

Salinas WLI Team:

- **Sarah Hardgrave** is a Deputy General Manager with the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) working to successfully implement the Groundwater Sustainability Plans for the six subbasins covered by the SVBGSA. Sarah has the skills, patience, perseverance, and commitment to work towards a sustainable groundwater future for our communities and agriculture in the Salinas Valley. Sarah has been active in water resource issues in Monterey County for 25 years. She previously worked for the County of Monterey, both in the Fifth District Supervisor's Office and in the County Administrative Office, as well as for Big Sur Land Trust, City of Pacific Grove, and as a water resources management consultant. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from Mount Holyoke College, as well as Master of Community and Regional Planning and Master of Science in Public Affairs degrees from the University of Oregon. Email: hardgraves@svbgsa.org
- **George Villa** is a Policy and Program Manager at MILPA. He is a Chicano/Apache/Indigenous man with roots in South Texas, and Jalisco, Mexico, residing in Salinas CA. He leads the organizations research, mentors young men in the area, and is a voice for inclusive community development. Holding a Bachelor's and Master's in Community Development from UC Davis, George brings a strong academic foundation to his work. He founded Team Villa Boxing Gym, a nonprofit empowering youth through boxing and fitness. A former California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Firefighter 1. In his free time, he enjoys hiking, swimming and healing ceremonies. He also serves as a strength and conditioning coach for his nephew professional Boxer Ruben Villa IV.
- **Karina Moreno** (she/they) is a Program and Leadership Coordinator at MILPA. She is an Indigenous Chicana born and raised in Watsonville, CA, where she witnessed firsthand the challenges rural communities face due to climate change and criminal justice disparities. These experiences ignited her passion for advocacy at the intersection of environmental justice and racial equity. Karina works to advance intersectional environmentalism by developing programs and events that support participants in building their relationship with nature, while also creating opportunities for community members to learn how to engage civically, while centering MILPA's philosophies rooted in cultural healing. Their commitment to community extends to mentoring youth and serving on the City of Watsonville Climate Action and Adaptation Committee, the Monterey Bay Climate Justice Collaborative, and the Watsonville Wetlands Watch Board of Directors.
- **Leticia Hernandez** is a community organizer and Salinas native with more than a decade of experience co-creating community-based programs in environmental justice, food systems, and youth workforce development. She is the Founder of the Natividad Creek Park Community Garden and Learning Lab, where she focuses on environmental education, stewardship, and community connections. Leticia has served in leadership and advisory roles with Everyone's Harvest, the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, and the City of Salinas Traffic and Transportation Commission. Her work is grounded in equity, collaboration, and a deep commitment to community-led solutions.
- **Leticia Torres (she/her/ella)** is a Community Engagement Coordinator with the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, supporting outreach and community engagement efforts for the Salinas Valley Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing (MLRP) Program. Her work centers on creating pathways for community members to participate in shaping decisions that affect the future of their communities' land and water. Leticia grew up in Watsonville, CA, and has been a resident for the past 18 years. As an immigrant and daughter of immigrants, she draws on her lived experience to ground her commitment to community-led solutions rooted in equity and dignity. Leticia has a diverse background in technology, design, and entrepreneurship. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design from San José State University. Outside of her work with MLRP, she runs a financial coaching business and is passionate about educating

and empowering the Latinx/Hispanic community through financial literacy. Some of her favorite hobbies include spending time in nature, hiking, and painting.

- **Dan Dever**, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Building Rural Economies, Rural Economic Development Consultant. Dan joined RCAC in 2002 to provide economic development consulting and training services to communities and small businesses throughout RCAC's service territory in thirteen western US States. During this time, he has provided consulting services and facilitated numerous training classes including Leadership, Recharge Our Communities Economy, and Start! Grow! Revive! Your Small Business. Prior to joining RCAC, Dan held a variety of positions to provide training and work on economic development issues with communities, businesses, and organizations that took him throughout the US and abroad.
- **Lucy Caine** (they/them) is a Program Manager on EDF's Climate Resilient Water Systems team, with over nine years of operations and project management experience across the agricultural and environmental sectors, including 4.5+ years at EDF. They lead the team's Justice & Equity program, overseeing the Water Leadership Institute in Arizona and California, and supporting equitable expansion into new geographies. Lucy's work centers on building respectful partnerships with frontline communities while developing internal systems that enable J&E capacities to scale with accountability and impact. They hold a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Oregon and a Graduate Certificate in Water Conflict Management and Transformation from Oregon State University.
- **Claudia Mendoza Chávez (she/her/ella)** is a Senior Specialist with Environmental Defense Fund and lead for the Water Leadership Institute (WLI) in California. She is an alumni of the WLI program from the Delta Mendota Cohort. Born and raised in Michoacan, Mexico, she has spend the past 10 years living and working in the San Joaquin Valley. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology from CSU Stanislaus and a Masters in Anthropology from UC Santa Barbara, where she is currently pursuing her PhD. She is passionate about community work and making space for marginalized voices. Email: Cmendozachavez@edf.org. Phone number: (209) 289-5501.

Session 1 Speakers:

- **Louise Miranda Ramirez, OCEN**
- **Val Lopez, Amah Mutsun**
- **Kanyon Sayers-Roods** is Costanoan Ohlone-Mutsun and Chumash; she also goes by her given Native name, "Coyote Woman". She is proud of her heritage and her native name (though it comes with its own back story), and is very active in the Native Community. She is an Artist, Poet, Published Author, Activist, Student and Teacher. The daughter of Ann-Marie Sayers, she was raised in Indian Canyon, trust land of her family, which currently is one of the few spaces in Central California available for the Indigenous community for ceremony. Kanyon's art has been featured at the De Young Museum, The Somarts Gallery, Gathering Tribes, Snag Magazine, and numerous Powwows and Indigenous Gatherings. She is a recent graduate of the Art Institute of California, Sunnyvale, obtaining her Associate and Bachelor of Science degrees in Web Design and Interactive Media. She is motivated to learn, teach, start conversations around decolonization and reindigenization, permaculture and to continue doing what she loves, Art.
- **Linda Larios** was raised in San Juan Bautista and comes from the Salina, Tonguva Tribe. She also has relations with the Ohlone People. She dedicates her life to uplifting women and teaches a water ceremony and how to heal through the water.
- **Samuel Sandoval Solis, Ph.D.**, Professor, Extension Specialist in Water Resources Management. Samuel Sandoval is a professor and extension specialist in water resources at UC Davis – UC ANR. He is a water resources scientist interested in improving water management for human and environmental needs in California and along the border, considering the economic, environmental and social justice aspects for

long term sustainable strategies. He works with a wide range of people, from farmworkers delivering training on how to prevent contamination of water due to pesticides applications (in English and Spanish), to water resources managers and decision makers developing basic research to determine environmental flows. He is the founding member of the [Water Management Lab](#). Dr. Sandoval is a collaborator in several institutions: he is the co-host of the [Water Talk Podcast](#), and the academic advisor for the non-profit organization [Water Education for Latino leaders](#); a scientific collaborator of the [California Institute for Water Resources](#), the associate director of the [Permanent Forum of Binational Waters](#), and a policy expert for the [UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute](#). Before joining UC Davis, he studied the water allocation between the United States and Mexico in the Rio Grande basin. Samuel earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering, and master of science from the National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico, and doctoral degree in Environmental and Water Resources Engineering from at the University of Texas at Austin.

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- **Pablo Ortiz**

- **James Derbin**, CCSD General Manager. I manage the day-to-day operation of the water, storm, wastewater systems and streetlighting in Castroville as well as the Moss Landing and Moro Cojo wastewater and storm water systems. I focus on developing and supporting the CCSD staff that serves the Castroville Community and help by continually planning and updating our Capital Improvement plan and budgeting for needed investment in replacing and upgrading the publicly owned assets within the CCSD service area. We keep the public interest and affordability of the services we provide as one of our highest priorities.

- **Michelle Bumgardner** is the Community Liaison for Monterey One Water's Community Relations team. With over 15 years at the agency, she brings deep institutional knowledge and strong community connections. She represents Monterey One Water at public tours and events across the region and also supports the Monterey Regional Stormwater Management Program, expanding her reach and impact.

- **Rogelio Ponce**

- **Michael Cahn** is an Irrigation and Water Resource Advisor for University of California, Cooperative Extension and serves the central coast counties of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz. He received his B.S degree in Soil and Water Science from UC Davis, and Masters and Ph.D. degrees from Cornell University. He has worked for UC Cooperative Extension since 1995, first as a Vegetable and Row Crop Advisor in the Sacramento Valley, and since 2001 in his current position. His research and extension activities are focused in the areas of irrigation technology, water management of vegetable and horticultural crops, protection of water quality, and food safety. He led the development of CropManage, an online decision support tool for water and nutrient management of vegetables in 2011, which has also been adapted for berry, tree, vineyard, and forage crops. Contact information: Michael Cahn, Irrigation and Water Resources Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Monterey County, 1432 Abbott St, Salinas CA 93901. (831) 759-7377. mdcahn@ucdavis.edu website cemonterey.ucanr.edu

- **Manuel Luz**, Environmental Health Specialist for Drinking Water Protection Services Environmental Health Bureau. Duties: I am dedicated to protecting the residents and natural resources of Monterey County by promoting responsible practices, providing environmental health education to industry workers and the public, and enforcing Environmental Health laws when necessary. My daily responsibilities include conducting sampling and inspections of local and state small water systems, identifying and correcting deficiencies through guidance and technical assistance, and supporting emergency and disaster response efforts when needed. Contact info: Monterey County Health Department 1270 Natividad Rd, Salinas, CA 93906. 831-755-4505

- **Ricardo Carmona**, P.G., Hydrologist at Monterey County Water Resources Agency. Ricardo Carmona is a hydrologist and a professional geologist with broad experience in environmental and engineering projects

related to soil, groundwater, and surface water quality. At MCWRA, Mr. Carmona supports different portions of the Agency's Groundwater Monitoring Program, including Seawater Intrusion monitoring, Groundwater Extraction monitoring and Well Registration programs developed for Monterey County. Mr. Carmona earned his B.S in Geological Sciences from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), worked as an environmental consultant for soil and groundwater characterization and remediation projects in Spain and Portugal. After moving to California, he continued supporting projects related to groundwater, surface water and stormwater quality across the state and became a licensed Professional Geologist . Ricardo Carmona also earned a certificate in Project Management from UC Berkeley and acquired experience in database management and business analysis skills supporting software development projects related to field data collection applications.

- **Sarah Lopez**

- **Mayra Hernandez** joined Community Water Center (CWC) in February 2019 as a Community Organizer. She is now a Community Solutions Advocate, leading and managing community engagement and base building projects in the Central Coast. Mayra believes that food is a big part of all cultures and not enough attention is given to commodity chains, especially in communities of color and low-income communities, where people face many injustices. Mayra's research in commodity chains sparked her interest in social and environmental justice. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology. Prior to joining CWC, she worked in education for more than seven years as a Peer Counselor at Watsonville High School and volunteered in several K-12 schools (in low-income communities). **Contact:**
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- **Jasmine Rodriguez** (ALBA) is a dedicated supporter of sustainable agriculture with a strong love for animals and five furbabies at home. She earned her B.S. in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology with a minor in Plant Physiology from CSU Monterey Bay, after transferring from Humboldt State University following an inspiring entomology internship. With over seven years of experience in IPM agricultural research, she now supports students and interns at ALBA, helping them grow their knowledge and prepare for careers in farming. She plans to pursue a master's degree in bio agricultural sciences, driven by her passion for soil, crops, and continued learning to better serve local farmers.

- **Robin Lee** has a background in geology, residential construction, archeology, wastewater plant operations and urban and regional development with an emphasis on the community participation and community outreach components of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. (NPDES). She has done extensive bicycling including commuting, courier, and touring. She has successfully pushed for the inclusion of a bicycling green way to be included in the future growth area of the City of Salinas. She has also been involved in obtaining state funding for a restoration project on Santa Rita Creek managed by the Central Coast Wetlands Group. She is a founding member of Sustainable Salinas and Salinas Neighborhood Council. She is currently directing the Santa Rita and Bolsa Knolls Watershed Group to bring awareness to the needs of the urbanized areas of the Santa Rita Creek Watershed. This group conducts community projects that include community native plant garden installation and a native food forest at Santa Rita Park, storm drain stenciling, and other projects to demonstrate best practices for property owners to prevent pollutants from entering the creek and for creating native plant habitats. The group also aims to develop community environmental activism through its projects. She has a B.Sc. in Geology with minors in anthropology and biology, Masters in Regional and Urban Planning.

- **Emily Cota**

- **Sheyla Cerda**