

## Steady through every storm: Three decades of dedication



Left to right: Robert Villalobos, Mark Will, Jean Lespade, and Robert McIntyre

Over the years, we have proudly celebrated many new hires, retirements, and long-serving employees whose dedication shapes this agency's success. At the November 12, 2025, Special Board of Directors Meeting, four employees were honored for achieving 30 years of dedicated public service.

### Mark Will

Senior Engineer Mark Will joined the District in 1992 as an Engineer I in the Development Review Department. He has spent his career in Development Review and now leads the West Side Development Review Team. Throughout his career, Mark has contributed to major projects including the California High-Speed Rail, the El Paseo Shopping Center, and Veterans Boulevard, ensuring new development hits all the marks for flood protection.

He is widely appreciated for his professionalism, steady work ethic, and deep technical knowledge.

### Robert Villalobos

Robert Villalobos, Engineering Technician III, began his District service in 1994 as a Design Technician I, and has spent the past 24 years in Development Review. Robert's precision, reliability, and sound judgement have supported numerous local projects, including the Clovis Community Hospital expansion and the Golden Triangle Development. Whether he's reviewing plans, processing reimbursements, or setting finish floor elevations to protect homes from flooding, Robert brings consistency, care, and accuracy to every task.

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## Message from the General Manager



Peter Sanchez

With the rainy season underway, this issue highlights efforts that reflect the District’s focus on community support and preparation. Through the expanded PIE Program, our new *Ask an Expert* videos, and a renewed effort to certify businesses for stormwater-safe practices, the District shares resources that help our community make small, meaningful changes to protect stormwater. At the same time, our Engineering Services and Agreements Department supports the development community, partner agencies, and long-term infrastructure construction.

We are deeply grateful for the partnerships and people who make this work possible. The Fresno Irrigation District’s Basin Interties Project—recognized statewide for its innovation—demonstrates how collaborative problem-solving strengthens local groundwater supplies. International dialogue with a visiting delegation from Münster, Germany, shows how our local efforts contribute to global conversations on resilience and sustainability. We also extend heartfelt appreciation to our 30-year employees, whose dedication and expertise have strengthened the District year after year, rain or shine.

Together, these stories underscore the District’s goal to provide resources, grow partnerships, and show gratitude for the people and projects that protect our water resources in every season.

## Sharing a piece of the PIE (Program)

The District’s Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Program is a key part of our federal stormwater permit, and one of the most wide-reaching efforts we undertake each year. The Program includes a wide range of activities, including staffing educational booths at community events, giving classroom presentations, delivering school outreach materials, supporting regional water education programs, maintaining a 24-hour stormwater hotline, partnering with community groups to stencil storm drains (featured in the Spring 2025 *Flood Line*), managing the Clean Stormwater Grant Program (featured in the Spring and Summer 2025 *Flood Line*), and distributing pollution-prevention resources across Fresno and Clovis.

Mixed-media public outreach is another piece of the PIE. In collaboration with Archer & Hound Advertising, the District develops television and radio messages, social and digital content on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Multilingual educational materials in English, Hmong, Punjabi, and Spanish reflect the diversity of our community. The majority of outreach directs residents to KeepItClear.org, our stormwater education hub, which offers practical tips and pollution-prevention guidance.

One of the most recognizable elements of the campaign—our colorful Keep It Clear stormwater awareness banners—is also expanding. Using five years of illicit discharge and complaint data, staff identified neighborhoods with the

highest number of stormwater concerns. Based on this analysis, 75 additional banners are being installed on basin fences in priority areas to deliver water-quality reminders where they’re needed most. This year, the District also partnered with Fresno State’s Office of Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management to install two new banners near campus, increasing visibility for thousands of students, employees, and daily commuters.



Keep It Clear banner

Whether it’s a classroom presentation, a booth at a local event, a banner in your neighborhood, or an Instagram reel, the PIE Program is designed to meet people where they are. The message remains simple and consistent: every small action, like picking up trash, disposing of household chemicals properly, or reducing pesticide use, makes a big difference in protecting our shared water resources.

## Winter water wisdom: New *Ask an Expert* videos



Scenes from the *Ask an Expert* series, featuring interviews with FID’s Assistant General Manager of Operations, Adam Claes (L) and the District’s Master Planning & Special Projects Manager, Denise Wade (R)

Have you ever wondered what happens to rainwater after it runs off your street, or how local basins, miles of pipelines, and canals work together to prevent flooding? The District’s *Ask an Expert* YouTube series answers these questions and more, featuring short, easy-to-follow videos on a range of stormwater topics.



On-location filming with Archer & Hound’s team at Basin “BO” (Sunnyside s/o Belmont)

Each episode spotlights a water professional explaining a specific area of stormwater management, from how systems are designed to how residents can do their part to keep things flowing properly. The goal is to make technical topics simple, practical, and relevant to everyday life in the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area.

In one of the newest videos, Denise Wade, the District’s

Master Planning & Special Projects Manager, explains how storm drainage systems are designed to safely move water from neighborhoods to basins. Her team manages the District’s Urban Storm Drainage Master Plan, which covers more than 150 basins and an extensive network of pipelines. For readers who enjoyed learning more about the Master Planning Team in the Spring 2025 *Flood Line*, this video addresses more questions about their work, showing how careful design and aesthetics come together to protect and enhance our community.

Another new video features Adam Claes, Assistant General Manager of Operations for the Fresno Irrigation District (FID). He discusses how our agencies work together to manage stormwater. During winter storms, the District pumps its basins to FID canals, creating capacity for upcoming storm events, and FID routes that water to its basins, located west of Highway 99. In the summer, that partnership reverses, and FID delivers surface water to many District basins, helping replenish local groundwater supplies. Through this collaboration, approximately 35,000 acre-feet of surface water was delivered to District basins for groundwater recharge in the spring and summer months of 2024, as highlighted in the Summer 2025 *Flood Line*.

Through the *Ask an Expert* series, the District aims to connect residents with experts that keep our community resilient. From Integrated Pest Management to pool draining and local wildlife, each video connects everyday topics to stormwater. Watch them all on our YouTube channel @FresnoMetroFlood.



# Strengthening sister city ties: Münster, Germany delegation visits the District



German delegates meet with District leadership

On October 30, the District welcomed a delegation from Münster, Germany as part of the Urban Diplomacy Exchange Project, a program commissioned by the German Federal Foreign Office and carried out by the Association of German Cities. Fresno and Münster have been sister cities since 1986, and this week-long professional exchange—focused on climate adaptation, sustainable resource utilization, and energy efficiency—further strengthened the long-standing international partnership.

The delegation was welcomed by Director Kacey Auston, General Manager Peter Sanchez, Assistant General Manager-District Engineer Brent Sunamoto, Operations Engineer Jarrod Takemoto, and Environmental Resources Manager Andrew Remus. During their visit to the District, staff explained how the agency’s storm drain inlets, ponding basins, and canal interties work together to protect Fresno and Clovis neighborhoods from flooding while also supporting groundwater recharge. Conversations highlighted key components of Fresno’s long-term water management strategy including the District’s master planning efforts, infrastructure design, and coordination with the Fresno Irrigation District.

The delegation also met with other local agencies and experts in Fresno to learn about the region’s approach to

sustainable infrastructure and climate resilience. Their tour included presentations about Fresno’s solar and battery projects, the California Energy Commission’s Darden Clean Energy Project, and a visit to the City of Fresno’s Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility. They also attended a Fresno City Council meeting, met with representatives from the Fresno’s Sister Cities International Chapter and the San Joaquin River Conservancy, and visited the Fresno Chaffee Zoo.

The delegation included Ingo Kopitz, Head of Waterway Planning, Department of Mobility and Civil Engineering; Alexander Beer, Head of Department for Infrastructural Building Management, Department of Property Management; Birgit Wildt, Advisor for National and International Environmental and Climate Protection, Department of Green Spaces, Environment and Sustainability; and Hayrie Salish, Citizens’ and Council Services, International Office. Their visit provided a rare opportunity for international collaboration on shared challenges involving urban water management, flood control infrastructure, and climate resilience.

The District was honored to participate in this exchange and thanks the delegation for their visit, insight, and shared commitment to building sustainable, resilient communities.

# Only rain in the drain, no gunk in the gutter

Did you know that washing your trash or recycling bin in the driveway can send dirty water straight into the storm drain? Unlike the water that flows down your sink or shower drain, stormwater is not treated. Storm drains lead directly into our community’s ponding basins, which provide flood protection, groundwater recharge, and habitat for local animals, and in some areas, discharge to the San Joaquin River. When bins are rinsed on pavement, leftover food, bacteria, oils, and harsh cleaners end up in



BinBusters of California utilizes a specially manufactured vehicle to sanitize bins and capture wastewater

these waterways, harming animals and contributing to pollutants that may affect groundwater quality over time. Fortunately, there’s a cleaner solution. Local companies offer professional trash bin cleaning equipment that captures and properly disposes of dirty wash water. The District is authenticating businesses that demonstrate proper wastewater handling and stormwater protection practices. Companies that complete a questionnaire, participate in an on-site system review, and demonstrate how they manage wash water responsibly will be featured online and in outreach materials as trusted partners in protecting local stormwater quality. By choosing a certified service, homeowners can avoid unnecessary fines, prevent pollution, protect local animals, and keep our stormwater clean. These small actions add up and support the water resources we all depend on.

## Verified Stormwater-Friendly Bin Cleaning Companies (as of publication)

Bin Busters California | (559) 900-8998 | binbustersca.com

Businesses interested in this free process can contact us at [environmental@fresnofloodcontrol.org](mailto:environmental@fresnofloodcontrol.org).

# Team Spotlight: Engineering Services and Agreements

Meet the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District's Engineering Services and Agreements Department. Managed by Norma Lopez-Teal, this unique department consists of two closely connected teams: Engineering Services and Agreements.

The Engineering Services team plays a central role in supporting development throughout Fresno-Clovis. They assess and collect drainage fees, which fund a development's proportionate share of the drainage system, and provide drafting services using computer-aided design software to create drawings that range from simple sketches to full sets of construction plans.

The Agreements team drafts, reviews, and manages agreements with developers and/or other agencies. In collaboration with Development Review, they collect information, consult legal counsel, and manage agreements from draft to execution—tracking more than 200 agreements at any given time. After execution, they monitor each agreement through completion, ensuring all terms are met. This follow-through allows



Left to right: Corey Matteson, Tim Parrish, Leana Lopez, Norma Lopez-Teal, Alex Madrigal, and Keith Radford

the District to finalize agreements, close out obligations, and process reimbursements efficiently and accurately.

Together, the two teams play a critical role in supporting the development community, partner agencies, and the District’s long-term infrastructure construction.



# Winter rains, smarter gains: Celebrating the Basin Interties Project with FID

The District is excited to congratulate our partner agency, the Fresno Irrigation District (FID), on being named a finalist for the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Excellence in Innovation Award. FID's Basin Interties Project is a standout example of how collaborative, resourceful engineering can support the goals of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) while maximizing existing public infrastructure.

The ACWA Excellence in Innovation Award recognizes groundbreaking, creative solutions that strengthen California's long-term resilience. FID's Basin Interties Project exemplifies this spirit, demonstrating how regional partnerships and shared infrastructure can produce lasting water supply benefits across the North Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency area.



**Intertie at Basin "CK" (southwest of Belmont & Cornelia)**

The project, completed in August 2024 and partially funded by the Department of Water Resources Flood Diversion and Recharge Enhancement Initiative, connects four District basins to nearby FID canals through engineered interties, providing an estimated 1,700 acre-feet of groundwater recharge each year.

Instead of starting from scratch, the District and FID leveraged stormwater basins that were already serving



**Intertie at Basin "SS" (northeast of Annadale & Walnut)**

the community for storm drainage, avoiding the costs typically associated with acquiring new land or building entirely new recharge facilities. By connecting these basins to the irrigation canal network, the project increased recharge opportunities within District basins.



**Left to right: Interties at Basin "AS" (northwest of California & Valentine) and "CE" (northwest of American & Maple)**

The District congratulates the Fresno Irrigation District on this well-deserved recognition and is proud to partner with them in the continued work of building a more resilient local water supply.

# Steady through every storm

Continued from cover



**Peter Sanchez (L) and Sarge Green (C) present Mark Will (R) with Resolution of Appreciation for 30 years of service**

## Robert McIntyre

In 1995, Robert McIntyre joined the District as a Design Technician before transitioning to a role supporting technology systems in the early 2000s. He is currently a Computer Network Technician II. Over the last three decades, he's assisted the agency through technological change—from AutoCAD and software system upgrades to enhancing network security, and deploying remote-work systems and maintaining reliable IT operations during the pandemic. His commitment to service, including after-hours support, has been vital to keeping District operations running smoothly.



**Peter Sanchez (L) and Sarge Green (R) present Robert McIntyre (C) with Resolution of Appreciation for 30 years of service**

## Jean Lespade

Jean Lespade, Telemetry Technician III, also began in 1995, serving as a Facilities Technician before becoming the District's first Telemetry Technician. Jean plays a key role in maintaining and troubleshooting basin pumps

and electrical systems. In 2023, District staff elected him as Employee of the Year—a testament to his dedication and mentorship. His resourcefulness earned him the nickname "MacGyver," and his contributions have resulted in safer operations and significant cost savings over the years. He even earned a Safety Award in September 2006 for fabricating a device out of a scissor jack that enables staff to safely lift and support heavy objects.



**Peter Sanchez (L) and Sarge Green (R) present Jean Lespade (C) with Resolution of Appreciation for 30 years of service**



**Peter Sanchez (L) and Sarge Green (R) present Robert Villalobos (C) with Resolution of Appreciation for 30 years of service**

Each honoree received a Resolution of Appreciation from the Board of Directors, recognizing their commitment, dedication, and invaluable contributions to the District's mission. Through the commitment of employees like Mark Will, Robert Villalobos, Robert McIntyre, and Jean Lespade, the District continues to protect neighborhoods, improve infrastructure, and manage stormwater systems with excellence.

District staff thank and congratulate each of them for their 30 years of service to the community.





# Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District

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Mailing info - If your mailing information has changed or if you prefer to receive *Flood Line* by regular mail, e-mail, or both, please contact Natalie Rose Wilcox at [nataliew@fresnofloodcontrol.org](mailto:nataliew@fresnofloodcontrol.org) or (559) 456-3292.

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## Close Up: Alex Madrigal

Creativity and problem-solving have always gone hand in hand for Alex Madrigal. After moving to Fresno from Las Vegas at the age of four, he took interest in the visual and technical aspects of design. High school art and drafting classes sparked his curiosity in architecture, which he later pursued at Fresno City College. It was there that he learned about CAD (Computer-Aided Design) and other tools that would shape his career.

Those software skills proved valuable in his first job at an HVAC company, where he drafted mechanical and plumbing plans. This experience laid a strong foundation for his role as a Design Technician at the District. For the past year and a half, Alex has supported Engineering Services by preparing exhibits, assisting with contract drafting, and reviewing and processing fee applications.

What Alex enjoys most is the process itself: watching a drawing or contract grow from a blank screen into a complete, functional document. His familiarity with design software also helps streamline tasks, which is especially useful as Engineering Services continually refines workflows and looks for more efficient ways to manage projects. “We’re always trying to get better at what we do,” he said. It’s an environment he appreciates.

Outside of work, Alex’s life is filled with music and family. A multi-instrumentalist, he plays guitar, electric bass, and drums, and has performed with his band for the past six years. He and his fiancée are raising two sons, aged two and seven months, a chapter he describes as demanding but incredibly rewarding. “It’s a lot,” he said with a laugh,



**Alex Madrigal and family at a local pumpkin patch**

“but knowing they’ll grow up together makes it worth it.”

Looking ahead, Alex hopes to continue building his skills and expanding his knowledge in the field. He credits the District’s supportive environment for helping him grow: “The people here make a big difference. Everyone is helpful, and it’s a good place to learn.”

Blending creativity, precision, and ambition, Alex brings a thoughtful and reliable presence to the Engineering Services Team—and he’s just getting started.

