

Stein Buer:

Good morning. This is an awesome turnout, this is wonderful. I want to start by thanking Steve Stockton for coming here late last night to spend time with us; I promise you, Steve, this Vegetation Symposium will grow on you. And I want to thank all the rest of you as well for coming; it's your time, your energy, and your knowledge freely shared that will make this symposium a big success. I want to thank our partners, the Corps of Engineers, the State Department of Water Resources, and the State Reclamation Board for co-sponsoring this event, and for allowing a large number of your talented staff to be here this morning. It's very important that a lot of us hear what goes on today and contribute to the symposium.

Our partnership is a long-standing, deep, and wide partnership in California, extending over 100 years in planning, designing, constructing, maintaining, flood-fighting, forecasting, operating, recovery and rehabilitation. We have worked together on all these fronts over all these years. We look to our distinguished partners and we see a lot of strength. In the Corps of Engineers, we see an organization deeply rooted in the nation's history with a global reach, a national perspective, powerful, determined, and accomplished. In the state of California, the Reclamation Board and the Department of Water Resources, we see a great talent pool as well; an organization capable of rapid mobilization under strong leadership, as we have seen play out in 2006 when the state declared an emergency and mobilized to spend about 300 million dollars in the season. It was a fantastic accomplishment, a great credit to this state.

So, what is it that local agencies such as SAFCA can bring to this partnership? And there are many of us up and down the Valley who work directly with the state and the Corps to move forward on these projects. Well, being small, SAFCA has 13 full-time employees; that's our full extent. But we have, because we're small, agility, creativity, and a passionate commitment to our community, and we have the support of a truly remarkably talented group of consultants; we can reach into the consulting world and get the very, very best the nation and the world has

to offer. We can bridge gaps, we can solve problems, we can quickly move unencumbered to fill the gaps where the larger agencies may be held up by contacting regulations, funding limitations, or decision-making processes.

But our greatest strength is the fact that our nerve endings are deeply embedded in our local communities. This is America up close, and our citizens ask us on a daily basis -- we get thousands of phone calls, emails, and at public meetings we're in direct contact with our constituents, day in, day out throughout the year, during the day and in evening meetings. And our constituents ask us over and over again, how are you spending our hard-earned money? Do you have your priorities straight? Are you being efficient? Are you considering all of the consequences of your actions? Are you using the best available science? Those questions, which guide us on a daily basis, I think can guide this symposium as well, and I look forward to the proceedings and report. Thank you very, very much.

Now, it is my great pleasure and honor to introduce the mayor of this great city of Sacramento, a veteran of flood fights and battles to win improvements for Sacramento over 16, 17 years now. Please welcome Mayor Heather Fargo.