

Speaker Bios:

Arvind Akela

Arvind K. Akela, P.E., BCEE, CEM, LEED® AP (BD+C) is the Director of Engineering at Silicon Valley Clean Water, with over 20 years of experience in water, wastewater, and energy systems. He oversees a \$358M capital program and leads initiatives in sustainability, innovation, and regulatory compliance. Arvind has advanced energy efficiency, implemented cutting-edge strategies, and built regional collaborations. He holds a master's in mechanical engineering from San José State University and a bachelor's from National Institute of Technology, Patna, India. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in California and holds multiple certifications. Arvind is a past President of the California Water Environment Association and a frequent speaker on utility innovation and clean energy. He has received national recognition for leadership in building resilient and sustainable utility operations.

Rosario Cortes

Rosario Cortés is the Manager of Regulatory Affairs for WaterReuse California. Rosario represents WRCA in a myriad of regulatory activities involving recycled water including the implementation of the water use efficiency legislation, funding issues, the onsite reuse regulations, and more. Rosario has 25-plus years of experience in California water policy. In addition to working for two members of the California State Legislature, a governor and as a contract legislative advocate, she held several high-level positions for water-related associations including the Association of California Water Agencies, the California Municipal Utilities Association and most recently the California Special Districts Association.

Mark Millan

Mark Millan is the founder and principal of Data Instincts, a professional consultancy specializing in public outreach for implementing a spectrum of reuse water projects. He has coordinated outreach for dozens of reuse water projects throughout the United States and has advised on reuse internationally. Mr. Millan has authored numerous papers and participated in many research projects on water-related communications. Mark co-authored the Water Research Foundation's **Developing Model Communication Plans for Advancing Awareness and Fostering Acceptance of Potable Reuse** (WRF 4540) and was a contributing writer to the World Health Organization's **Guidelines for Potable Reuse** published in 2017. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees for WaterReuse California, and in 2024 was honored with the prestigious "**Bahman Sheikh Award for Vision in Water Reuse**". Mark served on the city council for the Town of Windsor and was Mayor in 2016.

Dr. Negin Ashoori

Dr. Negin Ashoori serves as the Senior Water Resources Engineer at the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), where she leads both technical and policy-driven initiatives focused on regional water resource management. Her work includes overseeing BAWSCA's long-term water supply reliability planning effort, known as Strategy 2050. Prior to joining BAWSCA, Dr. Ashoori was a postdoctoral researcher at Stanford University with the Re-Inventing the Nation's Urban Water Infrastructure (ReNUWIt) research center. She is committed to advancing innovative, cost-effective solutions to complex water management challenges.

Manisha Kothari

Manisha has almost 25 years of experience with infrastructure development and water supply planning. She has worked in the U.S. federal government, as a consultant, and for almost 19 years, at San Francisco's municipal utility with local and regional water supply responsibility, the SFPUC. At the SFPUC, Manisha oversees planning for large capital water supply projects from concept through implementation.

YinLan Zhang

YinLan Zhang is the SFPUC project manager for PureWater Peninsula. She's part of the Alternative Water Supply team within the Water Enterprise that works on developing additional dry year supplies for the SFPUC's retail and wholesale customers. She has been with the SFPUC for 17 years and has been involved in multiple capital projects for both water and wastewater enterprises.

Kristen Yasukawa

Kristen Yasukawa is the Unit Manager of the Office of Civic Engagement at Valley Water. In this role, Kristen leads Valley Water's community engagement initiatives across Santa Clara County, which includes the agency's purified water public outreach program. Kristen has more than 15 years of experience in public information, community engagement, and project management in the environment and education fields in the public and private sectors. Kristen holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a minor in Business Management. She also holds certificates from the California Public Information Officials' J. Lindsey Wolf PIO Institute and the Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute's Civic Leadership Program.

Peter Fisk

Dr. Peter S. Fiske is the Director of the National Alliance for Water Innovation (NAWI) the U.S. Department of Energy's Water Innovation Hub at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. NAWI's key focus is on lowering the cost of small-scale, modular water treatment and reuse systems so that more water can be reused locally, lowering the cost and energy associated with water transport and distribution. Prior to joining LBL, Fiske was the Chief Executive Officer of PAX Water Technologies. PAX Water pioneered the use of biomimicry to develop innovative and energy efficient technologies to improve drinking water quality and reliability in municipal water systems. Fiske is also on the Board of Fontus Blue, Inc., and occasionally lectures at U.C. Berkeley's Haas School of Business.

Lisa Tomenendal

Lisa Tomenendal earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of St. Mary's in San Antonio, TX. She then worked as a human and environmental health consultant, specializing in air quality projects and human inhalation exposure assessments. Currently, she is a second-year graduate student in the Civil and Environmental Engineering program at the Colorado School of Mines, working under Dr. Tzahi Cath and Dr. Chris Bellona. Her research focuses on optimizing advanced treatment processes for nutrient and organics removal in wastewater, with an emphasis on Direct Potable Reuse (DPR). In her free time, she enjoys practicing yoga, playing soccer, and taking her dog on walks or outdoor adventures.