

WILL S. GREEN AWARD

2026

Fritz Durst

The 2026 Will S. Green Award recipient is Frederick "Fritz" Durst. Fritz's leadership in the Sacramento Valley is extensive, diverse, and well-known, helping to guide the region into the modern era of water and flood management.

His leadership is centered on a foundational theme that Fritz has coined and has embodied: "Fix not Fight." Fritz recognizes there is a time to fight to protect the region, but he understands that is not the path for an enduring and vibrant future for the Sacramento Valley. It is partnerships, purposeful action, and understanding that lead us to a better tomorrow.

Farming. Fritz is a recognized leader in farming in California, growing more than 30 different crops, including organic asparagus, whole grains for bread, and rice. He has been on the cutting edge of new methods of farming and soil health to improve infiltration and moisture holding capacity, as well as connecting with consumers through organic products and programs where people can learn about the farmers producing their food.

Water Diversions. Fritz was Reclamation District (RD108) Board president for 20 years, where he led a process testing alternative barriers to prevent fish from entering its canals. Fritz helped negotiate a funding plan to construct the two flat plate fish screens now deployed in RD108 that were largely funded by state and federal dollars. He has also led efforts to secure water rights outside the traditional irrigation season. These efforts have allowed RD108 to reliably divert water for its landowners for farming, as well as in the fall and winter months to decompose rice straw, provide Pacific Flyway habitat and grow food for Chinook salmon and other fish species.

Dry Year Planning. Fritz has been the chair of the Dry Year Task Force for the past several decades, bringing people and various agencies together during dry periods to plan, organize and take collaborative actions to help the region get through these challenging years with minimal conflict and serving water for multiple benefits.

Flood Protection. Fritz has dedicated his energy to the Sacramento River West Side Levee District, Knights Landing Ridge Drainage District and Reclamation District 108—serving the last 30 years on all three boards. Fritz helped lead a movement for landowner funded "heavy" maintenance. These programs directly led to the building of a flood team and organized approach to flood safety improvements at these agencies that positioned them for

approximately \$40 million in levee improvements over the past two decades, protecting the landowners and small communities in our region.

Sites Reservoir. Fritz has been the President of the Sites Reservoir Project Authority over the last decade. The trust and respect that Fritz brings to the negotiating table has brought investment partners together in an impressive way. He has also led many efforts with the state and federal agencies to work through permits, funding, water rights and local issues—all because he believes the Sacramento Valley needs Sites Reservoir for the future.

Partnerships. Fritz has been a leader in working with agriculture, local governments, water suppliers, and the conservation community to make the Sacramento Valley a better place. He has led efforts in the Conservation Task Force to forge deeper relations with diverse parties. One notable example is Fritz reaching out to the President of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman Association (PCFFA), a group that historically challenged Sacramento Valley water supplies, and suggested that fighting in the courts for the past decades has not worked well for anyone. We should instead learn about each other, build trust, and work together to fix the fishery which we both value dearly. This partnership, known as the Bridge Group, has been a positive, action-oriented salmon recovery effort to double juvenile hatchery production.

As this extensive list suggests, Fritz has contributed immensely to irrigation and flood protection in the Sacramento Valley through these diverse actions. Importantly, he has engaged and been a passionate and skillful communicator about the Sacramento Valley and has always been willing to share his ideas to diverse audiences. For these reasons and many more, Fritz Durst is the 2026 Will S. Green Award recipient.



The WILL S. GREEN AWARD is presented annually by the Northern California Water Association Board of Directors to an individual who has devoted their life to the promotion and advancement of irrigation and regional sustainability in the Sacramento Valley.

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS



2025
Don Bransford



2024
Edward Horton



2023
Tom Ellis



2022
Stuart Somach



2021
Mary Wells



2020
Charlie Hoppin



2019
Homer Lundberg



2018
Sandy Willard Denn



2017
Tib Belza



2016
Tim O'Halloran



2015
Richard Rominger



2014
Fran Silva



2013
Gene Harris



2012
George Basye



Founders Award
Al Montna



NCWA