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San Diego Chapter News

California Special Districts Association



Special District Spotlight

PORT OF SAN DIEGO ADVANCES HABITAT-FRIENDLY SHORELINE PROJECTS TO PROTECT SAN DIEGO BAY

Innovative shoreline infrastructure combines coastal resilience, marine habitat restoration, and public access.

The Port of San Diego is expanding its efforts to protect San Diego Bay through an innovative approach that combines shoreline infrastructure with environmental restoration. In March 2026, the Port's Board of Port Commissioners awarded a $2.9 million construction contract for two habitat-friendly shoreline projects: one along Harbor Island Park in San Diego and another along the Chula Vista side of the Sweetwater Channel.

The projects reflect the Port's commitment to protecting the bay's ecological health while maintaining shoreline stability and preserving opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the waterfront.

CSDA

Quarterly Dinner Meeting

November 19, 2026
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Dinner served at 6:45 pm

The Butcher Shop
5255 Kearny Villa Rd.
San Diego, CA 92123

Click here for more information

2027 Executive Board Meeting Schedule

- January 25, 2027
- April 19, 2027
- July 19, 2027
- October 18, 2027

2027 Quarterly Dinner Meeting Schedule

- February 18, 2027
- May 20, 2027
- August 19, 2027
- November 18, 2027

2027 Quarterly Lunch Meeting Schedule

- March 16, 2027
- June 15, 2027
- September 21, 2027
- December 21, 2027

Building a Healthier Bay Through Innovation

Approximately 74% of San Diego Bay's shoreline is reinforced with traditional structures, such as seawalls and rock barriers known as riprap. Although these structures provide important coastal protection, they generally offer limited habitat for marine life.

To address this challenge, the Port is working with ECOncrete, an environmental technology company specializing in nature-based coastal infrastructure. The company's COASTALOCK system uses specially designed concrete shoreline units that provide structural protection while creating spaces where marine organisms can establish themselves.

The expansion builds on a successful pilot project installed along a 160-foot stretch of Harbor Island in 2021. After several years of monitoring, Port staff found that the structures remained resilient and supported more than 60 marine species. The units also attracted organisms that naturally filter water, providing an additional water-quality benefit.



Encouraged by these results, the Port is extending the approach to two additional locations, replacing portions of conventional rock shoreline with habitat-enhancing structures.

Investing in Environmental Stewardship

The Harbor Island project includes $1 million in funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The complementary Sweetwater Channel project is supported by $2.6 million through a supplemental environmental project agreement with the City of San Diego. The Sweetwater Channel improvements will be located adjacent to Paradise Marsh, an ecologically important area.

The original Harbor Island pilot was made possible through the Port's Blue Economy Incubator, which supports innovative approaches and technologies that can benefit the region's waterfront and marine environment.

Together, these projects demonstrate how public agencies can incorporate environmental considerations into infrastructure investments without sacrificing essential shoreline protection

A Long-Term Benefit for the San Diego Region

The Port of San Diego manages 34 miles of waterfront across five cities and oversees a diverse portfolio that includes maritime operations, public parks, recreation, environmental initiatives, and waterfront development. Its work contributes to the region's economy while helping maintain the bay as a valuable environmental and recreational resource.

By expanding habitat-friendly shoreline infrastructure, the Port is demonstrating how innovation and collaboration can help address coastal challenges while supporting marine biodiversity and public access. The projects represent an important step toward a more resilient San Diego Bay, benefiting the region's communities and natural environment for years to come.

Learn more: Read the Port of San Diego's official project announcement.

2026 LEGISLATIVE YEAR IN REVIEW: ADVOCACY THAT MATTERS TO SPECIAL DISTRICTS



As California's 2025–2026 legislative session comes to a close, the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) is highlighting the impact of collective advocacy in protecting local control, preserving revenue, and maintaining the flexibility special districts need to deliver essential services.

For special districts throughout San Diego County and Southern California, these efforts help protect the resources and operational authority needed to serve local communities effectively.

Protecting Local Revenue and Financial Stability

One of CSDA's key priorities was opposing legislation that could have increased costs or restricted local agencies' ability to fund essential services. CSDA successfully opposed proposals that threatened to increase pension costs, impose burdensome information-handling requirements, or restrict the use of local agency investment funds. The association also helped ensure that affordable housing infrastructure legislation would not unnecessarily restrict special district fees and charges.

CSDA supported legislation clarifying local agencies' authority to establish property-related and service-related fees and charges, helping districts maintain the financial tools needed to operate and maintain infrastructure.

Preserving Local Control and Operational Flexibility

CSDA worked to prevent new state mandates that could have created additional administrative burdens for special districts. Among its successes, the association opposed legislation that would have required districts to adopt .gov or .ca.gov website and email addresses, while also advocating for practical flexibility in auditing requirements for smaller districts.

CSDA also continued advocating for changes to California Air Resources Board regulations affecting zero-emission vehicle requirements. Although regulatory amendments modestly delayed implementation and acknowledged some concerns involving emergency response, additional advocacy remains necessary.

Protecting Essential Services Through Collective Advocacy

CSDA's advocacy extended beyond individual bills to broader challenges affecting public agencies. The association helped prevent a proposed wildfire liability shift that could have limited special districts' ability to recover costs following wildfire damage, including emergency response expenses and losses involving public infrastructure and local property tax revenue.

The power of collaboration was also evident during Special Districts Legislative Days, when 183 local leaders representing 29 regional groups participated in 92 meetings with legislators and their staff. Their efforts helped stop proposals that would have restricted the use of emerging technologies supporting the safe and affordable delivery of essential services.

A Stronger Voice for Special District

During 2026, CSDA reviewed 5,065 state bills, actively tracked 2,397 measures, and adopted 241 priority positions. Of the 127 bills CSDA supported, 70 became law. Of the 114 bills it opposed, 23 became law, while many others failed to advance or were amended.

These results demonstrate the importance of a coordinated legislative voice. For San Diego County's special districts, continued engagement with CSDA and state lawmakers will remain essential to protecting local resources, addressing emerging challenges, and ensuring agencies can continue delivering reliable, affordable services to their communities.

Learn more on CSDA's 2026 year-end bill reports here:
www.csda.net/advocate/bill-tracking .

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

San Diego Chapter members,



As the year ends and the holiday season begins, I want to thank you in this final President's Message for the privilege of serving as your Chapter President. Representing San Diego—the state's best and most engaged chapter—over the past two years has been an honor and a pleasure.

Our members make this chapter special. Whether you attended a chapter dinner, invited a colleague, suggested a speaker, or represented San Diego at CSDA events, you helped special district leaders connect, learn, and advocate for the communities we serve. Take pride in your work and the positive changes you have brought to our chapter.

Our newly elected officers will take office at the start of 2027, and I look forward to the improvements they have planned to better serve you.

Please join us for our final chapter meeting of 2026 on Thursday, November 19th, at the Butcher Shop to celebrate the year, connect with fellow members, and welcome the holiday season. I wish you, your families, and your agencies a happy, healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. I look forward to seeing you on the 19th and at next year's chapter meetings.

With gratitude,
Jose Martinez
President, CSDA San Diego Chapter

MARTY MILLER MAKES HISTORY AT METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT

Marty Miller, president of the Vista Irrigation District Board of Directors, has been elected Chair of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, marking a historic milestone as the first representative from San Diego County to hold the position in the agency’s nearly 100-year history.

Miller has served on the Vista Irrigation District Board since 2008 and has represented the San Diego region on the San Diego County Water Authority Board of Directors since 2011. Throughout his career, he has taken on leadership roles focused on financial stewardship, water planning, and sustainability.



As Chair, Miller will help guide Metropolitan, the regional water wholesaler that serves approximately 19 million people across six Southern California counties. His appointment brings an important local perspective to regional water management and the ongoing work to ensure a reliable water supply for communities throughout Southern California.

CSDA congratulates President Miller on this well-deserved achievement and recognizes his continued commitment to the broader San Diego region.

TREASURER'S REPORT



Income for the period was from 2026-27 Membership Payments $4,725.00 and August 2026 dinner meeting $3,770.00 for a total of $8,495.00.

Expenditures for the period included The Butcher Shop Restaurant for August 2026 dinner meeting $4,126.05; Video Contest 1st and 2nd Place Winner Awards $3,000; and credit card processing fees $197.76 for a total of $7,323.81.

The fund balances as of September 30, 2026 were as follows: the Grant Scholarship Fund balance increased by the 50% allocation of the annual membership receipts $3,000.00 with an ending balance of $30,189.94; the Speaker Program fund remained unchanged with a balance of $2,500.00; and the General Fund balance after adjustments for income, transfer to Grant Scholarship fund, and expenses increased by $1,808.69 for an ending balance of $9,281.72 for a total Fund balance of $41,971.66. The bank balance (adjusted for uncleared checks) as of September 30, 2026 was $41,971.66.

Rich Stevenson
CSDA Treasurer

ELECTIONS

Elections for positions on the Board of Directors will take place during the upcoming Quarterly Dinner Meeting on November 19, 2026. Members are encouraged to attend and participate in this important process as we look ahead to another successful year.



AFFILIATE MEMBERS

AMERESCO

BBK Best Best & Krieger Attorneys at Law

burke Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP

TRANE TECHNOLOGIES

CSDA CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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