



### In this Issue:

- 28th Annual General Assembly Speaker Announced
- Wildflower Update from the RCHCA: The Poppies are Poppin'
- PACE Commercial Seismic and Efficiency Workshop on March 21
- Calling All Fellows!
- Murrieta's Night Sky is Transforming
- Executive Directors Column: Are we Communicating or Just Making Noise?

## 28th Annual General Assembly Speaker Announced



Building off past years' success, the 28th Annual General Assembly and Leadership Conference, to be held on June 20th at the Pechanga Resort and Casino, will be the biggest yet, featuring a day-long Future of Cities Symposium prior to the Dinner and Keynote Address. WRCOG is excited to welcome Josh Earnest, White House Press Secretary under President Barack Obama (2014-2017), as the 2019 keynote speaker! For a more in-depth look at the event, [click here](#).

Mark your calendar for a full day of informational presentations, insightful discussions, networking, and entertainment! Interested in Sponsoring? Check out these great [sponsorship opportunities](#)! For more information on the event or to sponsor, contact us by clicking below.

[Contact Staff](#)

[Wildflower Update from the RCHCA:](#)

# The Poppies are Poppin'

It's back! That floral phenomenon known as the "super bloom" has struck southern California once again with a little help from this winter's storms. While sensitive areas, like the RCHCA reserves, are not open to the public, we have the inside scoop on a number of ideal locations where you can experience the super bloom. [Click](#)



[here](#) for a list of spots that are sure to delight. Enjoy and be sure to cue up the "Sound of Music" soundtrack!

The growth of this native vegetation is an indicator that the various grassland management techniques utilized by RCHCA are working! We hope everyone takes an opportunity to enjoy the spectacle while it lasts, but remember to do so responsibly: maintain appropriate speeds on roadways, stop on the side of the road only for emergencies, explore publicly accessible lands only, and always stay on the path. Happy hiking!

[Contact Staff](#)

## PACE Commercial Seismic and Efficiency Workshop on March 21

Did you know seismic strengthening improvements are now eligible for financing through WRCOG's Commercial PACE Program? On Thursday, March 21st at 10 a.m., WRCOG is hosting a [workshop](#) for those interested in learning more about how PACE financing can be utilized for making seismic, energy efficient and water conserving upgrades to commercial buildings. Come learn how Commercial PACE can help make your buildings more resilient and efficient!

[Contact Staff](#)

## Calling All Fellows!

Recruitment for WRCOG's Public Service Fellowship Program is in full swing for the 2019-2020 cohort!

This program seeks to train young professionals interested in public service through placement in one of our member agencies.

Would you or someone you know be a great fit for the Fellowship Program? Check out [WRCOG's website](#) for more information including the Program overview, application, FAQ, and the Fellowship Experience Booklet. Act fast, the application deadline is March 30th.



[Contact Staff](#)

## Murrieta's Night Sky is Transforming



The City of Murrieta is officially the first of WRCOG's Streetlight Program participants to begin transforming its night sky with the replacement of incandescent bulbs with new, energy efficient LEDs in 1,114 streetlights and counting! City officials can monitor the progress of the transformation in real time with the Streetlight Dashboard, pictured above.

Through the Streetlight Program, 11 jurisdictions, including Murrieta, will retrofit 55,000 total lights and save a projected \$70 million over the next 20 years. All 55,000 streetlights across the subregion are expected to be retrofitted by next summer. Check out this [video](#) to watch a streetlight retrofit!

[Contact Staff](#)

## Executive Director's Column: Are we communicating or just making noise?



***The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.***  
– ***George Bernard Shaw***



Effective communication can mean the difference between success and failure in any situation—across industries, at home, even the baseball field. When communication is effective, misunderstandings and conflicts are minimized and efficiency goes up. Communication has the power to bring people closer together and bridge the gap between individuals and organizations. So, whether it be with a spouse, significant other, family, friend, or at work, we should all strive to be better communicators.

In today's fast-paced world, methods of communicating are constantly changing. Social media is a great example of a platform that, just in the last decade, has revolutionized communication, especially how we get information. According to a [Pew Research Center Study](#), 68% of U.S. adults get at least some of their news from social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Nextdoor, a social media app that provides neighborhood-specific news updates, is now being used in [75% of U.S. neighborhoods](#). Nearly [80% of all Americans](#) are using some form of social media. And with good reason—these platforms are optimized for the user's desired experience; they offer short headlines for the person on the go, vibrant imagery for visual learners, and stories often tailored to the individual's interests based on their choice of where they get their information.

These social media channels represent just a fraction of the innovations that have occurred in communications over the last 5, 10, or 15 years—think email, cell phones, text messaging, video calls, etc. It has become easier, faster, and cheaper than ever to connect with someone through a device that fits in your pocket. But with more channels of communication than ever, are there also more opportunities to be misunderstood?

The ability to communicate via phone, email, text, or other platforms means

people now share fewer person-to-person interactions. While we often think of these innovations as saving time and perhaps even improving communications, a miscommunication resulting from an unfortunate comma omission or inference of an unintended tone could lead to calamitous results. Removing the face-to-face interaction may hinder or defeat the purpose of the communication altogether. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, I find that the most poignant, thoughtful and convincing messages are often still delivered in person.

So how can governmental agencies strike a balance in providing timely information, using the methods stakeholders prefer and making content engaging, while ensuring accuracy, conveying professionalism and fostering trust? This is a challenge many of us likely face daily. At WRCOG, we communicate through a variety of platforms (staff reports, our website, videos, this newsletter, Facebook, the list goes on) and, even when covering the same topic, our tone, level of detail, and style shifts in each, all in an effort to achieve that balance.

One tool WRCOG has been utilizing lately is the [COGCast](#), a bi-weekly podcast series in which we share stories and information about our programs and other agencies that are working hard to make a difference in our communities. Our mission is to give listeners opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the many regional issues that confront us and the people and organizations working to address them, using this increasingly popular communications medium. We're excited about the feedback received on the COGCast so far and see positive results from our organization-wide communications strategies.

But could we be doing better and if so, how?

This is one of the many questions we'll be asking our General Assembly and Leadership Conference keynote speaker, Josh Earnest, on June 20th. Josh Earnest is a legendary communications strategist who was selected in 2014 by President Obama to assume the most visible job in American Politics as White House Press Secretary, and currently works as Senior Vice President and Chief Communications Officer for United Airlines. In these times where government struggles to effectively communicate with constituencies at all levels, the General Assembly will provide us the extraordinary opportunity to hear from someone who has faced these challenges at the highest level. Mr. Earnest is truly an expert communicator and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to engage him in a conversation about our region. Hopefully this will help all of us learn to communicate more effectively.



[Contact Rick](#)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



[CLICK HERE](#)

