

Source: UN-Water

## World Water Day Reflections

Sharon B. Megdal, Ph.D.  
WRRC Water Webinar  
22 March 2024



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

**WATER RESOURCES  
RESEARCH CENTER**

[smegdal@arizona.edu](mailto:smegdal@arizona.edu)



[wrrc.arizona.edu](http://wrrc.arizona.edu)

# Reflections on World Water Day 2024

by Sharon B. Megdal  
03/22/2024



This Reflections essay is being published on March 22, which is World Water Day. UN-Water, which coordinates the United Nations' work on water and sanitation issues, designates a World Water Day theme each year, and this year's theme is Water for Peace. The UN-Water [webpage](#) features these points related to the Water for Peace theme, which I quote:

- Water can create peace or spark conflict.
- When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.
- More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water.
- As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.
- Public health and prosperity, food and energy systems, economic productivity and environmental integrity all rely on a well-functioning and equitably managed water cycle.
- When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges.
- We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.
- This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.

Taken together, these bullet points convey the significant global water challenges. At the same time, they focus on the importance of acting together to lay "the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow."

With the abundance of water challenges, many of which are increasing in severity, working together on solutions is crucial. Challenges such as diminishing surface water supplies, over-extraction of finite groundwater, water pollution, flooding, and insufficient water access require our collective attention. Everyone needs and uses water, so everyone has a stake in our water future. As I like to say, everyone is a water stakeholder.

Implementing water solutions through partnerships was the focus of the WRRC's 2024 Annual Conference, held on March 12-13 on the University of Arizona campus. Panelists and keynote speakers alike spoke of the need to come together to address challenging issues such as allocating a drier Colorado River, addressing groundwater overdraft, developing innovative financing options, and working across borders. We hope that our annual conference provided an opportunity for the networking and conversation that are key to developing partnerships.

Engaging in conversation and open-minded analysis of options and tradeoffs can nurture the common understanding that is the foundation for working together to identify and implement solutions. Let's build upon our relationships so that mutual respect and genuine listening carry the day. It's not easy work, but in keeping with this year's Water for Peace theme, let's cooperate rather than fight so that water security can be achieved.

<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/reflections-world-water-day-2024>



# Reflecting on WWD 2024

## Bullets from UN-Water website:

- Water can create peace or spark conflict.
- When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.
- More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water.
- As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.
- Public health and prosperity, food and energy systems, economic productivity and environmental integrity all rely on a well-functioning and equitably managed water cycle.
- When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges.
- We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life.
- **This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow. (emphasis added)**

# Reflections on World Water Day 2022

## March 22-23, 2023 – UN Water Conference



### BLOG - Jun 01, 2023 Inclusivity at the Water Diplomacy Symposium and UN Water Conference fostered by the Women in Water Diplomacy Network



Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland addressing the Water and Tribes side-event at the UN Water Conference.

It is hard to believe that it was less than nine months ago that I became part of the strong and exciting Women in Water Diplomacy Network (Network). Connecting with the Network has already led to multiple fruitful personal and professional experiences.

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION | WATER COOPERATION | WATER DIPLOMACY



Greetings from New York City and Happy **World Water Day!** Today is the official start of the **UN 2023 Water Conference**, the first water conference convened by the United Nations in almost 50 years. Thousands of participants have gathered to commit to strong actions to address water issues at all scales across the globe. It is recognized that advancing achievement of **Sustainable Development Goal 6** — clean water and sanitation for all — requires actions on the part of each one of us.

Registration for the conference was not open to individuals. Instead, NGOs, universities, and others had to apply for accreditation to participate. UA Arizona's accreditation enabled the participation of eight registered delegates, who all arrived in New York City eager to participate. The UA Arizona delegation members include Colorado River Indian Tribes Chairwoman Amelia Flores, Gila River Indian Community Governor Stephen Roe Lewis, UA Arizona Professor and Director of the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy Andrea K. Gerlak, UA Arizona graduate student Wilzave Quiles Guzmán, Colorado River Basin Water & Tribes Initiative Co-Directors Matt McKinney and Daryl Vigil, UA Arizona alumna Elia Tapia, and yours truly. It is great to be at the conference with UA Arizona colleagues and partners, including former UA Arizona Extension Agent Josh Moore, who now works as Farms Manager for his home community, the Colorado River Indian Tribes.

Prior to the formal three-day conference, several of us participated in the all-day March 21 **Water Diplomacy Symposium**, where the discussion focused heavily on the need for inclusive and equitable consultation and engagement. We explored issues related to Indigenous communities, gender, income, and age, with a very strong focus on shared waters. Empowering ourselves was an important theme, whether it be through sharing of data and information, perspectives, and/or practices. Dialogue through the breaks was robust, and many new friendships were made. The Women in Water Diplomacy Network was the key convener. The network's signature clip will be worn by many throughout the UN Water Conference.



Women in Water Diplomacy Network Clip

World Water Day activities officially started for me at midnight, when I delivered via Zoom the keynote lecture, "Taking action to change the ways we use, consume, and manage water," for the Water Research Center at Sultan Qaboos University.

My World Water Day continued with the afternoon side event session at the UN, **The Role of Indigenous People in Governing Shared Waters**, which was co-convened by the Water & Tribes Initiative | Colorado River Basin and the WRRRC. We were honored that U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland delivered inspirational comments to lead off the session. Observing that water security depends on good water stewardship, she noted that a more equitable water future depends on respect, integrating Indigenous knowledge, and putting words into action. Indeed, the featured speakers from the Colorado River Basin and other parts of the world inspired attendees to recognize that working through respectful partnerships is essential.

Of course, there is great excitement associated with the conference and related events, which are occurring at the UN and all over New York City. Though everyone realizes that action is necessary and commitment statements are being developed, only time will tell if the commitments to action translate into improved water and sanitation conditions.

I'll end this Reflections — more to follow via the WRRRC's **Weekly Wave** newsletter and through our **March 28 webinar** about the conference experience — with how I ended my lecture for Sultan Qaboos University's celebration of World Water Day: Let's all act to improve!



Land Acknowledgement



Sharon B. Megdal, Ph.D.  
Director, Water Resources Research Center  
The University of Arizona



# WRRC 2024 Annual Conference held March 12-13, 2024 Implementing Water Solutions Through Partnerships

WRRC 2024 Annual Conference Agenda

[AGENDA \(PDF\)](#)

DAY 1 – MARCH 12 [Full Video](#)

12:00 PM	Registration
1:00 PM	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharon B. Megdal, Director, Water Resources Research Center, University of Arizona <a href="#">Video</a></li><li>• Shane Burgess, Vice President, University of Arizona Division of Agriculture, Life &amp; Veterinary Sciences &amp; Cooperative Extension <a href="#">Video</a></li></ul>
1:15 PM	Dedication to the Memory and Legacy of Thomas Meixner <a href="#">Kathleen Meixner and Family Video</a>
1:45 PM	Meixner Tri-University Legacy Project Moderator - Kathy Jacobs, Director, Center for Climate Adaptation Science and Solutions, University of Arizona <a href="#">Video</a>
	Student Presentations

Session recordings now available!



<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/news-events/2024-conference/wrrc-2024-conference-agenda>

# On networking – from local to global

## Networking leads to partnerships and cooperation

From my "Salty Reflections" talk to the Multi-state Salinity Coalition, 29 February 2024

- Establish and maintain connections.
  - When you meet a great expert – keep in touch and find out a way to continue connecting (don't be one and done)
- Doing things that seem “out of your job description” or out of your comfort zone can not only be good but can be great.
- Ask questions to learn and listen to learn.
- Be proactive in communicating.
- Network and maintain networks.
  - This can be exhausting but can have big rewards, including enhancing your own ability to help others advance in their careers.
  - Networking is a two-way street.
  - Make introductions!
  - Organize panels
- Be responsive, including with the media.

# Addressing wicked water problem requires broadly collaborative efforts

Process factors from a case study I've written about transboundary Colorado River Water and the International Boundary and Water Commission (in press)

1. A functioning mechanism for cooperation, including knowledge co-production
2. Mutual respect contributing to trust
3. Involvement of interested parties (stakeholders)
4. Good communication
5. Persistence and Patience
6. Eating with your partners
7. Leadership



Binational Summit on Groundwater at the United States-Mexico Border. April 2019

# Connecting this to our special guests

WRRC 2020 Conference  
Held virtually due to pandemic

3:15 – 4:15 pm	Drawing the Water Map	Moderator: <b>Laura Grignano</b> , Manager, Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGR) Central Arizona Project
	Arizona Water Management	<b>Clint Chandler</b> , Deputy Director, Arizona Department of Water Resources (Invited) <b>PPT</b>
	Groundwater/Surface Water	<b>Greg Kornrumph</b> , Manager, Water Rights Department, Salt River Project <b>PPT</b>
	Tribal Water Projects	<b>Gwendena Lee-Gatewood</b> , Chairwoman, White Mountain Apache Tribe <b>PPT</b>
	Technology and Reuse	<b>Brian Biesemeyer</b> , Executive Director, City of Scottsdale Water Resources <b>PPT</b>
	Water Quality and Agriculture	<b>Channah Rock</b> , Extension Specialist and Professor, University of Arizona <b>PPT</b>



**Gwendena Lee-Gatewood**  
Indigenous Women's Leadership Network



<https://www.iwln.org/>



Location of White Mountain Apache Tribe Settlement White River reservoir, treatment plant, and pipeline project. Source: Reclamation



<https://www.eli.org/events/women-water-diplomacy-network-2023-year-review-online-event>

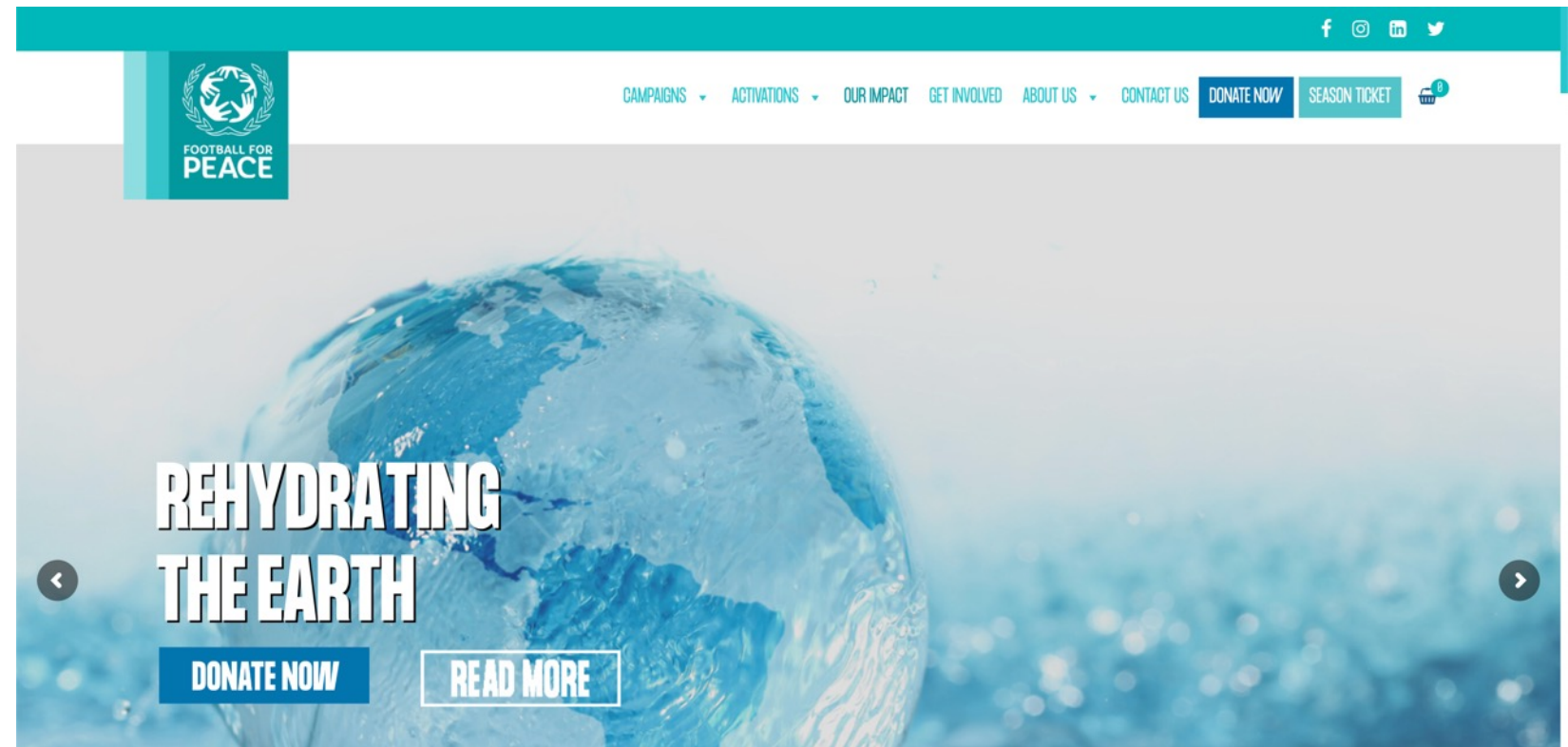




**Kash Siddiqi**  
Former Footballer  
and Football for  
Peace Co-founder



**Emily Brooks**  
Lead for Football for  
Peace's Rehydrate  
the Earth Campaign



<https://www.footballforpeace.org.uk/#>

# Open mic discussion/Q&A moderated by Jamie McEvoy Until 1:15 Arizona time



**Moderator:**  
**Jamie McEvoy**  
Incoming Associate  
Director, Water  
Resources Research  
Center, University of  
Arizona

