

Water, Business and Political Leaders Call for United Push for Peripheral Canal

On-going drought is leading to mandatory conservation, higher rates and prolonged recession in California

Palm Springs, Calif. -- California's economy will continue to struggle and ratepayers can expect high rates despite gains in conservation due to the ongoing drought and the need to modernize a water system that was built in the 1960s. That was the somber news from the Sixth Annual Riverside County Water Symposium held today, May 28, at the Palm Springs Convention Center where more than 800 people representing cities, counties, departments, businesses and water agencies who attended this year's event.

"With a united voice we must make ourselves heard in Sacramento. We must make our water needs the priority of our legislators at the capitol," said Riverside County Supervisor Roy Wilson, whose Fourth District includes much of the desert region's of the county.

For the sixth consecutive year, Riverside-based public affairs and stakeholder coalition development firm [TMG Communications Inc.](#) produced and coordinated the event.

New technologies to clean ground water more efficiently and solar power are working their way into the operations of the region's water districts, but Riverside County and much of Southern California continue to grapple with the drop in water allocations from the Bay Delta ordered by the courts to protect the finger-sized Delta smelt.

"This is the wettest drought in California history," said Brian Thomas, assistant general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Although rainfall is down in Southern California, northern California's rainfall was just shy of its average, Thomas said, implying that the shortage in the region is largely caused by the drop in water allocations.

Addressing the state's water challenges, Michael Chrisman, California Secretary for Resources reminded the audience that water is precious and that now is the best opportunity in 25 years to push for a peripheral canal around the Bay Delta.

"From a statewide perspective, the big decisions have been put off for way too long," said Michael Chrisman, California Secretary for Natural Resources. "The time now is critical for you to be involved in the legislative process.

A pall was cast upon many of the water leaders at the Symposium following the defeat of the state budget funding Proposition 1A. Its defeat has water agencies and districts bracing for the state raiding their funding, which could create new fees being imposed by the water agencies and districts.

During his call for a united effort to lobby the state for a peripheral canal around the Bay Delta, Charles Wilson, warned that business must play a greater role in pushing for water projects.

“Businesses must get interested in water issues or they’ll be getting out of business,” said Wilson, chairman of the Southern California Water Committee charged with water advocacy and education for seven counties in Southern California.

Wilson asked that audience members send letters, pass proclamations and contact legislators to let them know the support for a peripheral canal.

Matt Webb, president of the engineering firm [Albert A. Webb Associates](#), emceed the sold out conference, which attracted more than three dozen sponsors and representatives from more than 80 municipalities, water districts, government agencies and environmental groups. A diverse group of more than two dozen experts discussed the issues facing residents, industries and the environment in the watershed, including:

- Michael Chrisman, California Secretary for Natural Resources
- Riverside County Supervisors Marion Ashley and Roy Wilson
- Matt Webb, president, Albert A. Webb Associates and event emcee
- International water law expert Eric Garner, managing partner of Best, Best & Krieger
- Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet
- Celeste Cantú, General Manager, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
- Tony Pack, general manager, Eastern Municipal Water District
- John Rossi, general manager, Western Municipal Water District
- Steve Robbins, general manager, Coachella Valley Water District
- Dave Luker, general manager, Desert Water Agency

The event is presented by the Riverside-based engineering firm [Albert A. Webb Associates](#) and produced by the strategic communications and stakeholder coalition development firm [TMG Communications Inc.](#)

Summarizing the call to action, Palm Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet asked the audience to join his city’s efforts in its pathway to sustainability.

“Water is life. If we are to be a leader in water use, reuse and conservation, we need to commit to sustainability,” said Pougnet.

About the TMG Communications Inc.: *TMG is a Riverside-based strategic communications and stakeholder coalition development firm serving all of Southern California’s public affairs and public relations needs. TMG’s staff of public affairs, media relations, design and photography, sales and government affairs professionals provide a variety of outreach and public education services for Fortune 500 companies, water agencies and municipalities. For more information about TMG, please visit www.tmgonline.com*