

Session 3 Speakers:

- **Emily Gardner**, Deputy General Manager of the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Emily Gardner holds a Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies from the University of California Santa Barbara and a Master of Science in Coastal and Watershed Science and Policy from California State University Monterey Bay. Serving as the Deputy General Manager since 2020, Ms. Gardner builds on years of experience in water resource management in the Central Coast, collaborating with community stakeholders and providing leadership to accomplish key sustainability projects.
- **Pedro Enriquez** grew up on the East Side of San Jose, CA, and joined the Community Water Center in August of 2022 as a Community Solutions Advocate. Pedro was drawn to CWC because he wants to facilitate long-term potable water solutions within low-income, predominantly Spanish-speaking communities that have long been wrongfully overlooked in the political process. His commitment to community enrichment began on the East Side of San Jose where he helped support cafeteria workers in their unionizing efforts, organized communities to fight for affordable housing, and worked with a predominantly Spanish-speaking population to motivate them to become politically involved. He went on to earn his BA in Philosophy from UCSC where he enjoyed studying metaethics, philosophy of religion, and existential phenomenology. After graduating he began working as a behavioral therapist in Santa Cruz County, mainly with people on the autism spectrum and young children with developmental delays. Pedro excelled in finding novel ways to connect with his clients, expanding their ability to live independently with dignity, and designing early childhood language development programs through play. In his free time, you can catch Pedro playing baseball, eating spicy food, and enjoying good company. **Contact:** pedro.enriquez@communitywatercenter.org. Watsonville Office, (831) 288-0450.
- **Senator John Laird** was re-elected to the State Senate on November 5, 2024, carrying all four counties in the district which encompass Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties, as well as the majority of San Luis Obispo County. In the State Senate, Laird chairs and serves on a broad array of committees, including the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, and the Select Committee on Older LGBTQ+ Californians. During his first term in the Senate, Laird had 59 bills signed into law relating to environmental protection, sea level rise, increased access to healthcare, educational opportunity, sustainable agriculture, and electoral reform. Prior to his Senate service, Laird served as Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency under Governor Jerry Brown from January 5, 2011, until January 7, 2019. Laird also served as a member of the State Integrated Waste Management Board from 2008 to 2009. In 2002, he was elected to the State Assembly to represent the 27th District, which included portions of Monterey, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties, and was reelected in 2004 and 2006. While serving the maximum three terms in the Assembly, Laird authored 82 bills that were signed into law. Before serving in the State Assembly, Laird was elected as a member of the Cabrillo College Board of Trustees from 1994 to 2002. In 1981, Laird was elected to the Santa Cruz City Council, and served nine years until term limits ended his council service in 1990. He was a two-term mayor from 1983 to 1984 and from 1987 to 1988, making him one of the first openly gay mayors to serve in the United States. Laird has also served as executive director of the Santa Cruz AIDS Project, taught environmental policy at the University of California Santa Cruz, hosted a news talk program on KUSP public radio, and held analyst positions in budgeting and human resources for the County of Santa Cruz. The son of teachers and raised in Vallejo, Laird graduated with honors in politics from the University of California – Santa Cruz in 1972. He has been a long-time resident of Santa Cruz with his spouse John Flores. He has traveled extensively, is fluent in Spanish, enjoys conducting family history research, and is a life-long Chicago Cubs fan.