



MEDIA RELEASE

State Water Board selects Jay Ziegler as the new Delta Watermaster

He will report jointly to the board, Delta Stewardship Council

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SACRAMENTO - The State Water Resources Control Board named Jay Ziegler, former external affairs and policy director for the California Office of The Nature Conservancy, as the new [Delta Watermaster](#). He succeeds Michael George, who held the position for two four-year terms.

The Watermaster administers water rights within the legal boundaries of the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta and Suisun Marsh and advises the State Water Board and the [Delta Stewardship Council](#) on related water rights, water quality and water operations involving the watershed.

“Jay is uniquely qualified to provide crucial guidance and leadership on a multitude of challenges we are confronting in the Delta, which is the hub of California’s water infrastructure,” said E. Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the Water Board. “His experience will enable him to take a broad, holistic view at a time when conditions are evolving swiftly and dramatically due to the impacts of climate change.”

Ziegler, who starts his new position April 3, reports jointly to the board and the Stewardship Council.

“The Stewardship Council looks forward to working closely with Jay,” said council Chair Virginia Madueño. “Over the last eight years, Michael was a critical partner in implementing the state’s Delta Plan and ensuring that the council is responsive to the region’s needs. I know Jay will carry this work forward. His background, experience working in the Bay-Delta system, and, more recently, his time with The Nature Conservancy, has more than prepared him to lead the important work of the Watermaster office.”

A resident of Davis, Ziegler brings a wealth of experience to the position. During his 12 years at the conservancy, he led the agency's policy engagements on water, climate and resilience strategies, biodiversity and environmental and funding initiatives. Previously, he served in multiple roles at state and federal natural resource agencies, including intergovernmental affairs with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, where he focused on endangered species, public lands, water and natural resource management issues across the West.

His priorities in his new role include educating Californians about the Delta's vulnerability and advancing clear and understandable metrics for water use and diversion criteria. As an active leader in science-based water management, Ziegler has devoted much of his career to advancing science-based data and sharing information more effectively with stakeholders.

"The Delta is one of the most climate-vulnerable watersheds in the United States," he said. "It is no secret that there is a lot of stress on the system. It needs to be managed in a way that elevates science to protect this vital ecosystem while balancing the needs of people and nature."

Ziegler, a UC Davis graduate with a B.A. in political science and government, serves on the board of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy.

"We are in such a dynamic time," he continued. "Everything we think we know about the Delta, we probably need to test and validate again. Fundamentally, we are in a state that developed its water infrastructure in the mid-20th century, and while we have done an amazing job at developing water resources, we really have to adapt to the fundamental changes in hydrology that climate change is bringing to our doors."

More information on the Delta is available on the State Water Board [website](#).

The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's drinking water and water resources for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.

The Delta Stewardship Council was created to advance the state's coequal goals for the Delta – a more reliable statewide water supply and a healthy and protected ecosystem, both achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique characteristics of the watershed as an evolving place.