



**Local Agency Formation Commission of Napa County**  
Subdivision of the State of California

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*We Manage Local Government Boundaries, Evaluate Municipal Services, and Protect Agriculture*

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**Agenda Item 7e (Consent/Information)**

**TO:** Local Agency Formation Commission

**PREPARED BY:** Brendon Freeman, Executive Officer *BF*  
Stephanie Pratt, Staff Analyst *SP*

**MEETING DATE:** February 2, 2026

**SUBJECT:** CALAFCO Annual Conference Report

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**SUMMARY**

This is a consent item for information purposes only. Accordingly, if interested, the Commission is invited to pull this item for additional discussion with the concurrence of the Chair. No formal action will be taken as part of this item.

The 2025 CALAFCO conference was held in San Diego on October 22-24. The conference program is included as Attachment 1. It provided an excellent opportunity to network and learn from each other. Representing Napa LAFCO were one Commissioner and two staff members. Meetings focused on balancing housing needs with agricultural land preservation, improving governance for Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs), legislative updates, and enhancing LAFCO operations through training on communication, policy, and legal frameworks, emphasizing shared learning and strategic collaboration for local governance. There were engaging, interactive sessions designed to educate, inspire, and spark conversation among participants.

**Key Themes & Sessions:**

- **Housing & Land Use:** Discussions centered on the complex balance between preserving farmland and increasing housing supply, exploring LAFCO's role in this nexus.
- **Equity & DUCs:** Sessions focused on embedding equity in boundary decisions, improving infrastructure, and planning for DUCs through Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) and Spheres of Influence (SOIs).
- **Commissioner & Staff Training:** Interactive sessions covered essential LAFCO knowledge, leadership skills, and best practices for new and seasoned officials, including a session entitled "How Am I Supposed to Know That?".
- **Governance & Operations:** Focused training on legislative changes, communication strategies, and enhancing overall LAFCO effectiveness.

In addition, included as Attachment 2 is The Sphere 2025 article on Napa LAFCO titled "Planning Napa's Future, One SOI at a Time," which was distributed to each conference attendee.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- 1) CALAFCO 2025 Annual Conference Program with Speaker Bios
- 2) The Sphere: Napa LAFCO Article

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Beth Painter, Chair  
Councilmember, City of Napa

Paul Dohring, Commissioner  
Councilmember, City of St. Helena

David Oro, Alternate Commissioner  
Councilmember, City of American Canyon

Belia Ramos, Vice Chair  
County of Napa Supervisor, 5th District

Anne Cottrell, Commissioner  
County of Napa Supervisor, 3rd District

Joelle Gallagher, Alternate Commissioner  
County of Napa Supervisor, 1st District

Kenneth Leary, Commissioner  
Representative of the General Public

Eve Kahn, Alternate Commissioner  
Representative of the General Public

Brendon Freeman  
*Executive Officer*

# CALAFCO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 22 – 24, 2025  
Wyndham San Diego Bayside  
1355 N Harbor Drive, San Diego, CA 92101

## PROGRAM OF EVENTS

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025

#### 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | PRE-CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION:

##### ***So, You Think You Know LAFCO? Challenge & Expand Your Knowledge in The LAFCO Pyramid***

Join us for the most fun you'll ever have at a "LAFCO 101" session. This is not your ordinary "Beyond the Basics" ...it's so much more! Think you know LAFCO? Challenge and expand your LAFCO knowledge in this uniquely interactive session, styled after the classic game show *The \$100,000 Pyramid*! With four "celebrity" guest speakers (all tenured LAFCO professionals) giving out clues, contestants and the audience (that means everyone) will tackle everything from LAFCO history to tricky boundary powers and beyond. It's a fun, fast-paced way to sharpen your understanding while enjoying some friendly competition. Come prepared to meet new people, learn, and have some fun!

**Location:** Coast Ballroom

**Moderator:** Joe Serrano, Executive Officer, Santa Cruz LAFCO

**Panelists:** Michelle McIntyre, Executive Officer, Placer LAFCO; Paula de Sousa, Partner, Best Best & Krieger; Shane Stark, Commissioner, Santa Barbara LAFCO

#### 1:30 p.m. | CONFERENCE OPENING

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Speakers:** Gay Jones, CALAFCO Board Chair & Commissioner, Sacramento LAFCO; Anita Paque, CALAFCO Conference Chair & Commissioner, Calaveras LAFCO; José Henríquez, CALAFCO Interim Executive Director & Executive Officer, Sacramento LAFCO; San Diego County Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, District 3 (*invited - pending confirmation*)

#### 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | KEYNOTE SPEAKER DAVID MARQUET

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Sponsored by:** CV Strategies



#### 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | REFRESHMENT BREAK WITH SPONSORS

**Location:** Pacific C

**3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | GENERAL SESSION*****How Am I Supposed to Know That???* Moving From Guessing to Knowing – A Fireside Chat**

The LAFCO world is complex and often confusing – there’s no way to know it all and often learning is trial by fire. This session offers 4 unique perspectives of the top things commissioners and staff would highly benefit from knowing and understanding. Join us for an engaging fireside chat with a powerhouse panel of LAFCO professionals. And because we’ve all been there – or are there now – audience members will also share their perspective on what’s the most important thing(s) for commissioners and staff to know and understand. The session promises some unforgettable “lessons learned” perspectives and key take-aways for commissioners and staff alike.

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Moderator:** Francisco Estrada, Analyst, Santa Cruz LAFCO

**Speakers:** Mario Gardea, Commissioner, San Joaquin LAFCO; Colette Santsche, Executive Officer, Humboldt & Trinity LAFCOs; Sblend Sblendorio, Commissioner, Alameda LAFCO; Malathy Subramanian, Partner, Best Best & Krieger

**5:15 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. | CALAFCO WELCOME RECEPTION**

**Location:** Terrace

**DINNER ON YOUR OWN****THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025****7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | BREAKFAST BUFFET**

**Location:** Terrace

**8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. | REGIONAL CAUCUS MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS**

**Location:**

**Central Region** – West Coast Ballroom

**Coastal Region** – Pacific D

**Northern Region** – East Coast Ballroom

**Southern Region** – Embarcadero

**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | CALAFCO ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. | REFRESHMENT BREAK WITH SPONSORS**

**Location:** Pacific C

## **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025**

### **10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | REGIONAL AND ATTORNEY ROUNDTABLES**

**Location:**

- Central Region** – West Coast Ballroom
- Coastal Region** – Pacific D
- Northern Region** – East Coast Ballroom
- Southern Region** – Embarcadero
- Legal Counsel** – Captains IV



### **12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | LUNCH**

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Luncheon Keynote Speaker:** CA State Senator Dave Cortese, District 15  
(*invited - pending confirmation*)

### **1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

#### ***Reimagining Governance & Growth for California's Forgotten Communities***

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) continue to face persistent challenges – limited access to clean water, inadequate infrastructure, and exclusion from critical planning decisions. This session explores how equity can be embedded into boundary decisions, service reviews, and long-term planning. Participants will hear from panelists about innovative approaches and strategies that have advanced infrastructure, services, and equity in unincorporated areas. Attendees will leave with actionable insights on how LAFCOs can encourage infrastructure investments in underserved areas through Municipal Service Reviews, Sphere of Influence updates, and annexation policies.

**Location:** Coast Ballroom

**Moderator:** Brandon Fender, Senior Associate and Project Manager, RSG, Inc.

**Speakers:** Jason Fried, Executive Officer, Marin LAFCO; Alfonso Ruiz-Delgado, Assistant Director, Unincorporated Areas for Supervisorial District 2, County of Los Angeles; Tyler Webb, Deputy, Unincorporated Area Specialist for Supervisorial District 2, County of Los Angeles; Kurt Wilson, Executive Director, Western Riverside Council of Governments

#### ***Incorporations in the New World – What Makes Them Successful?***

On July 1, 2024, Mountain House became California's 483rd incorporated city, with a population of 25,108, and is a largely bedroom community developed over the past 25 years in eastern San Joaquin County. It was the first new city in the state since Jurupa Valley incorporated 13 years earlier. While incorporations used to be more common, many communities in California continue pursuing steps and applications to start their own incorporation processes. This session explores why incorporation worked in Mountain House, the role of revenue neutrality, and how LAFCOs can be ready for these proposals, sharing statistics and best practices from past initiatives.

**Location:** Pacific D

**Moderator:** Steve Sanchez, Commissioner, Riverside LAFCO

**Speakers:** Rod Butler, City Manager, City of Jurupa Valley; JD Hightower, Executive Officer, San Joaquin LAFCO; Jim Simon, Principal, RSG, Inc.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025****3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | REFRESHMENT BREAK WITH SPONSORS****3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | BREAKOUT SESSIONS*****Local Government Reorganization – What Tools Are In/Out of LAFCO’s Toolbox?***

As communities change and service demands shift, LAFCOs play a key role in enhancing service delivery, fiscal stability, and public welfare. This session explores mechanisms to address inefficiencies and improve outcomes, particularly for fire protection and water services. We will explore how LAFCOs can strengthen Municipal Service Reviews, address failing districts, leverage SB 938, and guide participants in identifying early signs of fiscal distress while navigating the legal and financial frameworks for reorganization. Real-world examples from the panel will illustrate how strategic reorganizations have resolved service gaps and strengthened local governance.

**Location:** Coast Ballroom

**Moderator:** Carol Ieromnimon, Associate, RSG, Inc.

**Speakers:** Jeff Collins, Director, San Diego County Fire District; Christine Crawford, Executive Officer, Yolo LAFCO; Tom Kennedy, President, Kennedy Water Consulting

***Cleared for Takeoff: Using Technology to Bring LAFCOs Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Technology is transforming how public agencies operate and LAFCOs are no exception. This session explores practical, proven ways LAFCOs can incorporate tools like artificial intelligence (AI), digital document management systems, and GIS platforms to streamline workflows, enhance transparency, and expand capacity. Featuring live demonstrations and real-world examples, we will provide hands-on insights into how all LAFCOs can modernize operations without major investments. We will also explore strategies for successful adoption and staff training to ensure long-term success. This session is ideal for both commissioners and staff looking to innovate in a grounded, mission-driven way.

**Location:** Pacific D

**Moderator:** Amanda Ross, Founder, South Fork Consulting

**Speakers:** Shannon Costa, Executive Officer, Butte LAFCO; Andrea Ozdy, Deputy Executive Officer, Ventura LAFCO; Mitzi Stites, Clerk/Analyst, San Joaquin LAFCO

**5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. | CALAFCO PRE-DINNER COCKTAIL RECEPTION WITH SPONSORS**

**Location:** Pacific C

**6:30 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. | CALAFCO AWARDS BANQUET**

**Location:** Pacific A & B

## **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025**

### **7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | BREAKFAST BUFFET**

**Location:** Terrace

### **7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. | CALAFCO BOARD OF DIRECTORS BREAKFAST AND MEETING**

**Location:** Embarcadero

### **9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | GENERAL SESSION**

#### ***Where the Farmland Meets the Front Porch: How do LAFCOs Protect Ag Lands and Increase the Supply of Housing?***

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act sets forth the State Legislature’s goals of both preserving California’s prime agricultural lands and facilitating orderly growth and development – particularly the need for housing at all income levels. How best can LAFCOs protect farmland when new housing is desperately needed? Our panel of LAFCO commissioners and executive officers will share their experiences and strategies for navigating a balance between these two essential, but sometimes competing, objectives. Attendees will be encouraged to contribute their own insights and suggestions to this conversational session about LAFCO’s fundamental task of balancing agricultural preservation with orderly development.

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Sponsored by:** Best Best & Krieger

**Moderator:** Wendy Root Askew, Commissioner, Monterey LAFCO

**Speakers:** Diane Burgis, Commissioner, Contra Costa LAFCO; Shannon Costa, Executive Officer, Butte LAFCO; Lucas Frerichs, Commissioner, Yolo LAFCO; Rachel Jones, Executive Officer, Alameda LAFCO; James Kyriaco, Commissioner, Santa Barbara LAFCO

### **10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. | REFRESHMENT BREAK WITH SPONSORS**

**Location:** Pacific C

### **10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | GENERAL SESSION**

#### ***CALAFCO Legislative Update: The Good, the Bad & the Future***

We’re back by popular demand! Here we are at the end of another legislative year. Join us as we recap the 2025 legislative impacts on LAFCOs and look ahead to what’s on the CALAFCO legislative menu for 2026.

**Location:** Pacific A & B

**Speakers:** José Henríquez, Legislative Committee Chair, Interim Executive Director, CALAFCO & Executive Officer, Sacramento LAFCO; Kai Luoma, Legislative Committee Vice Chair, Executive Officer, Ventura LAFCO

### **12:00 p.m. | CONFERENCE ADJOURNS**



# Planning Napa's Future, One SOI at a Time

By **Brendon Freeman, Executive Officer, Napa LAFCO**

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In 2025, Napa LAFCO's most pivotal deliberations have centered on spheres of influence (SOIs), the Commission's most powerful long-range planning tool.

In April, the Napa Commission tackled a significant SOI amendment for American Canyon's Green Island area. The hearing drew robust testimony from the Farm Bureau, Greenbelt Alliance, Save the Bay, and Napa County, highlighting the diverse interests and high stakes surrounding land use in this part of Napa County.

By August, attention shifted to the draft SOI update for the Napa Sanitation District. That process sparked a broad discussion about the long-term viability of extending sewer service to the Monticello study area.

This discussion addressed the core issue of balancing growth with resource protection.

These actions highlight LAFCO's distinct role in determining where growth occurs, how services are delivered, and how open space and agricultural lands are preserved. Looking ahead, Napa LAFCO is currently reviewing its local SOI policy, with proposed amendments set for Commission consideration in October.

As other Commissions across California evaluate their own SOI updates, Napa's experience serves as a timely reminder that these tools remain essential for community planning, service management, and protecting the landscapes that define them.