



For Immediate Release: October 5, 2025

For more information, contact: Jenny Holtermann jenny@wakc.com 661-746-3300

BUDAK AND PARKER TO RECEIVE WAKC AWARDS AT 70TH ANNUAL MEETING

BAKERSFIELD, CA – The Water Association of Kern County will proudly present the Water Leader of the Year and Water Legacy Awards on Wednesday, November 4th, at the 2026 WAKC 70th Annual Meeting to be held at Stockdale Country Club. Every year, the Water Association of Kern County awards two individuals as Water Leader of the Year and Water Legacy Award. This year's recipients are Kristina Budak and Jonathan Parker.

Kristina Budak is receiving the Water Leader of the Year Award. Kris is a civil engineer and longtime Kern County water professional. She served as the Director of the City of Bakersfield's Water Resources department from 2023 to 2026, leading and building a team of water professionals in both Water Resources and Wastewater. She managed challenging subjects, such as Kern River operations during a lawsuit, merging the Wastewater division with the Water Resources Department, and ensuring the city's water and wastewater services were financially stable. Kris says, "I am grateful to all those that I have had an opportunity to collaborate with and learn from over the years including members of the Kern River Interests, Kern County Subbasin, California Water Services Company, and the City of Bakersfield."

Jonathan Parker is receiving the Water Legacy Award. Since joining the Kern Water Bank Authority in 1999, Jon has played a significant role in developing infrastructure capable of storing and managing water that is extremely important to Kern County. His work on the Master Plan Project included the construction of the Kern Water Bank Canal, installation and rehabilitation of 41 wells, and the development of recharge basins and pipeline systems. His technical expertise has supported important endeavors including CEQA documents, Sustainable Management Criteria, and portions of the Kern Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Together, these accomplishments demonstrate Jon's lasting contributions to Kern County Water. WAKC is proud to name Jonathan Parker as the 2026 Water Legacy Award recipient.

Join us on November 4th to celebrate Kris and Jon's accomplishments, as well as all of our accomplishments over last year. WAKC is grateful for their service and commitment to Kern County Water. Community members can join WAKC in honoring our award winners by purchasing tickets at www.wakc.com/upcoming-events/ before October 23rd.

The Water Association of Kern County is a non-profit organization designed to educate and inform the Kern County community about water issues and events. Members consist of local water districts, municipalities, agencies and affiliated groups and individuals. More information may be found at www.wakc.com.