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WATER EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION

# WATER SUMMIT 2025

## Embracing Uncertainty in the West

### Speaker Biographies

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#### *California's Future: People and Nature Thriving Together*

##### **Wade Crowfoot**

Wade Crowfoot serves as California's Natural Resources secretary, leading efforts to conserve California's environment and natural resources. He has served as secretary since 2019 and advises Governor Newsom as a member of his cabinet.

Secretary Crowfoot oversees an agency of over 25,000 employees spread across 26 departments, commissions and conservancies. His agency is charged with stewarding California's forests and natural lands, rivers and water supplies, and coast and ocean. It also protects natural places, wildlife and biodiversity, and helps oversee the state's world-leading clean energy transition.

Secretary Crowfoot is leading efforts to achieve Governor Newsom's ambitious environmental vision, including a commitment to conserve 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030. He oversees billions of dollars of public investment to protect people and natural places from climate change impacts, and has led efforts to navigate California's record-breaking droughts, floods and wildfires. Secretary Crowfoot has also initiated a new era of partnerships with California Native American Tribes and is shifting how the agency operates to better support all California residents and communities.

Secretary Crowfoot has been on the frontlines of environmental leadership throughout his career. He served in Governor Jerry Brown's Administration as deputy cabinet secretary and senior advisor to the Governor, driving climate action. He led the non-profit Water Foundation to build water resilience across the American West. He spearheaded efforts to establish and defend California's landmark climate change policies as West Coast regional director for the Environmental Defense Fund. As an environmental advisor to then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, he helped establish many first-in-the-nation urban environmental policies. Secretary Crowfoot received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree from the London School of Economics.

Secretary Crowfoot grew up in Michigan spending summers at a YMCA camp and in the woods around his family's remote cabin in Northern Ontario. He moved to California in the mid-1990s and discovered backcountry camping with friends. His first time in the redwoods at Big Basin State Park is still one of his defining California moments. He loves to camp with his wife and daughter and learn new things in the outdoors, currently including fly fishing and soon backcountry skiing. He says his best days in as Natural Resources secretary are spent outdoors with local groups that are conserving land and connecting people to nature.

## ***Forecasting in Flux: Decision-Making in a Changing Climate***

### **Christine Albano**

Christine Albano is an associate research professor in hydrology at the Desert Research Institute (DRI), where her research focuses on understanding the impacts of weather variability and extremes on water, ecosystems, and human communities across the western US. Christine holds a Ph.D. in hydrologic sciences from University of Nevada, Reno, and an M.S. in ecology from Colorado State University. Prior to joining DRI, Christine worked as a field ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's National Water Quality Assessment Program, managed a boots-on-the-ground conservation science program across a nearly 1-million acre public lands ranch near the Grand Canyon's North Rim, and led several applied research projects as a lead scientist at Conservation Science Partners.

### **James Prairie**

James Prairie, Ph.D. is the research and modeling group chief working in Reclamation's Upper Colorado Basin Region since 2000. He is stationed at the University of Colorado's Center for Advanced Decision Support for Water and Environmental Systems (CADSWES). James leads applied research in short and mid-term operations and long-term water resource planning, climate variability, and decision support under uncertainty. His group pursues relevant research projects and seeks to transition their findings in Reclamation's current operations and planning activities. He further directs river basin modeling technical teams and oversees the consumptive use, natural flow and natural salinity development programs for the Upper Colorado River basin. James received his Ph.D. in civil engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder and a B.S. in environmental resource engineering from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

### **Andrew Schwarz**

Andrew Schwarz is the California State Water Project (SWP) climate action manager. The SWP (owned and operated by the California Department of Water Resources) is one of the largest public water and power utilities in the world, providing water for more than 27 million people and 750,000 acres of farmland. Andrew works with SWP management, other state agencies, public water agencies, and scientists to reduce the SWP's contribution to climate change and drive action on adapting to climate change risks facing California's water systems. With over 20 years of water resource management and engineering experience, Andrew specializes in climate change impact analysis, management solutions to impacts, and policy development. Andrew has worked on multiple state-level water resource planning projects and has also worked to support local water agency climate resiliency planning.

### **Tamara Wilson**

Tamara Wilson is a research geographer with the Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey. Her research work leverages historic land change records to inform future scenarios of land change and its impacts on water resource availability. Tamara has worked with multiple university and state research partners and has been awarded two California Strategic Growth Council grants to support her work. She has experience including stakeholder engagement in the research development process to ensure science outcomes can inform decision making. Tamara served as the deputy director for the USGS National Innovation Center from 2019 to 2024, forging inter-agency partnerships to advance technology approaches to solving our most pressing earth science challenges, including next generation stream gaging. Tamara is an active community member, having been elected to the Mountain View Whisman School District's Board of Education, serving on the Mountain View Education Foundation Board of Directors, and hosting a Little Free Library. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in environmental studies from California State University East Bay and her Master of Arts degree in geography from the University of Arizona.

## ***Adapting in the Delta: Moving Forward Through Uncertainty***

### **Charlotte Biggs**

Charlotte Biggs serves as the assistant deputy director for natural infrastructure and ecosystem resilience at the California Department of Water Resources. In this role, Charlotte directs DWR's multibenefit habitat and flood risk reduction projects, as well as environmental flow protection programs. Charlotte specializes in complex project delivery and policy development to support efficient implementation. Charlotte has been with DWR for 10 years, previously serving as assistant division manager for the Multibenefit Initiatives Division and program director for the EcoRestore initiative focusing on accelerating over 30,000-acres of habitat restoration in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Charlotte was DWR's lead on implementing the state's largest tidal wetland restoration project to date, the Lookout Slough Tidal Wetland and Flood Improvement Project in the Delta. Charlotte is leading implementation of proposed restoration and flood improvement projects in the Yolo Bypass, Delta, Central Valley and in the Sacramento River and its tributaries. Charlotte holds a master's from the University of Southern California in public policy and public administration and a bachelor's from the University of California, Santa Barbara in history and environmental studies. Before joining DWR, Charlotte held positions in the private sector as a consultant and with the California State University, Sacramento as a public policy facilitator.

### **Morgan Chow**

Morgan Chow is an environmental program manager at the Delta Stewardship Council, with over 15 years of experience in resilience and equity. As the project manager for the Council's climate adaptation initiative, Delta Adapts, she leads efforts to integrate regional adaptation planning, tribal perspectives, and environmental justice into the long-term management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. A native of the Bay-Delta estuary, she is dedicated to protecting the region and the communities who depend on it. Morgan holds a Master of Science in marine resource management from Oregon State University.

### **Jerred Dixon**

Jerred Dixon, a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Delta farmer, is the Director of Conservation Farms & Ranches and leads research and management of Staten Island. The island is described as a "living laboratory" to evaluate management approaches to reduce subsidence rates and support wildlife-friendly farming while maintaining economic viability. Jerred conducts research and manages various projects on Staten Island to evaluate sustainable solutions to practical challenges of farming in the Delta. He also serves as President of Reclamation District 38, Trustee of Reclamation District 2110 and Board Member of the Delta Protection Advisory Committee.

### **Josh Israel**

Josh Israel is a supervisory fish biologist in Reclamation's Bay-Delta Office and manages the Science Division's team of scientists. In 2009, he joined Reclamation's Environmental Affairs Division to help connect science to real-work decisions affecting water and fish. He has led efforts on ecological data visualization, drought impacts on endangered species, and population modeling to inform water operations and habitat restoration in California's Central Valley. His career emphasizes bridging science and management, examining California's water needs and recovery of fish and habitats, and strengthening stakeholder involvement in these science efforts. Josh is also science editor for Fisheries magazine and holds a Ph.D. in ecology from UC Davis.

## ***Crises in Context: How We Navigated Past Turbulence***

### **Brenda Burman**

Brenda Burman joined Central Arizona Project in 2021 and has been the general manager since January 2023, the first female to lead the organization. Brenda has more than 25 years of experience working on Western water and natural resource issues, where she has been committed to finding collaborative solutions to secure reliable water supplies for communities, farms, tribes and the environment. Before joining CAP, Brenda was the commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation and the first woman to hold that position. Brenda has served in many other areas of the water community: in private legal practice; as the water and energy counsel for U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl; as senior water advisor to an environmental organization; and in senior positions for water districts in California and Arizona. Brenda holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Arizona College of Law and is licensed to practice law in Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming.

### **Felicia Marcus**

Felicia Marcus has a long career as an organizational manager, a federal, state, and local government policymaker and as a non-profit leader. She is currently the Landreth Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Water in the West Program and is an elected Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and the American College of Environmental Lawyers. Felicia was most recently chair of the California State Water Resources Control Board after having served as regional administrator of the U.S. EPA Region IX and as head of the City of Los Angeles' Department of Public Works in addition to senior leadership in national non-governmental organizations (Trust for Public Land, Natural Resources Defense Council). She is also a member of the Water Policy Group, an international network of former and current high-level water official policymakers and is also one of the three US members of the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation in addition to serving on many boards and advisory committees. Felicia graduated cum laude from Harvard College (East Asian Studies), has her J.D. from New York University School of Law, and attended Hong Kong University (Rotary Fellowship).

### **Jeff Mount**

Jeffrey Mount is a senior fellow at the PPIC Water Policy Center. He is an emeritus professor of earth and planetary sciences and founding director of the Center for Watershed Sciences at the University of California, Davis. A geomorphologist who specializes in the study of rivers, streams and wetlands, his research focuses on integrated water resource management, flood management, and improving aquatic ecosystem health. He has served on many state and federal boards and commissions that address water resource management issues in the West. He has published more than a hundred articles, books, and other publications, including the seminal book *California Rivers and Streams* (UC Press). He holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in earth sciences from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

### **Tim Quinn**

Timothy Quinn retired in 2018 after a very eventful 40-year career in California water management and politics. In 1985, Tim started a 22-year stint at the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, most of it as deputy general manager. In 2007, Tim became the executive director of the Association of California Water Agencies, leading the association to legislative and other successes on behalf of ACWA's roughly 450 public agency members. In 2019, Tim was the William C. Landreth Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Water in the West Program, where he taught a course on water policy and wrote a paper on the importance of collaboration based on his career experience. In 2022, Tim joined the team of OceanWell Company, a startup with a breakthrough technology for desalinating ocean water that has the potential to reshape California water policy for the better. Tim earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics at the University of Colorado and master's and Ph.D. degrees in economics at UCLA.

## Water Summit Moderators

### Jenn Bowles

Jenn Bowles was named executive director of the Water Education Foundation in March 2014. A veteran journalist, Jenn worked as a reporter and editor at *The Associated Press* in the Los Angeles bureau for 10 years. She later became the environmental reporter at *The Press-Enterprise*, garnering awards for her coverage of water issues in California during a nine-year stint. In December 2016, she led an international journalism workshop on water issues for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in Iran. Jenn has a bachelor's degree in journalism and history from the University of Southern California and completed a year-long Scripps Fellowship in Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

### Nick Gray

Nick Gray is programs director for the Water Education Foundation. He manages many of the Foundation's workshops, conferences and tours of key water regions across California and the West, bringing attendees up close to dams and other water infrastructure, wildlife areas, farms and other sites involved in water. Before joining the Foundation in 2018, Nick spent 15 years as a science teacher and education director of a science museum. He has also been involved with regional science communication organizations, including Capital Science Communicators. Nick has a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Dayton.

### Mike Moran

Mike Moran has been working with East Bay Regional Park District for 34 years. He started his District career as a park services attendant at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline (1989-1992). He was a naturalist (1994-2012) and supervising naturalist (2012-2021), interpreting the Delta and assisting in the development of the Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta. His areas of interest are California water, birds and local history. Mike is presently a regional interpretive and recreation services manager (since 2021), overseeing half of the District's "I&R" teams. Previously, Mike has worked with the National Park Service, California State Parks, National Marine Sanctuary System, Yosemite Institute (now Nature Bridge), and led natural history and whale watch programs in Alaska, Canada, New England, Washington and California. He has been on a number of advisory committees for Delta and water projects, including: Franks Tract Futures (UC Davis), Delta Island Adaptations (UC Davis), Just Transitions in the Delta (UC Davis), Sacramento San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area (Delta Protection Commission) and Delta Conveyance Authority Stakeholder Engagement Committee (California State Department of Water Resources). He attended San Francisco State University (B.A. recreation & leisure studies, B.A. geography & human environmental studies), and the University of California, Berkeley (M.S., wildland resource science, studying San Joaquin River Basin salmon). Mike was awarded the national Master Frontline Interpreter Award in 2012 from the National Association for Interpretation, and the 2013 Robert G. Brownlee Award for Bay Discoveries from the Marine Science Institute.