



CFWC Activity Report

TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Michelle Paul, Executive Director

DATE: July 6, 2026

SUBJECT: CFWC Activity Report, June 2026

Summary

The summer kicked off with our team officially saying goodbye to former Executive Director Mike Wade, who had been supporting the Coalition on a part-time basis following the leadership transition on March 1. Mike served as a great partner and leader throughout the transition, and we wish him the very best in his retirement.

Last month our team focused on responding to a media landscape dominated by groundwater, SGMA, water infrastructure and drought-related coverage, while continuing targeted outreach to reporters, partners and opinion outlets. We continued to use our platform to highlight key messages through earned media, podcast participation, opinion placements, and ongoing digital storytelling tied to water supply, food production, and agricultural affordability.

Media Landscape and Response

In June, nearly 320 California agriculture-related articles were published. Coverage was mostly neutral, although for those that carried a sentiment, negative stories outnumbered positive ones nearly two to one. Groundwater and SGMA dominated, followed by stories focused on water infrastructure, drought and supply, ecosystems and the environment, the Colorado River, and water law and policy. Groundwater stories focused on the Central Valley and SGMA costs, in addition to new or proposed fees in Napa and Tehama counties and a proposed state oversight application fee of up to \$250,000.

Colorado River coverage focused on post-2026 negotiations, upper-basin rancher testimony and a data center lawsuit against the Imperial Irrigation District. Infrastructure stories highlighted Sites Reservoir funding and more than \$131 million for Valley water upgrades, while articles covering desalination appeared across drought, groundwater and infrastructure reporting.

Ecosystem coverage centered on invasive species, especially the golden mussel, and water quality coverage followed EPA's decision to shelve drinking-water microplastics testing.

Editorial Outreach and Placement

Media outreach remained focused on refining our reporter database, engaging with reporters, and responding to timely opportunities, including an NBC inquiry on almond water use. I also joined the [Western Growers podcast](#) for a California water overview and continued relationship-building with select reporters at Agri-Pulse and Monterey County Now.

Two opinion pieces were published in June, the first of which ran in the [Desert Sun](#) and highlighted California's conservation achievements and concerns over the stalled post-2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River. The second piece was placed in [Capitol Weekly](#) and emphasized the need for long-term surface water conveyance infrastructure, groundwater storage and affordability for agricultural producers.

Outreach

Last month, our team developed water education materials for youth-focused exhibits which debuted at the Merced County Fair. The materials help younger audiences understand the water systems behind local food production and the role water plays in bringing food to their plates. We continue to refresh and expand CFWC's youth outreach materials with regional and county-level content.

In June, we supported the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley and the Unified Water Plan (UWP) by working with partners to review feedback and respond to commenters. We also reviewed and published the Blueprint blog, "A Plan Shaped by Many Voices," which highlights how broad participation strengthened the plan and encourages continued readership and engagement. The UWP is expected to be submitted to Congress later this month.

Food Grows where Water Flows Signage

We continue to seek partners to display our Food Grows Where Water Flows sign. Custom sizes are available and provide an opportunity for dual branding with your organization. We have a preference for high-visibility locations. More information is available [here](#).



Digital Engagement and Storytelling

In June, we began sharing behind-the-scenes reels from our recent content trip to the Friant area, offering an authentic look at California agriculture and the issues that farmers are currently facing. These videos will continue to roll out throughout the summer as part of our ongoing storytelling efforts.

We also shared recap videos from our recent Salinas influencer tour, which received strong, positive engagement from our target audience. The response reinforced the value of these tours in introducing agriculture to new audiences in a positive and engaging way.

Across our California Farm Water Coalition channels, we also promoted our recent op-eds highlighting [California's leadership in conserving Colorado River water](#) and [the importance of investing in a reliable water future for the state's farms, communities, and food supply](#).

Cultivate California Performance

Totals for Cultivate California	Activity year-to-date
Posts	76
Views	5,996,609
Reach	2,082,385
Interactions	133,148
Follows	38,814
Profile Visits	84,849
Click through rate (CTR)*	2.41%



Top-performing posts in June:



Farming and Community

Interactions: 4.2k
Views: 101.7k



Behind the Scenes Raisin Grapes

Interactions: 1.9k
Views: 71.6k



Diversification in Farming

Interactions: 2k
Views: 87.1k





CFWC Activity Report

TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Michelle Paul, Executive Director

DATE: June 5, 2026

SUBJECT: CFWC Activity Report, June 2026

Summary

May kicked off with a bang, as the full CFWC team spent the first week of the month hosting our booth at the ACWA Spring conference, making connections, and participating in break-out session. The event was a great opportunity for me to build relationships and continue to build my understanding of California water policy. The rest of the month was equally active we traveled around the state for meetings on SB72 and the California Water Plan, a member agency district tour, the California Water Institute and a Cultivate California social media influencer tour.



Media Landscape and Response

During the month of May, we saw just over 300 California agriculture-related articles published, with messaging mostly negative and focusing on crisis. The Colorado River once again dominated the news, closely followed by drought and water supply, water quality and contamination, ecosystems and the environment, water infrastructure, fisheries and salmon, and water law and policy. SGMA and groundwater was also regularly mentioned in regional and statewide media, while drought and supply coverage centered on Western states and the Colorado River. Fisheries' coverage noted the opening of several salmon runs, and heavy water quality coverage stemmed from continued attention to a widely distributed PFAS study.

Editorial Outreach and Placement

Overall, the elections crowded out Opinions, Letters, and Editorials, which limited opportunity for messages on ag water. We were successful, however, in placing an editorial in [Sacramento Bee](#) urging the state to pay for the cost to mitigate damages from the golden mussel invasions. This piece was picked up by all McClatchey media group markets in California including Fresno, Modesto, Merced, and San Luis Obispo.

We continue to develop and seek placement for a number of editorial pieces focused on increasing the State's water supply, the success of Imperial County farmers to meet conservation goals, and letters to the editor highlighting how a major Los Angeles articles piece that negatively reflected agriculture was not balanced and lacked an ag perspective.

I continue to create opportunities to build relationships with reporters focused on writing about water and agriculture in the state. Over the summer, we will put additional focus on this as we look to increase our impact and fulfill our mission of being the spokesperson for irrigated agriculture in the state.

SJV Blueprint and CAP Support

We also continued our support for the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley and its Unified Water Plan (UWP). Brandon Souza authored a [blog](#) and continued production of its weekly e-blasts. We developed a LinkedIn outreach program and developed an Introduction reader guide, a supply step-down ledger, an evaluation of DWR's groundwater report compared to UWP findings, a crop acreage impact summary with supporting water volume workbook, refreshed Blueprint graphics, and updated fact sheet two-pagers. We continue to participate with the Ag Caucus on the CAP, supporting where we can be helpful.

Outreach

When we weren't in our Sacramento office building out our media outreach strategy, digital presence, and approach to engage with members, we were out and about in the state, participating in several high-profile meetings with agency staff as work kicked-off on the California Water Plan and the state's compliance with SB 72. We also participated in the SJV Water Resilience Seminar hosted by the Water Institute in Fresno last month and the Groundwater Resources Association of California's SGMA seminar focusing on the impacts of implementation. We left this series of meetings fully aware that our role going forward will be to highlight stories from boots on the ground, connecting regulators with the impacts of these policies as they develop California's future water policy.

Food Grows where Water Flows Signage

We are looking for partners to display our iconic Food Grows Where Water Flows Sign. A letter with additional information on how to partner with us was recently sent out, please contact us for more information.



Digital Engagement and Storytelling

In May, we traveled to the Friant area to interview local farmers about their experiences growing in the Central Valley, focusing on the importance of water, the community aspect of agriculture, and the impressive scope of agriculture in the area. These interviews will form the basis of a new video series releasing over the coming months on Cultivate California channels going behind the scenes with the people behind California agriculture. On our CFWC channels, we highlighted our [Op Ed on the California golden mussel infestation](#).

At the end of the month, we hosted a three-day Spring Farm Tour in the Salinas Valley with two food and recipe creators, where they toured farms, learned about regional water challenges, and gained a deeper appreciation for the innovation and water stewardship behind California's produce system. This tour will generate content to be shared with their audiences to widen our reach and create empathy for the hard work and challenges being faced in California agriculture.

Cultivate California Performance

Totals for Cultivate California	Activity year-to-date
Posts	54
Views	4,812,873
Reach	1,725,704
Interactions	113,711
Follows	33,398
Profile Visits	68,500
Click through rate (CTR)*	2.37%



Top-performing posts in May:



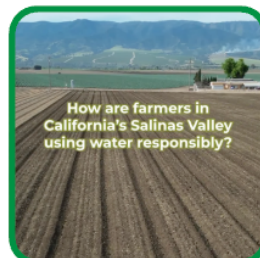
Importance of Exports

Interactions: 2.5k
Views: 82.5k



Peach Tarte Tatin Recipe

Interactions: 3.5k
Views: 43.5k



Salinas Valley Water Sustainability

Interactions: 2.1k
Views: 98.3k