



## Westlands Water District

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### Announcement of General Manager's Retirement

#### *Statement from General Manager Thomas W. Birmingham*

**Fresno, November 23, 2022** – Today, Thomas W. Birmingham, General Manager of Westlands Water District, made the following statement:

"I will retire as an employee of Westlands Water District on December 31, 2022.

It has been my great honor to have been part of a dedicated team of District employees for more than 22 years. I am retiring with extreme pride in the things Westlands has accomplished over the last two decades, including settlement of drainage litigation, settlement of litigation concerning the allocation of water to pre-merger lands and merged lands upon the renewal of the District's 1962 water service contract, acquisition of additional Central Valley Project water supplies through the assignment to the District of water service contracts, conversion of the District's water service contracts to repayment contracts, implementation of a significant land retirement program to balance the demand for water with available supplies, implementation of water conservation programs, development of large scale renewal energy projects on District owned lands, construction of habitat restoration projects, and development of integrated water management programs.

I am also proud of the role Westlands played in advancing good water policy. The District was able to influence major State and federal legislation, including the California 2009 Bay-Delta Reform Act, the CALFED authorizing legislation, the San Joaquin River settlement and restoration program authorizing legislation, and the federal Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act. The District also played a leading role in negotiating the water purchase agreement for the Yuba River Accord, amending the 1986 coordinated operations agreement, and restoring flexibility for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project operations through the 2019 biological opinions. These

biological opinions did more than restore the projects' operational flexibility; they improved conditions for listed species. Indeed, the 2019 biological opinions are more protective of listed species than the biological opinions they replaced.

None of these things were accomplished by me. Rather, I was part of a team of talented staff working under the leadership and direction of an engaged, thoughtful Board of Directors. And none of these things could have been accomplished without working in partnership with dedicated staff of multiple public water agencies from nearly every region of the State, multiple State agencies, and multiple Federal agencies.

As Westlands' General Manager, I have had the opportunity to work with elected and appointed officials at every level of government, in both major political parties, in Washington, D.C., and in Sacramento. I am proud that, to this day, virtually all these people look to Westlands for constructive solutions to the biggest water and water-related ecosystem challenges facing California.

My greatest joy as General Manager has been my daily interaction with the people that make Westlands a wonderful place to work, including its Directors and staff. I have the greatest respect for Westlands' employees who work in the field and the District's offices to deliver water to westside farms and communities. I want them to know how much I appreciate their diligent work.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who farm in Westlands. Despite incredible challenges, these men and women produce food that feeds the State, the nation, and the world. They are innovative, generous, and philanthropic. I cannot imagine a finer group of people. I wish them and the District the best. And, as always, I am praying for rain."

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#### **About Westlands Water District**

Westlands Water District is recognized as a world leader in agricultural water conservation and has served the farmers and rural communities on the west side of Fresno and Kings counties for more than five decades. As stewards of one of California's most precious natural resources, Westlands continually invests in conservation and champions farmers deploying innovative irrigation methods based on the best available technology.