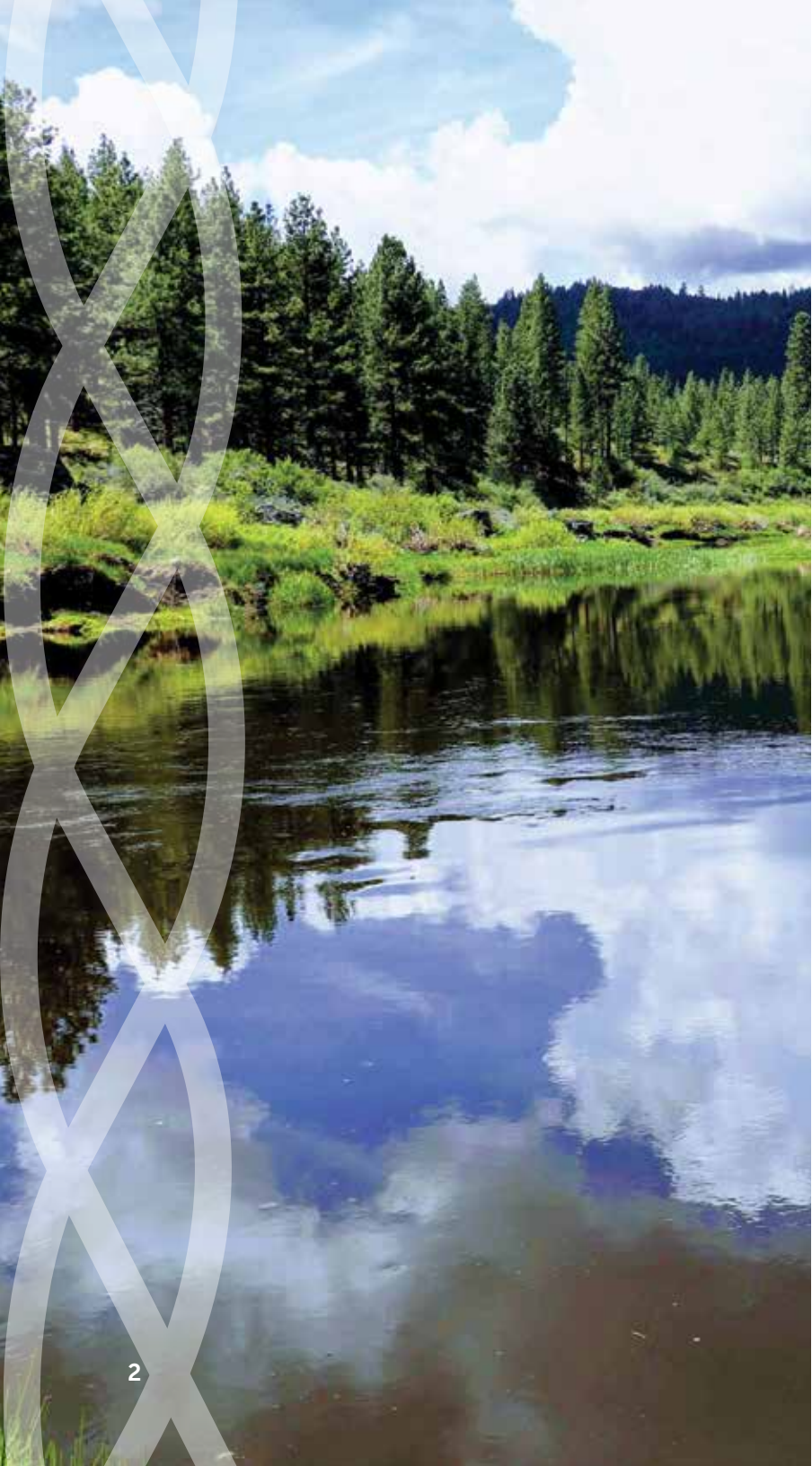
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Water Solutions Network



Collaborating for California



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# A Message from the WSN Team



## *Dear Water Solutions Network Members and Friends,*

We are excited to share this visioning document with all of you and thank you all for your insights and contributions. This document, developed as the result of a robust Network engagement process, is designed to reflect on where we've been together and to build a common vision of where we would like to go together as we chart our future trajectory.

We would be remiss if we didn't start by expressing our deep gratitude to all the people and organizations that helped to shape the amazing network we now enjoy. S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation initiated the inquiry that would lead to the creation of WSN. Coro Northern California, Water Education for Latino Leaders/Celeste Cantú Consulting, and Dig In co-created the amazing cohort experience that is the hallmark and core of our network capacity. And, of course, all our members who are the heart and soul of our network.

The road ahead is fraught by climate change, social unrest, inequity, and uncertainty. The scale and magnitude of

the crisis is beyond anything any of us have experienced in our lifetimes. Our comfort and safety, if not human survival, hinges on our capacity to let go of our assumptions about how humans live on this planet. The challenges before us will best be met by recovering our sense of interconnectedness and interdependence with each other and everything around us. We are grateful to be approaching these challenges with a network of individuals committed to bold action toward sustainable and equitable land and water stewardship and who are systems thinkers with the capacity to bridge differences and collaborate for a better California.

We are eager for the opportunities ahead of us to enhance our network and to scale up our collaborative capacity and efforts.

Onward,

**Debbie, Odin, Angelica, Biney, Jenny, and Pedro**



# Introduction

Over the last five years, the Water Solutions Network (WSN) has grown from an idea to a network of nearly 150 cross-sector leaders across the water and land stewardship arenas in California and neighboring watersheds. WSN was founded on concerns about the intensity of extreme water challenges facing California and the nature of how water and land are managed in the West. WSN has dedicated itself to fostering relationships and building leadership skills that increase capacity to take bold, collaborative action toward equitable and sustainable land and water stewardship in California and watersheds we share with other states.

The Water Solutions Network was seeded and supported in its first five years by the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation. Foundation leaders, reflecting on the significant support they had provided in the California water and land stewardship arenas, had identified that leadership, strong relations, and cross-silo collaborative capacity are critical to achieve transformative change in those arenas. They decided to make a legacy investment to support development of a network of diverse water leaders. The investment would support training these mid-career leaders in relationship-building, collaboration, and systems change skills.

Ultimately, WSN was formed in 2017 by a partnership between Coro Northern California, Dig In, and Water Education for Latino Leaders. Coro Northern California served as the backbone, receiving the grant funds and managing the program. Most of WSN's members have participated in our intensive cohort experience, and others have joined the network through relationships, advising, and/or participating in Network activities. The Network has spawned numerous micro-collaborations and our tools are being practiced and shared by members around the state.

As WSN expends the remainder of the Foundation funds, it is at an inflection point. The Network has explored the opportunities of this moment through an in-depth process of envisioning possible futures, resulting in this document. It is designed to reflect on where we in the Network have been and to imagine where and how we can move together into the future, building upon the immense concentration of human resources, expertise, and capacity in the Network.

# History of WSN

WSN was birthed on an idea: California's greatest challenge in more equitably and sustainably managing its water resources is not simply the external limitations we are experiencing, such as the impacts of climate change and economic and racial inequality, but the limitations in working creatively and collectively, across sectors, to address the challenges we face. "There is widespread agreement among stakeholders that progress in the field of water management in California requires leaders who are skilled in systems change and conflict resolution, capable of cultivating opportunities for generative thinking, and effective in working across sectors and stakeholders," stated S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation in its 2017 RFP to enhance state water leadership. "These competencies, however, do not appear out of thin air. For those mid- and upper-level water leaders moving into positions of increasing influence and authority, there is an immediate need to bolster the individual leadership skills and supportive networks that will help them promote needed systems change."

After sponsoring a significant scoping process with leaders in the two sectors of water and leadership/networks, the Foundation invited [Coro Northern California](#) in partnership with [Dig In](#) and [Water Education for Latino Leaders](#) (WELL) to propose a program that would support the development of diverse leaders. The organizations incorporated the gathered feedback and expertise with their own expertise in California water and in leadership development and network building. These organizations worked to not only design the Network and recruit participants, but also to develop an Advisory Council of individuals with deep experience and impact in water in California and nationally.



**Excerpted from the 2018 Recruitment Flyer.**

WSN supports leaders committed to solving California's most pressing water management challenges. Starting with an immersive, collaborative learning experience, WSN will prepare and inspire participants to:

**Cross boundaries**

Engage stakeholders from all sectors, bridge differences, and create connections that can achieve more than any one group could accomplish alone

**Connect resources**

Find ways to leverage existing institutions and initiatives, align efforts to improve water management, and elevate information to enhance collective decision-making

**Choose bold action**

Propose and pursue changes needed to ensure sustainable and equitable water management in California



WSN Summit 2018, Photo by Creel Studios

WSN recruited candidates from a diversity of sectors and backgrounds who shared a commitment to drive transformational change across our state's water systems. The Design Team, including Laney Whitcanack, Marselle Alexander-Ozinkas, Matthew La Rocque, and all of the co-facilitators for Cohort 1, co-created the curriculum.

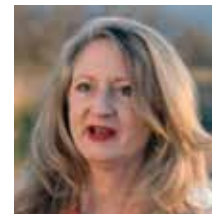
The resulting WSN launched its initial cohort in 2018. Co-facilitated by **Courtney Young-Law, Odin Zackman, Celeste Cantú, Victor Griego, and Miguel Luna**, participants came together in six three-day retreat sessions over eight months to build relationships and deepen their skills and understanding of leadership capacities. The curriculum, founded on Coro Northern California's curriculum and expertise, evolved across the cohorts to include curriculum developed by Dig In, WSN, and drawn from other sources, includes systems thinking and conflict transformation and includes tools for collective action and for navigating working across lines of difference. The facilitation team challenged network members to define and adopt a "North Star" guiding document. In one of many welcomed instances of members reframing facilitation team



Courtney Young-Law



Odin Zackman



Celeste Cantú



Victor Griego



Miguel Luna

requests, the members opted to describe the “horizon” instead of the “North Star,” reflecting their commitment to embracing different perspectives. The effort produced the [Inaugural Charter](#).

Cohort 1 would be the first of five amazing and impressive cohorts co-facilitated by a Coro Northern California Trainer, Courtney Young-Law (Cohort 1), **Donald Proby** (Cohort 2), and **Nnenna Ozobia** (Cohorts 3 and 4), along with Odin Zackman (Cohorts 1-5), Victor Griego (Cohorts 1-2), Miguel Luna (Cohorts 1-2), Celeste Cantú (Cohorts 1-3), and **Debbie Franco** (Cohorts 4-5). In subsequent years, and as the Network matured, cohort participants continued to engage with each other to learn and build the foundation for collaboration, whether in-person (Cohorts 1 and 2), online (Cohorts 3 and 4), or hybrid (Cohort 5). Relationship-building continues beyond and outside of the cohort experience, as Network members connect through in-person gatherings and learning opportunities, collaborating on projects supported by WSN and micro-collaborations among members, and through monthly online opportunities to share information and plan Network activities.

WSN has evolved, varied, and adapted over the years. For an example of variation, some, but not all, of the cohorts involved participants from selected watersheds or regions. Cohort 1, for example, involved the Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and Central Valley watersheds. The watershed focus was intentionally designed to develop a critical mass of actors in a watershed. The regional focus had the byproduct of limiting who could

be invited to join a particular cohort. So, the final cohort was drawn from a statewide pool to provide access to participants outside of the watersheds targeted in the earlier cohorts.

WSN continues to evolve to enhance the functioning of the network. Water Education for Lation Leaders (WELL) eventually left the partnership. Celeste Cantú, who had been representing WELL in



Network Retreat 2020

the partnership, stayed on as Celeste Cantú Consulting. Originally envisioned as three cohorts that would achieve a critical mass to support transformation, the program garnered an overwhelmingly positive response that spurred S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation to fund two additional cohorts and network maintenance.



Donald Proby



Nnenna Ozobia



Laney Whitcanack



Marselle Alexander-Ozinkas



Matthew La Rocque



WSN was originally conceived of as a loose, self-organizing, self-generating network of cohort members coordinated by Community Managers and supported by a facilitator (Odin Zackman), mini-grant funding, and networking software. Jenny Tanphanich and Jamie Ferro served as WSN's first Community Managers. The Charter included a committee structure that Jenny and Jamie managed. It was a lot to maintain and difficult to sustain participation. The committee structure did serve to cultivate two network-wide retreats. One retreat was in-person and one virtual. Jenny is now serving in her last term and Pedro Hernandez has joined her. Through their leadership, the Network is renewing its efforts to build relationships, especially across cohorts, by holding get-togethers and events.

The evolution of the activities and actions that the newly established network wanted to take moved beyond the scope of cohort-based efforts. Over time, it became apparent that the network itself could provide the basis of a movement that could live independently and sustain itself as a transformational piece of the future of water. WSN created a new Managing Director position and brought on Debbie Franco in that role. One of the new Managing Director's charges was to bring the Network to alignment around its future organizational form. This visioning document and the accompanying process is designed to inform the transition.



Angela Pang

WSN also continues to benefit from staff and administrative support from Coro Northern California. **Angela Pang** developed and maintained the backbone infrastructure for the Network and provided care and coordination for every Network gathering and communication until she stepped back. In 2022, Biney Dev took over for Angela and continues to cover all WSN's logistical needs. WSN is also fortunate to have hired Angelica Dowell to fill a newly created Network Manager staff position. As the visioning process wraps up, WSN will hire additional staff to support the Network, build the organizational infrastructure, and expand programmatic capacity.

Over the course of the last five years, Network facilitators and members have recognized the importance of expanding avenues for entering the Network beyond the cohort experience and are now inviting others in their own networks to participate in WSN. In order to fulfill the vision of collaborating for more sustainable and equitable water and land stewardship, in the past year, WSN has moved forward to expand both participation in the Network and activities to support collective action and impact. WSN has also responded to members' interest in undertaking network-wide projects, deepening local connections, and reconnecting face-to-face by hosting regional gatherings.

Arian Aghajanzadeh, Cohort 2

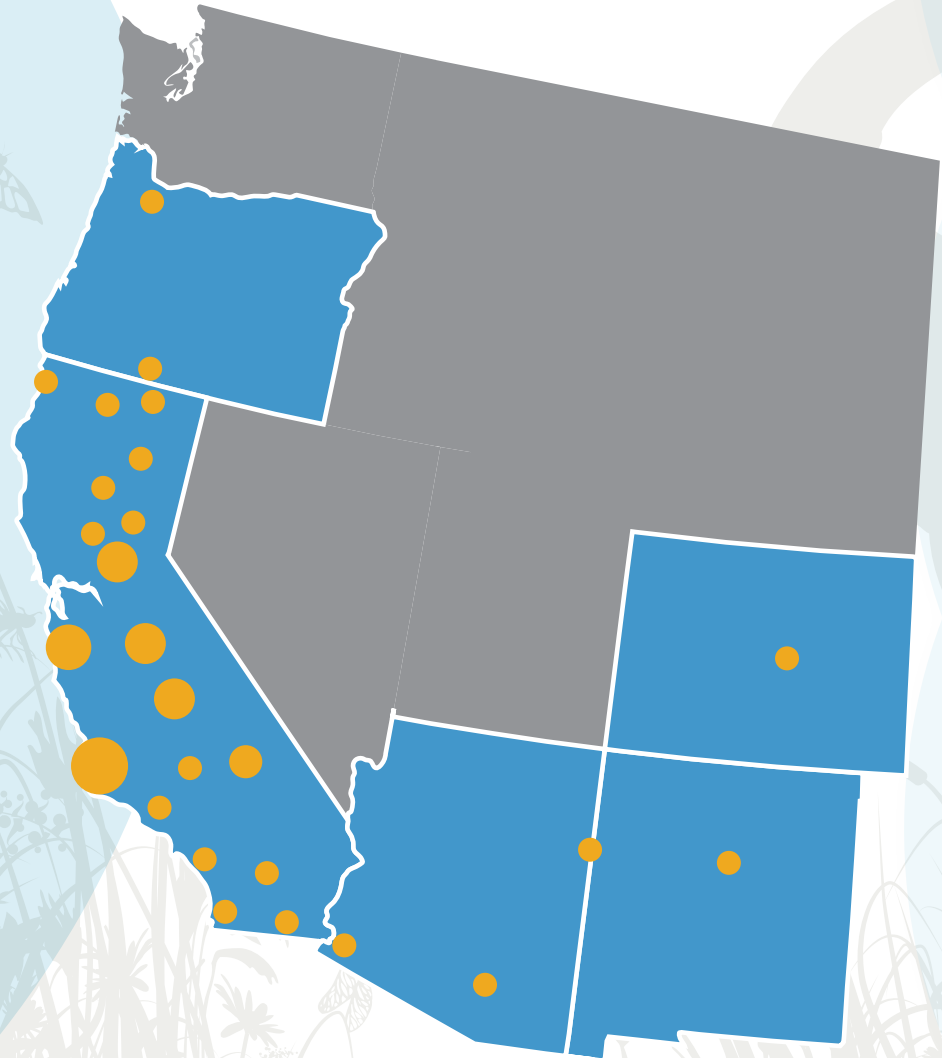




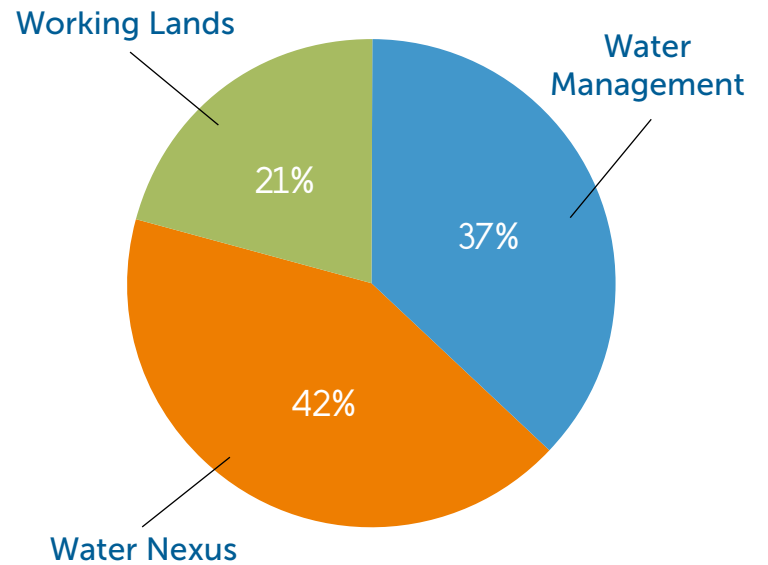


## The Network

WSN now boasts a diverse network of almost 150 land and water stewards around the state and in neighboring states. Cohorts were recruited to reflect the ethnic diversity of the state and to approximate a balance across those working in water management, working lands, and what was called the water nexus and included NGOs and others whose work is connected to or impacts water resources.

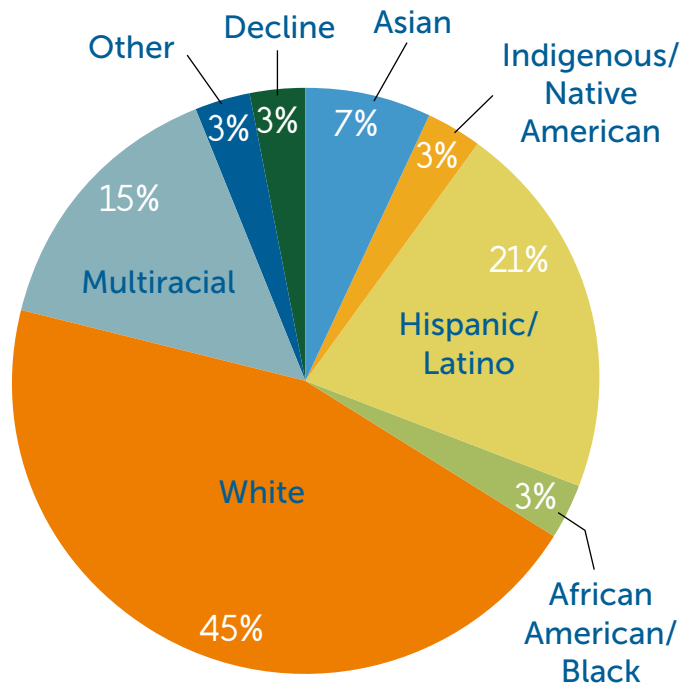


## WSN Membership by Industry

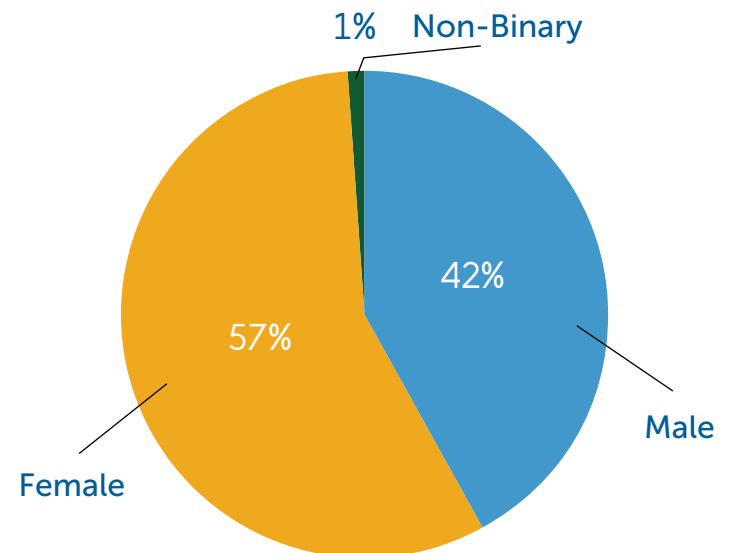


*The pie charts describe our current membership.*

## Membership Ethnicity



## Membership Gender



# Reflections on the Future



Members from Cohort 2 during their final cohort session

Facing an open future, WSN leaders in late 2021 launched a network-wide visioning process to engage Network members in contemplating WSN’s possible paths forward. WSN engaged the services of the Consensus and Collaboration Program at Sacramento State University to guide the process. Members were invited to consider a broad range of ways that the Network could be organized and funded, and what niches and activities it could focus on to be most impactful in achieving its vision of sustainable and equitable land and water stewardship. Through meetings, a survey, and one-on-one interviews and conversations, members shared their experiences, considered the Network’s values, vision, objectives, and niche, and assessed what WSN did well, how it could enhance its effectiveness, and what opportunities it could potentially leverage. During this process, WSN leaders began framing the Network’s vision as including both water and land, and focused on stewardship rather than management, reflecting in writing what was heard in members’ conversations and understanding of the Network’s focus and work.

A companion [Reflections document](#) includes a fuller discussion of what we heard from Network members. Key themes and ideas regarding what to preserve, where WSN can improve into the vision, and areas of potential opportunity to advance sustainable and equitable land and water stewardship follow. A [slide deck](#) also summarizes the survey responses received.

## What to Preserve

**Core curriculum focuses:** Network members valued many of WSN's core curriculum delivery areas, identifying them as important and unique, including skills training in building trust and relationships, communication, collaborative multi-interest solution-building; applying innovative, interdisciplinary and systems thinking; and training on equity.

**Key WSN objectives and areas of focus:** Members endorsed seeking to bridge across jurisdictional, sectoral, disciplinary, and geographic silos both statewide and at the regional and watershed level; the focus on prioritizing equity in the land and water sectors and engaging diverse, underrepresented voices; cross-generation learning and mentorship; supporting dialogue in the field around real and difficult, crisis-level issues; and challenging the status quo and supporting transformational change.

**Work to sustain the Network:** Many Network members also asked that WSN continue seeking to sustain and strengthen the Network's connective tissue by continuing to offer relationship-building and collaboration opportunities, in-person gatherings and site visits, group learning and activity-based projects that result in concrete outcomes.

**Taking action:** A number of Network members endorsed WSN's vision and desired WSN to prioritize bold actions and activities aimed to achieve its objectives of equity and sustainability.





## Where WSN Can Improve into the Vision

Network members identified certain areas where WSN could increase its effectiveness and impact, including ways to advance equity and expand inclusive Network participation, options for enhancing training curriculum and delivery, and ways to support and extend the functioning of the Network.

**Internal equity training:** There is interest in the Network in more enrichment and training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). It can be challenging to set an approach that works for all participants in a group, including those with extensive experience thinking about equity and those encountering this content and its demands for self-examination for the first time, and to conduct sessions in a way that challenges individuals to grow while providing sufficient safety. It was recommended that experiences be carefully designed, planned, and led to increase rather than decrease trust and understanding, support learning, ensure sufficient support is available, and spark the energy to produce change. Reserving DEI discussions for in-person gatherings, conducting baseline or onboarding training separately for those unacquainted with DEI and thinking about equity, and bringing in experienced and successful outside faculty/facilitators were some of the suggestions.



**Advancing equity in the land and water fields:** There are opportunities for WSN to offer fee-for-service training, skill-building, and tools to advance equity in the state's water and land sectors, as well as taking on projects to reduce inequities. Examples of potential trainings include:

- ~ How to engage effectively with marginalized communities
- ~ Training and power-building for communities lacking resources
- ~ Train on the role of culture and power in meetings and the physical and psychological impacts of racism

**Inclusivity and belonging in WSN:** Proactively seek to fill gaps in diversity in the Network, including African Americans and Native Americans and representatives from agriculture, the private sector, and underrepresented geographic areas of California, and creatively find ways to reach these individuals; craft sessions to accommodate those with less capacity to get time off work or employer compensation for attending; seek Network feedback to identify blind spots or areas where Black, Indigenous and People of Color ( BIPOC) may experience that white fragility is being centered.

**Ways to expand participation from the land sector:** Consider crafting outreach language specific to land sector needs and interests; reaching out through agricultural organizations and land management agency leadership; and ensuring land management content is incorporated into curriculum.

**Program curriculum, design, and delivery:** Craft curriculum for a wide range of learning styles and orientations, including those with more linear, practical approaches, for introverts as well as extroverts, and ensure the participants understand in what contexts various tools could be used to support the grounding of the concepts in action. Facilitate and intervene actively and promptly in a nonjudgmental way to support participants in practicing and embodying collaborative skills and achieve the goals of advancing collaborative culture. Ensure participants enter a training understanding potential time demands and how guidelines will be enforced.

**Enhancing Network functioning:** Expand more in-person activities (implemented in 2022); organize network-wide collaborative projects such as this year's watershed framework planning; host site visits for learning and sharing information on challenges and best practices; and offer skills refreshers and behavioral nudges to practice skills.



***"IF YOU KNOW WHENCE YOU CAME, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO LIMIT TO WHERE YOU CAN GO."***

James Baldwin

### ***Potential opportunities to advance equitable and sustainable land and water stewardship***

Network members shared advice, recommending allocating resources into marketing and strategic communications, and, given that it may not be feasible to offer the intensive cohort experience moving forward, identified needs in the water and land sector fields that might be opportunities for WSN to fill with training, technical support, or projects. These included:

- ~ Help on-the-ground organizations identify and link with resources, potential funding opportunities, and partners
- ~ Offer fee-for-service grant writing
- ~ Offer cross-sector and cross-disciplinary communications training on how to convey complex topics in a way that resonates
- ~ Host issues forums, spaces for dialogue or work to bridge community divides around challenging water/land issues
- ~ Develop a DC exchange program to share case studies and best practices with those from federal agencies and congressional staffers
- ~ As part of mentorship, support members to pursue positions of influence, for example, joining boards of NGOs and local districts where it's possible to make a difference
- ~ Offer train the trainer sessions to Network members to support the spread of collaborative skills
- ~ Consider, as an organization, or as members of the Network, taking public policy positions or endorsing projects



# Vision Process Summary and Outcomes

Over the course of the year between December 2021 and December 2022 the following language was drafted and reviewed broadly across the Network during vision process meetings, Committee of the Whole, Steering Committee and Advisory Council meetings. The language below reflects a path that incorporates and balances the feedback received. It is meant to be expansive and highlight the range of activities and opportunities that WSN may pursue moving forward contingent on staff and member capacity and interest, funding, and strategic timing.





## Water Solutions Network Niche

Drought, wildfire, floods, and other catastrophic events are more extreme and occurring with greater frequency. Those most vulnerable suffer the most and are slowest to recover. Our traditional tools and siloed approaches do not measure up to the challenges we face and the values we hold. The Water Solutions Network is building a network of diverse, high-capacity individuals committed to bold action that transforms who, how, and what we do to more sustainably and equitably steward California's land and water.

California's water and land sectors are intensely fragmented by institution, mindset, interest, and geography. Issues and the discourse around them take place in silos of practice, politics, and group that lead to conflict, stalemate, and frustratingly slow progress. Even when opportunities appear, the balkanization

of practice in the field keeps us from making the best use of resources that come our way and perpetuates overt and insidious inequities.

By cultivating a diverse and equitable network of high-capacity, cross-sector individuals committed to taking bold action together, the Water Solutions Network expands individual and network capacity to:

- ~ Center equity in practice and outcomes
- ~ Understand and intervene in systems
- ~ Connect individuals and organizations across difference
- ~ Provide strategic advice and tools to support cross-sector collaboration

Center equity  
in practice and  
outcomes



Understand and  
intervene in  
systems



Connect individuals  
and organizations  
across difference



Provide strategic advice  
and tools to support cross-  
sector collaboration





Photo by Creel Studios

While working in the near term to build capacity and relationships, WSN is also working in the longer term to transform the speed and efficiency with which we adapt to the natural systems changing at ever-accelerating rates. WSN's net impact will drive local and regional actions informed by a systems approach and propelled by real-time collaborative learning and coordination. Actions, freed from the limits of fragmented sector and jurisdictional boundaries, will be driven by shared values and a growing understanding of how humans can impact natural systems at system scale.

As this transformation takes hold, diverse actors will approach a watershed with full view of its interdependent elements. For example, rather than entering a forest solely to thin trees, such a group might first ask who has relationships with the forest, especially indigenous peoples whose relationships and expertise span thousands of years. The group might ask who stands to be

All of WSN's work is founded on a commitment to equity.



Cohort 1 during a site visit to Friant Dam

impacted, good or bad, by any actions taken. The group might visit the forest and survey the forest, noticing the overgrown meadow, clogged springs, overshadowed food sources like oak trees and huckleberries, community use patterns (human and non-human), and other elements obfuscated by single-sector approaches. Bringing net resources such as expertise, funding, and authorities together across sectors could suggest clearing and restoring the meadow instead of thinning it; restoring a spring that might indicate a different pattern of vegetation management; preserving trees that might have otherwise been removed, etc.

All of WSN's work is founded on a commitment to equity. WSN starts by identifying the voices missing from the table or muffled by racism, neglect, and/or lack of resources. Every activity will create opportunities to resource and amplify diverse voices, supporting full engagement from the outset. In practice, this may mean moving more slowly to first build trust and respect, and allow time for capacity building so that everyone who comes to the table can fully participate, contribute, and lead.

## Incorporated Name

### *The Watershed Solutions Network*

The Water Solutions Network name was designed to communicate its focus on solving water-related challenges. As the conversations have evolved and conditions have changed we are faced with the reality that you cannot manage water without managing land, and vice versa. A shift, over time, to the Watershed Solutions Network, along with proactive branding and messaging, reflects this reality and more clearly communicates the cross-sector foundation we strive to create.

To support a transitional phase, the new 501(c)3 will incorporate under the Watershed Solutions Network moniker and maintain the Water Solutions Network as a program of the new organization. This also creates the opportunity to incubate other programmatic networks necessary when employing a watershed approach. After all, a water sector informed by systems thinking cannot succeed unless other sectors and silos are also employing systems thinking and have the capacity to collaborate.



Cohort 1, Session 2 at The Mission Inn

## Organizational Type

### *501(c)3*


WSN started with a vision of a self-generating network. In practice that has been challenging to maintain and cultivate. Creating a free-standing organization will give the Network stability and the flexibility to fundraise and hire staff who can hold the Network space. It also provides the human and organizational infrastructure to continue expanding the Network.

While the Network may consider other organizational forms that serve its mission in the future, the 501(c)3 status allows for the best continuity between its current form and the future. The 501(c)3 status does not preclude the Network from self-generating activities and a governance structure can be created that will maintain network space and autonomy.

### Governance

During the transition phase to a 501(c)3, WSN will maintain its current structure with the Committee of the Whole meeting monthly and the Advisory Council meeting quarterly. Both will provide overarching guidance. We will also establish a founding Board of Directors to initiate the incorporation process. As we shift to this transition period we will revisit membership on the Advisory Council to assure that we have the right range of voices, perspectives, and expertise represented.





# WSN

## CHOOSING BOLD ACTION TO SUSTAINABLY AND EQUITABLY STEWARD CALIFORNIA'S LAND AND WATER.

### Transitional Focus and Direction

As WSN has grown and developed, the original focus on water management has expanded to reflect the diverse membership through a shift to “stewardship” from “management” and the addition of “land”. The statement below reflects the shift:

**Crossing boundaries, connecting resources and people, and choosing bold action to sustainably and equitably steward California’s land and water.**

### Activities

The Water(shed) Solutions Network cultivates interconnected networks and relationships that increase collaborative capacity at watershed scale. Specifically, the Network may do the following as capacity and resources allow:

- ~ Build diverse, persistent, action-oriented networks and relationships through trainings, capacity building, and network activities with a special focus on building regional networks with the capacity to act and learn together
- ~ Facilitate place-based experiences that connect people to each other and to specific places
- ~ Partner with and provide strategic guidance and tools to partners working to integrate across land and water and to shift toward watershed scale, systems thinking and action
- ~ Demonstrate and amplify the value and importance of collaborative, systems-based, bold action in the face of climate change
- ~ Identify people to bring into the network and accelerate their leadership skills and career success



*The Watershed Solutions Network is uniquely positioned to build the equity-centered networks and relationships from the ground up that will support connecting the dots across sectors and jurisdictions.*

### ***Build Persistent, Action-oriented Networks***

Collaborative application of systems thinking and action, from the ground up, provides one pathway to guide investments toward the greatest equitable synergies at scales appropriate to produce the magnitude of impacts needed to leap to the pace of climate change in an equitable manner.

The Watershed Solutions Network is uniquely positioned to build the equity-centered networks and relationships from the ground up that will support connecting the dots across sectors and jurisdictions. The existing network membership reflects a broad and diverse cross-section of land and water stewards with growing influence. WSN will leverage existing members to more intentionally develop watershed-specific networks and to expand their capacity to collaborate and act together.



Site visit to the Salton Sea at the 2022 Southern California Region Retreat

### ***Facilitate Place-Based Experiences***

Too often we rely upon statewide or national approaches while giving lip service to the idea that one size doesn't fit all. Humanity's future on this planet relies upon our capacity to rediscover what we used to know: stewardship is about interdependence and reciprocity. It's the crux of systems thinking that many find too complex to manage at scale. That's what drives our silos. Starting at a smaller scale makes it easier to see and understand those dynamics and to elevate and address embedded inequities. The network approach offers the means to interconnect smaller scales within a geography with common challenges and coordinate actions to achieve watershed-scale impact.

Building on the skill sets developed in WSN curriculum including things like What Is Going On (WIGO) and Don't Know what you Don't Know (DKDK), systems thinking, and the watershed approach, WSN includes an existing network of people who can act as watershed anchors to help others expand their capacity to understand the complex nature of our natural systems (which include humans!)

The Network will facilitate, partner on, and host experience-based gatherings that provide a local context for understanding interdependence and reciprocity. The experiences will be designed to honor Tribal and community knowledge and expertise, expand watershed networks, and expand watershed connectivity to state and federal policy-makers from the ground up. As the experiences evolve, they will function as a mirror to state and federal policy makers, reflecting the synergies and opportunities available if we can transcend silos.



### ***Provide Tools and Technical Assistance***

Local and regional actors are overwhelmed by the redundant and fragmented requirements of various planning and management programs. As mentioned above, this a recipe not only for failing to meet the demands of climate change, but also for wearing out and demoralizing boots-on-the-ground actors, the people we rely upon to deliver the change we need.

WSN will strive to create mechanisms, like the [WSN Watershed Framework](#), that offer pathways toward systems approaches that coordinate the good work already being done; reduce redundancies; and make space for flexibility, serendipity, and synergies. WSN will partner with local and regional actors to test, refine, and learn together. As a start, WSN will create a Watershed Framework learning network starting with those taking the Framework for a "test drive" and expanding to include everyone working toward cross-sector, watershed-scale coordination and collaboration.

### *Communicate*

Most funding programs are extremely focused on the “what” over the “how.” That makes sense in the short-term thinking driven by election cycles. It breaks down quickly when considering what it takes to constantly, actively, and collaboratively manage the systems of which we are a part. The unpredictability and extremes that climate change is delivering require more nimble and proactive human infrastructure, balancing urgent needs with a wider view of the long-term horizon.

While we cannot afford to lose track of our progress, we could use a shift in focus from short-term gains to long-term sustainability. There is an emergent effort to effect this kind of change in our political and governmental institutions. WSN’s growing network of influencers across the land and water sectors provides interconnectivity across these burgeoning efforts and offers more accessibility to decision-makers.

Program facilitators included Donald Proby, Celeste Cantú, Angela Pang and Odin Zackman



### *Network Expansion*

In the first five years, individuals entered the Network through three paths. Most members entered by way of the intensive cohort experience. Some became members through invitation to be an Advisory Council Member. A small number were invited to be advisors for a specific cohort. Moving forward, individuals may become Network members in the following manners:

- ~ Participation in a cohort experience
- ~ Participation in an orientation and modular trainings
- ~ Invitation through regional sub-network activities, and/or
- ~ Invitation to be part of the Advisory Council

The Network may elect to add pathways to membership but will always strive to assure that those who join share the values and commitment embodied by the Network. [The WSN Compact](#) will serve as a means to assure all enter the Network with a common set of commitments. WSN exists to bridge differences, and Network members must expect to interact with a wide variety of participants who have widely varying experiences, philosophies, approaches, and positions in society. WSN makes space for everyone with a learning mind-set willing to be open minded. We do not, however, allow bullying or hate and reserve the right to ask a participant to excuse themselves if we observe this behavior.

### *Funding*

The Network will pursue diverse funding as appropriate to support our work. Funding sources may include but are not limited to:

- ~ Philanthropy
- ~ Corporate philanthropy
- ~ Public funding (Local, State, and Federal)
- ~ Fee for service



WSN Compact  
will serve as a  
means to assure all  
enter the Network  
with a common set  
of commitments.



**Water Solutions Network Compact**

I \_\_\_\_\_, personally commit to honoring and upholding the following WSN values in all WSN sponsored activities:

- I am committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and will be sensitive to making space and taking space in a manner that supports WSN's commitment to expanding leadership opportunities and that reflects California's rich diversity.
- I will uphold WSN's inaugural [Charter](#).
- I will show up as a collaborator and will approach discussions with curiosity and a commitment to solutions. I will be open to challenging my own "talking points".
- I will be respectful of others and self aware of how I show up, the energy I bring, and the power I have to facilitate constructive dialogue.
- I will strive for understanding and proactively invite discussion with those I may not feel that I have common ground with.
- I will be bold in my thinking and action.
- I will strive to cross boundaries and make connections in my work and the work of WSN.
- I will embrace collaboration and look for opportunities to expand the impact of resources, authority, or influence I may have, especially to make space for rising voices and expanding diversity and equity and working toward sustainability.
- I will respect my own and others' boundaries, including those placed upon me or others by my/our employer(s), and assure that no Network member is implicated by an action I take individually or in collaboration with other Network members.
- I will honor the trust built in WSN that allows participants to speak candidly and directly by not attributing anything said to a specific individual.

My signature indicates my personal commitment. I am not signing on behalf of my employer or representing my employer in any way.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# WSN Programs 2023 and Beyond

WSN is very fortunate to have received and to anticipate receiving multi-year funding for two new programs that will expand our network and capacity development efforts focusing at regional and watershed scale. WSN received a grant from the Water Foundation to develop the Watershed Framework. A generous anonymous donation will support WSN to test drive the Watershed Framework over the next three years. WSN is also finalizing funding from the Department of Conservation and the US Forest Service to support two “Forest Gatherings” in 2023. The intention is to fund two per year for the next three years, culminating in a statewide gathering.

The Network is also fortunate to have carry-forward funds from the original S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation investment that will support ongoing network development and a focused discussion on DEI. In addition, we are engaged in partnerships that are supporting network development and action around forest management and LiDAR data collection.

We have an exciting year ahead cultivating existing programs and partnerships and launching new ones. We will also focus our time, energy, and resources on organizational development including incorporation, board development, hiring new staff, and establishing all the necessary organizational infrastructure.

Below you will find short descriptions of WSN’s 2023 programs.

## Network Building

WSN will always maintain a focus on building strong, high-capacity networks of diverse people committed to bold action. Initially we focused on doing this work within the context of an intensive cohort experience. Network members expressed an interest in shifting toward collaborative action opportunities. WSN will continue to support and cultivate the marvelous network we have built. We will also expand our efforts, through the Watershed Framework test drives and Forest Gatherings, toward building networks in specific regions and watersheds and moving those networks to collaborative action.



To do any of this well, we will need to address a core area of growth and opportunity. WSN started with a commitment to equity. Both the larger cultural context and the ethos in our Network around equity have shifted. We are due for a network-wide conversation and reflection on how WSN holds a space that bridges differences while also actualizing our network commitment to equity in the land and water sectors. In 2023 we will hire a facilitator with the skills and expertise to guide the Network through this conversation with the goals of developing common understanding and appreciation for network members' perspectives and experiences, and more fully define what we expect from each other and from the larger Network when it comes to equity. We will drive toward a shared theory of change that describes how we see WSN moving the needle on land and water related equity issues.

### **Gatherings**

In 2023, WSN will reprise our annual, network-wide gathering. Conditions allowing, we will meet in-person for a celebration of where we've been together, a retreat/restorative experience, and a launch of where we're headed together. Our Community Managers and Network Manager will also be working to cultivate local and regional gatherings that bring members together for fellowship, learning, and, we hope, action.

### **Committee of the Whole**

The Committee of the Whole will continue to meet monthly and serve as a hub of information, coordination, and guidance open to all network members. The Community Managers will be considering how to generate more energy and engagement in the Committee of the Whole in 2023 and beyond.

### **Network Survey**

WSN will be distributing a survey to solicit feedback from members on the kinds of capacity building opportunities network members would like to see in the future. We will, initially, be looking for opportunities that can be self-funded and for the network wherewithal to identify collaborative opportunities and coordinate fundraising to actualize them. The survey results will inform the trainings/retreats/experiences that the WSN will offer in the second half of the year.



The Committee of the Whole will continue to meet monthly and serve as a hub of information, coordination, and guidance open to all network members.



## Watershed Framework Test Drives

WSN convened an esteemed group of advisors to develop the Watershed Framework. In 2023 we will take the Framework for a “test drive” in at least two watersheds. In short, the Framework provides a roadmap that builds on existing and prior efforts and seeks four important shifts:

- Centering equity from the beginning, both in process and outcomes
- Structuring the process to engage cross-sector and watershed-wide convenors to assure persistent and diverse participation across sectors and across the watershed
- Gathering, learning, and coordinating at full watershed scale—headwaters to groundwater to outflow, including engineered system elements—and connecting ongoing and emerging manageable scale efforts across the watershed
- Cultivating systems thinking to eliminate redundancies and amplify the impact of cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional collaborative action

The test drives will serve as an opportunity to build diverse, watershed-wide, cross-sector networks and ground-truth the approach. It will also offer opportunities to develop a more detailed playbook to guide watersheds in applying the Framework. The Framework is organized around a set of activities that are meant to be taken as needed and to support ongoing collaboration and coordination in perpetuity.

## Forest Gatherings

The Forest Gatherings are designed to embody equity by starting with the indigenous people of the place where the gathering will occur and honoring their relationship to the place by treating them as the Hosts. The purpose of the gatherings is to elevate the local and regional actors, collaborations, and activities among statewide and federal decision makers and to build connectivity both among the human participants and between the humans and the place. Participants camp out together in the forest, collaborate on a hands-on restoration activity led by the host Tribe and the locals, and discuss forest and watershed issues while experiencing the place. The first two gatherings produced deeper and more persistent relationships, especially across agencies and between local actors and decision-makers. WSN hopes that these gatherings will feed and be fed by the Watershed Framework test drives.

## Partnerships

WSN may engage in partnerships to support crossing boundaries, connecting resources, and taking bold action.

WSN is currently partnering with the [California Water Data Consortium](#) to co-convene a "LiDAR Team." The team is made up of state and Federal leaders, locals, and NGOs to share information and identify opportunities to expand LiDAR data coverage around the state. It is a light lift. WSN simply helps to facilitate a monthly meeting for the group.

## Organizational Spinoff and Building

2023 will bring a great deal of organizational development activities. Incorporation will require seating a founding Board of Directors and filing articles of incorporation. That will provide the enabling conditions to establish accounting/banking, personnel, insurance, and other resources necessary to support a 501(c)3 incorporated organization. We will also work to raise WSN's profile and to hire necessary organizational and programmatic staff.





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Photo by Creel Studios

## Conclusion

Thanks to the initial vision and funding from the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation and the care and commitment of our founding partners, Coro Northern California, Dig In, WELL, and Celeste Cantú, WSN is a burgeoning network of almost 150 diverse leaders who share collaborative capacity and commitment to bold action. Our first five years have catalyzed micro-collaborations, a new network (the [Process Based Restoration Network](#)), job opportunities, and countless relationships and conversations. It is challenging to capture everything from within the diffuse setting of a network. Our shorthand is the general satisfaction and enthusiasm we heard from our members in the survey, meetings, and individual interviews. We have something special and 2023 and beyond offer us the opportunity to expand our network membership and impact.



Photo by Creel Studios



Photo by Creel Studios

# Onward!



# Yearbook



Inaugural Advisory Council





**Past and Present Advisory Council Members**

Joya Banerjee  
 Barry Bedwell  
 Dore Bietz  
 Ashley Boren  
 Norma Camacho  
 Celeste Cantú

Mike Connor  
 Susana DeAnda  
 Denise Fairchild  
 Radhika Fox  
 Debbie Franco  
 Victor Griego  
 Martha Guzman Aceves  
 Allison Harvey Turner

Kathy Jacobs  
 AG Kawamura  
 Felicia Marcus  
 Dave Puglia  
 Pete Silva  
 Lester Snow  
 Ashley Swearingen  
 Jenny Tanphanich

Buzz Thompson  
 Laney Whitcanack  
 Michael Woo  
 Odin Zackman  
 Also pictured in group photo,  
 Laurie Dachs, Marselle  
 Alexander-Ozinskas, Miguel  
 Luna, Matthew La Rocque





**Cohort 1 Members**

- Casey Anderson
- Drew Atwater
- Ricardo Bayon
- Tracy Delaney
- Anatole Falagan
- James Ferro
- Cynthia Guzmán
- Ann Hayden
- Rene Henery
- Marta Lugo
- Sandi Matsumoto
- Stephen Mejia-Carranza
- Alesandra Nájera
- Carlos Quintero
- Michelle Reimers
- Paul Robins
- Eileen Takata
- Jenny Tanphanich
- Abby Taylor-Silva
- Edgar Tellez Foster
- Marybeth Vergara
- Rafael Villegas
- Ellen Wehr
- Kay Wiand

**Cohort 1**



**Cohort 2 Members**

Arian Aghajanzadeh

Jamie Anderson

Christina Babbitt

Dore Bietz

Adam Borchard

John Cain

Morgan Campbell

Roger Cornwell

Pedro Hernández

Maria Herrera

Kenneth Holbrook

Hong Lin

Michael Lynes

Carrie Monohan

Jennifer Nevills

Karen Pope

Adriana Renteria

Julie Rentner

Cori Ring-Martinez

Denise Soria

Cindy Tejada

Jordi Vásquez

Willie Whittlesey

Nick Wobbrock



Cohort 2





Cohort 3 Virtual May Session

**Cohort 3 Members**

- |                     |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Shreejita Basu      | Charmna Gilmore           |
| Joseph Claverie     | Brian Golding             |
| Jose Cortez         | Sahara Huazano            |
| Ben Duval           | Alydda Mangelsdorf        |
| Justina Gamboa-Arce | Sarafina Maraschino       |
| Sammy Gensaw        | Amy McCoy                 |
|                     | Kathryn Elmore-McCutcheon |

**Cohort 3**



- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Moisés Moreno -Rivera    | Lauren Steely          |
| Elizabeth Nielsen        | Crystal Tulley-Cordova |
| Maximiliano Felipe Ochoa | Scott White            |
| Fisayo Osibodu           | Ann Willis             |
| Zoe Rodriguez del Rey    | Amy Witherall          |
| Frank Ruiz               | Francisco Zamora       |
| Scott Seus               |                        |



Cohort 3 Virtual Graduation



**Cohort 4 Members**

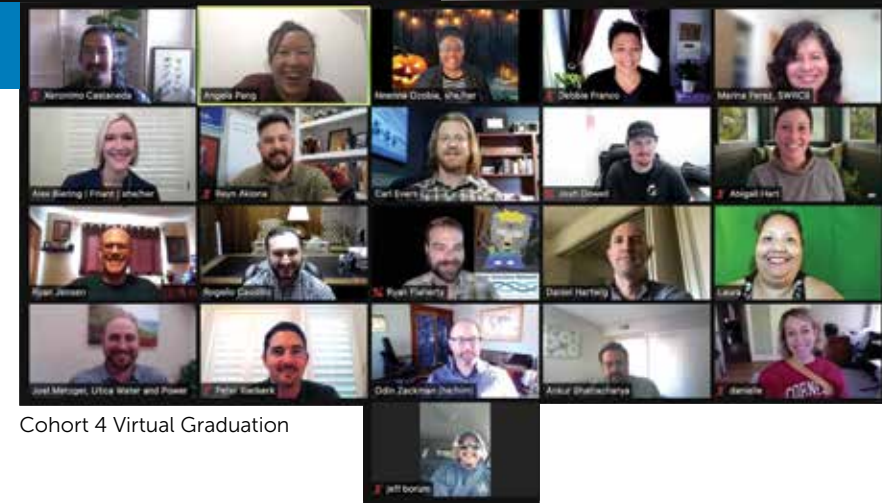
- Reyn Akiona
- Danielle Bergstrom
- Ankur Bhattacharya
- Alexandra Biering
- Jeff Borum
- Darcy Bostic
- Xerónimo Castañeda
- Rogelio Caudillo
- Flora Cordoleani
- Josh Dowell
- Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner
- Vicky Espinoza
- Carl Evers
- Ryan Flaherty
- Abigail Hart
- Daniel Hartwig
- Ryan Jensen
- Joel Metzger
- Ricardo Ortega
- Marina Perez
- Laura Ramos
- Peter Rietkerk



**Cohort 4**

**Greater Tule River Watershed  
Cohort 4 Project Area**

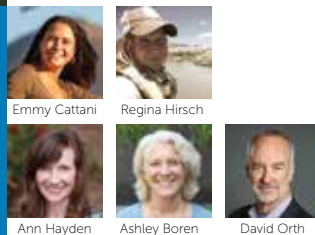
- Headwaters Watersheds:
- Tule River
  - Deer Creek
  - White River
- Valley Floor:
- Tule Subbasin (Bulletin 118)



Cohort 4 Virtual Graduation

**Cohort 4 Collaboration Partners**

- Regina Hirsch
- David Orth
- Ashley Boren
- Ann Hayden
- Emmy Cattani

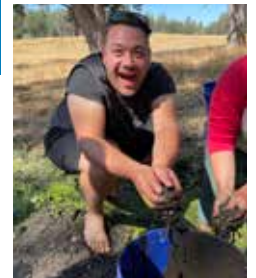


**Cohort 5 Members**

- Michelle Banonis
- Lisa Beyer
- Amanda Bohl
- Karen Buhr
- Art Castro
- Melissa Corona
- Trina Cunningham
- Max Fefer
- Angel Santiago Fernandez-Bou
- Justin Fredrickson
- Melissa Gunter
- Masika Henson
- Miguel Hernández
- Lisa Hu
- Chris Lehman
- Karlee Liddy
- Kristine McCaffrey
- Jennifer McGovern
- Tara Moran
- Kathleen Schaefer
- Suzanne Sharkey
- Jessi Snyder
- Daniel Spivak
- Austin Stevenot
- Brook Thompson
- Sergio Vargas
- Melissa Weymiller



**Cohort 5**



**Cohort 5 Collaboration Partners**

- Bill Leonard
- Jennifer Bates
- Dore Bietz



# A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:



Celeste Cantú



Ariel Ambruster



Laurie Dachs  
Allison Harvey Turner  
Joya Banerjee  
Marselle Alexander-Ozinskas  
Matthew La Rocque



Odin Zackman



Laney Whitcanack  
Courtney Young-Law  
Angela Pang  
Nnenna Ozobia  
Donald Proby  
Biney Dev



Victor Griego  
Miguel Luna  
Celeste Cantú





Water Solutions Network



Collaborating for California

# Collaborating for California

[watersolutionsnetwork.org](http://watersolutionsnetwork.org)