

CRYSTAL CLEAR AWARD

2026

Denise Carter

Benjamin Franklin once said, "If you want something done, ask a busy person." That captures the trait of this year's Crystal Clear Award winner.

Denise Carter is a farmer and she and her family are deeply committed to community service in the Sacramento Valley. Denise has been a 4-H Sheep Project Leader for five years; a soccer coach and a school volunteer; Farm Bureau Director and Second Vice President of the local Farm Bureau; and President of the North Valley Chapter of California Certified Organic Farmers. She is a graduate of the Agricultural Leadership Program (Class 38) and was the recipient of the Common Threads North award. In November 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Denise to the Colusa County Board of Supervisors, and she was subsequently elected to her seat three times, also serving on the NCWA Board of Directors during this time.

Specifically with respect to water quality, Denise was a director of the Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program from its inception, where she was a strong and effective voice on the attributes of the Sacramento Valley and delineating this from the broader Central Valley. She testified before the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board about stewardship and the use of soil health-focused management to build resilient soils, productive crops, and a more sustainable farming system protective of water quality.

She can frequently be found harvesting or operating farm equipment on Benden Farms, growers of a diversified set of crops including conventional and organic prunes, walnuts, vine seeds, sunflowers, dry beans, wheat, alfalfa, and rice.

Through this work, she helps protect water quality using soil health-focused management to build resilient soils, productive crops, and a more sustainable farming system. She participates in every facet of agriculture: ownership, cultural operations, and policy and she is a tireless advocate for local farmers, agriculture, and rural community flood protection.

For her foundational and enduring support of the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition as a Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program director, and for her role in advancing the Coalition's strategic planning goals by encouraging the next generation of leadership, Denise Carter is recognized as the 2025 Crystal Clear Award winner.



THE CRYSTAL CLEAR AWARD recognizes exemplary efforts to protect and address water quality in the Sacramento Valley

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS



2025
Hat Creek Grown



2024
Lester Messina



2023
Cooperative Extension Rangeland Watershed Clean Water Team



2022
Dr. Karl Longley



2020
Denise Sagara



2019
John Currey



2018
John Garner



2017
Larry Domenighini



2016
Richard Price



NCWA