



Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson, AZ, 2026  
Image: Sharon B. Megdal

## Reflections: Information Sharing, Dialogue, Solutions, and Thanks

by Sharon B. Megdal  
April 24, 2026

Two dynamic and rewarding work activities have converged this Spring Semester. Once again, I am teaching the graduate course, Water Policy in Arizona and Semi-arid Regions, and on April 14–15 we convened the **WRRC Annual Conference**, *Water for Tech, Mining & Energy: Pathways to Arizona's Future*.

There is commonality in these two time-intensive activities in that both are designed to stimulate learning, questioning, and dialogue. After three weeks of introductory classes, the students have heard from over 20 guest lecturers offering a variety of insights based on a wealth of experience. Topics covered included tribal water management and Indian water rights, large water infrastructure projects, municipal water strategies, water quality, agriculture, water for natural systems, transboundary water, and more. Our annual field trip to Sweetwater Wetlands tied together groundwater recharge, effluent reuse, and water for natural systems. Guest speakers uniformly spoke to their appreciation of the quality and extent of student questioning. In addition to engaging with the experts during class meetings, a requirement for students' policy-oriented term papers is to interview at least three experts. My rationale for this is that one cannot learn about water policy only through researching books and online materials. Input from experts with real-world and current experiences is necessary to supplement the book/online research. I look forward to the students' end-of-semester paper presentations and submissions.



Sharon B. Megdal, Professor David Quanrud, Director John Kmiec and Shoshana Mayden of Tucson Water, and students at Sweetwater Wetlands 2026

This year's WRRRC annual conference focused on water use by the tech industry—mainly data centers and chip manufacturing—mining, and energy. Our conference advisory committee provided valuable input to the program's design. An opening blessing by San Xavier District Chairman Austin Nuñez and a stimulating and challenging opening keynote by Professor Upmanu Lall were followed by introductory "101" sessions that provided foundational information about the three water using sectors of focus. The sessions that rounded out the afternoon and followed the next day explored matters related to planning, community engagement, partnerships, and research. We worked hard to integrate time for questions and reflections, and conference sponsors engaged actively with attendees. Having welcomed in-person and virtual attendees, for whom registration was free, I invite you to visit our [conference webpage](#) for links to recordings of conference presentations and panels.



Sharon B. Megdal opens the 2026 conference. Image: Mitchell Masilun

Graduate class and conference discussions were frank in their recognition of challenges but also spoke to solutions. Realistic assessments of current conditions, along with approaches to working collectively, provided insights into the hard work required for identifying, developing, and implementing solutions. Several participants emphasized that solutions may not be quick and are likely to be expensive.



2026 conference attendees. Image: Mitchell Masilun

In addition to information sharing and dialogue opportunities, we recognize the importance of nurturing the next generation of water professionals through facilitating connections and networking. Several students from my class attended the conference. One wrote to me afterwards:

“It was a wonderful experience. I found the talks to be highly informative and engaging, particularly in how they connected water policy, science, and real-world challenges in Arizona. I also greatly valued the networking opportunities, as they provided a chance to interact with professionals in the field and gain insights into ongoing work and career pathways. Overall, attending the conference was both inspiring and enriching ....”

All of us at the WRRRC are very grateful to everyone who made the conference and my class rich with insights and perspectives. My most sincere thanks go to the conference speakers, the staff and volunteers, the university leadership, the sponsors, the conference advisory committee, and, of course, the students, including those from my class, and other participants!

The 2026 conference agenda with video and presentation links can be found on the WRRRC [website](#).

