

Small Water System Leaders Launch Website for Mutual Water Company Shareholders in Altadena and Fire and Disaster Zones

The shareholder rights website includes "Know Your Rights" resources for community residents who are shareholders in mutual water companies.

ALTADENA, CA, UNITED STATES, May 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The California Association of Mutual Water Companies' Disaster Information Task Force has launched a website, SmallWaterSystemWarriors.com, with resources for community residents who are shareholders in mutual water companies.

Mutual water companies are community-owned, nonprofit water utility cooperatives that often serve some of the smallest, most rural and lowest-income communities in California, as well as residents in urban areas. Collectively, they serve an estimated 1.5 million Californians. Despite their scale and significance, our shareholders are routinely excluded from state policy conversations that shape their water future.

The future of mutual water companies is particularly important in fire-damaged Altadena, where most residents receive their water from these community-owned systems and homeowners are shareholders with a direct stake in how their water is managed. As the community recovers from the devastating Eaton Fire, protecting these hyper-local systems is essential to preserving affordability, accountability and the community's ability to rebuild on its own terms.

Highlighting Altadena's mutual water companies means standing up for people throughout the state in similar disaster risk areas, supporting neighbors over outside interests, and ensuring that those seeking to take advantage of a community in recovery do not strip residents of their voice, their privacy, property rights or their control over a vital resource.

Resources on the Small Water System Warriors website are designed to help resident shareholders understand their rights as they navigate disaster recovery, state consolidation proceedings and regulatory mandates — processes that can alter the terms of their property ownership, often without adequate notice if they don't know their rights.

While the resources are available to shareholders statewide, recent legislation by Los Angeles-area lawmakers targets mutual water companies and their shareholders who are victims of the Eaton Fire in Altadena. Among its provisions, the legislation would expose shareholders'

personal information to vendors, political campaigns and neighboring utilities — including for profit investor-owned utilities.

"What happens in Altadena will set a precedent for how officials treat mutuals throughout California after a disaster," said David Armstrong, general manager of Calimesa-based South Mesa Water Company, and chair of the task force. "We oppose seeing mutuals and their shareholders — who are overwhelmingly focused on rebuilding their water systems — singled out and penalized for making hard decisions in the aftermath of losing so many homes."

Armstrong warned that a provision of SB 1417 by state Sen. Pérez would require the release of currently confidential information about shareholders and bill-paying customers to neighboring utilities that neither serve the area nor have jurisdiction over the water company, as well as to elected officials and other third parties, without safeguards in place. This could expose sensitive data, creating risks of privacy violations, political coercion, and fraud. According to Armstrong, the legislation's underlying goal is to merge mutual water companies with investor-owned utilities or municipalities, some of which have records of mismanagement.

The [Small Water System Warriors website includes](#) the following resources:

- Ownership Rights: What shareholders are entitled to under California law — Consolidation Proceedings: How to participate when the State Water Resources Control Board reviews a system
- Legislative Threats: Bills that could affect mutual water companies and shareholder options — Rate and Service Protections: Due process protections for shareholders

Small Water System Warriors is a shareholder rights initiative of the Disaster Information Task Force of the California Association of Mutual Water Companies. The organization is independent and is not affiliated with any state agency or water authority.

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