



WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT

General Counsel



Westlands
Water District



A District Committed to Sustainability

Formed in 1952, Westlands Water District is an agricultural water district located in the San Joaquin Valley of California and is headquartered in Fresno. Westlands first received a water supply from the Central Valley Project in the late 1960s and has since served the farmers and rural communities on the west side of Fresno and Kings counties.

To learn more about the District's sustainability efforts, click [here](#).

A First-in-Class Water District

Westlands is among the few, if not the only, agricultural water agencies in the United States that distributes water through an entirely enclosed system. The District's approximately 1,100 miles of pipe and 3,000 water meters deliver and measure every drop of water that is transported through the District and minimizes water losses caused by seepage and evaporation. Westlands continually invests in this sophisticated system to ensure the most efficient distribution of water.

The District is positioned to continue its mission and meet the current and future needs of its water users. Westlands water users have implemented one of the most extensive water conservation efforts in agriculture. Historically, Westlands has served as a leading advocate for this sector of the industry. Noted for its excellence in water and groundwater management, Westlands has earned a reputation statewide and nationally for leadership in key areas of water policy.

Farmers in Westlands rank among the most productive and water efficient farmers in the world. Approximately 60 different high-quality, nutritious crops are produced by these farmers for the fresh, dry, canned, and frozen food markets, domestically and internationally. The farms in Westlands produce an average of \$2 billion in crops and generate approximately \$5 billion in farm related economic activity each year. The activities in Westlands support nearly 35,000 jobs and benefit local communities in the San Joaquin Valley and across the state.

Westlands' primary source of water is from the Central Valley Project (CVP), operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Westlands supplements its CVP allocation through water purchases, recharge projects, groundwater, and other sources. Westlands also delivers municipal and industrial water to the cities of Coalinga and Huron, Naval Air Station Lemoore, and several unincorporated communities within its service area.

Westlands has collaborated with federal and state governments, and other public water agencies on numerous ecosystem projects. These projects have opened and restored thousands of acres of wetlands for the benefit of at-risk fish species, improved instream habitat and flow for the protection of fish, and improved water quality in the Delta. In October 2020, in partnership with the Department of Water Resources, Westlands completed the Lower Yolo Restoration Project, which restored nearly 2,100 acres of former cattle grazing pastureland to tidal marsh, riparian habitat, and transitional upland buffer habitat. To learn more about the District, click [here](#).



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Mission

Since its formation in 1952, the mission of the Westlands Water District has been to provide timely, reliable, and affordable water services to landowners and water users in western Fresno and Kings Counties. These water services include the sustainable management and delivery of water supply, as well as the provision of ongoing education, advanced technology, and innovative methods for environmental conservation.

The District's services have expanded to providing water use efficiency grants, implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, managing an 80,000-acre land lease program, implementing the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, and exploring new water resources projects to improve long-term water reliability.



Goals

To support its mission, Westlands has adopted the following goals:

- ◇ Preserve and restore the federal contract water supply.
- ◇ Obtain supplemental water supplies through short and long-term purchases and transfers.
- ◇ Examine options for supply enhancement and drainage mitigation.
- ◇ Support timely construction of cost-effective facilities to enhance the quality and reliability of water supplies.
- ◇ Conduct the maintenance, operational and administrative functions of Westlands in an efficient and effective manner.
- ◇ Implement and maintain an effective Water Conservation Program by providing growers with accurate and current information and technical assistance to aid with water management planning.

Governance

The Westlands Board of Directors is comprised of nine members, each of whom is a District landowner or designated representative of a District landowner. Board elections are held every two years, with half of the seats up for election each cycle. Directors are elected to four-year terms of office. The Board meets on the third Tuesday of each month (except holidays, and on an as-needed basis) during regularly noticed public meetings to discuss district business and provides policy direction to the General Manager, who manages and implements the Board's direction. The Directors also sit on the Finance & Administration Committee, which was created to discuss District policies and provide recommendations to the Board. The Finance & Administration Committee meets as needed.

Description of the Role

Under direction of the Board of Directors, in coordination with the General Manager, the General Counsel performs a broad range of staff legal work, represents the District on legal matters before a variety of governmental agencies and tribunals, performs a wide variety of legal research, and provides senior management with effective legal advice or opinions and their implementation, research, studying, interpreting, and applying laws and regulations, and court decisions. Further, the General Counsel provides expert legal advice in the specialized area of water law, which may be exceptionally difficult and sensitive. For a full description of specific duties, visit the District's General Counsel class description on the District's website [here](#).

Duties and Responsibilities

The core responsibilities of the General Counsel are to guarantee the District is working in compliance with the law in every way. The incumbent will handle all legal actions to prevent the District's profile and its employee's reputation from the risk of exposure to the public as defined below:

- Provide legal advice or opinions to management and the Board of Directors on the legal effect of rules, regulations, proposed legislation, statutory law, court decisions, and administrative actions.
- Provide legal advice or opinions related to the definition and development of District policies, procedures, and programs and provide continuing counsel and guidance on legal matters and legal implications of all matters.
- Serve as key legal advisor on all major transactions, including acquisitions, divestitures, and joint ventures.
- Respond to legal correspondence and conduct special investigations involved in the enforcement of laws and District policies, rules and regulations.
- Assist in the preparation of or prepare cases that may result in litigation before boards, commissions, hearing officers, administrative law judges, or trial or appellate courts.

Key Characteristics

The District is seeking candidates with a wide range of experience in water-related legal matters and who are well-versed in the Brown Act. The incumbent will coordinate and manage litigation with outside counsel, develop and manage departmental budgets, and provide general in-house counsel to staff, including drafting and reviewing contracts, reviewing grant contract compliance, and other district matters. The selected candidate would preferably be based in either the Fresno or Sacramento areas and will possess the following:





Knowledge of:

- Operations of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project.
- Existing state and federal water policy.
- California statutory and constitutional law, government codes, and federal reclamation laws.
- State and Federal legislative process.
- Principals, methods, materials, and practices of legal research.
- Court procedures, principles of administrative and Constitutional Law.
- Conduct proceedings in trial and appellate courts and before administrative bodies.
- The principles and practices of public personnel administration.

Skills and Abilities to:

- Analyze legal principles and apply those to the most difficult and complex legal and administrative issues.
- Perform research, analyze, appraise, and apply legal principles, facts, and precedents to legal issues.
- Present statements of fact, law and argument orally and in writing in clear and logical form.
- Prepare the most complex and difficult opinions, pleadings, rulings, regulations, and legislation.
- Conduct the most complex and sensitive in nature legislative and legal work.
- Establish and maintain the liaison with legislative and other governmental bodies.
- Interpret and apply federal, state, and local laws to the administration of District policies, programs, contracts and services.

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate is an experienced attorney, admitted to practice in the State of California and in good standing with the State Bar, who demonstrates the following further professional and personal characteristics:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Experience working closely with a wide range of constituencies: Board of Directors, water users, landowners, union, member agencies, and key stakeholders.
- Experience in advising sophisticated public entities with regard to overarching strategic planning.
- Notable experience in leading a diverse organization with initiative and drive.
- Exhibits the highest levels of trustworthiness, honesty and integrity.
- Is engaging and inspiring to professionals at all levels of the organization.
- Fully appreciates the needs of water users and partner agencies.

Qualifications

Education and Experience

Any combination of equivalent education and experience that has led to the acquisition of the knowledge required by the position. A typical way of acquiring the knowledge would be:

A Juris Doctorate (J.D.) degree, current membership in the California State Bar and demonstrate years of increasingly responsible experience as an attorney or courtroom environment. A clear and comprehensive understanding of legal matters in water law.



Compensation and Benefits

The annual salary range for this role is **\$150,000 - \$498,000**. Compensation will be commensurate with the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate. This is an at-will position.

In addition, the District provides a comprehensive employee benefit package that includes Medical, Dental, Vision, Life and Long Term Disability insurance coverage. Employees share in the cost of dependent coverage for the medical and vision plans. The following is a summary of the benefits:

- **Hybrid Schedule:** A hybrid schedule is available for this role, to be negotiated at the time of offer. Individual is required to attend all board meetings in person.
- **Retirement:** CalPERS 2% at 62 plan. Unused medical leave can be converted up to six months of service credit upon service retirement.
- **Health Benefits:** Nine (9) medical plans offered through CalPERS. Medical plan premium varies and depending on the medical plan enrolled, the District and the employee share the cost of the premium.
- **Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) Plan:** Employees enrolled in a District medical plan are automatically enrolled in the HRA Plan and receive a monthly reimbursement from the District for the cost of the medical plan premium.
- **Dental Insurance:** The District contributes 100% of the premium for the employee and the employee's eligible dependents.
- **Vision Insurance:** The District contributes 100% of the premium for the employees; the District and the employee share the premium for the employee's eligible dependents.
- **Life Insurance:** The District contributes 100% of the premium for life insurance and AD&D in the amount one times the employee's annual salary.
- **Disability Insurance:** The District covers 100% of the premium for the employee.
- **EAP:** Provides counseling services free of charge to employee and immediate family members.
- **Section 125, Flexible Spending Plan:** Provides premium conversion, dependent care and health care spending accounts at no cost to the employee.
- **Annual Leave:** Annual leave is accrued at the rate of 12 days per year, increasing to 16 days per year after 5 years of service, and 20 days per year with 10 years of service.
- **Medical Leave:** Medical leave of 12 days per year. Accrual of medical leave is unlimited.
- **Holidays:** Eleven paid holidays per year.

The District does not participate in Social Security or SDI. The salary and benefits described herein do not represent a contract and may be modified without notice.

Application and Selection Process

This is a confidential process and will be handled accordingly throughout all phases of the recruitment and selection process.

Submittals from interested candidates are desired immediately but should be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Friday, March 15, 2024**. Only a select number of highly qualified candidates will be invited to participate in the interview process. An electronic version of all submittals is required. Interested candidates must apply online to <https://koffassociates.com/wwd-general-counsel/>. Required are a comprehensive resume, compelling cover letter (two-page maximum), and six references (2 supervisors, two direct reports and two colleagues—references will be contacted only after the interview process).

For questions and inquiries, please contact:



Pete Smith, Senior Recruiter
Koff & Associates • (510) 342-3233
peter_smith1@ajg.com • www.koffassociates.com

Application materials will be screened in relation to the criteria outlined in this brochure. Candidates with the most relevant qualifications will be given preliminary interviews by the consultant. Koff & Associates will report results to the District. The District will then select candidates to participate in panel interviews. Extensive reference and background checks will be completed on the selected candidate.

Conditional Offer of Employment

An offer of employment will be conditioned upon: legal ability to work in the United States; passing a medical examination; verification of a candidate's employment history, education and training; other information contained in the Employment Application; and verification of Bar admission.

If you need special accommodations for a potential interview due to a qualifying disability, please contact the Human Resources Department at (559) 241-6205 immediately.



Westlands Water District is an Equal Opportunity/ADA Employer.