

# The Regional Water Authority

## TWO DECADES OF COLLABORATION

### *A Solid Foundation For The Future*

In the early 1990s, water purveyors in the Sacramento region faced an increasingly complex landscape. Communities and water supply needs were growing rapidly, and concern for the environment was increasing. The spread of groundwater contamination and the need to protect the lower American River were adding new challenges to the job of ensuring safe and reliable water supplies.

**The lower American River supports 43 species of native and nonnative fish, including fall-run Chinook salmon and steelhead.**

Guided by the idea that agencies can accomplish more together than separately, local water providers began a two-year process to combine existing efforts and create a unified approach to regional water issues. The result was the Regional Water Authority (RWA), a joint powers authority formed in June 2001.

The regional approach continues to pay dividends. With its emphasis on partnerships and technical excellence, RWA has netted tangible results for its members and marked milestones on numerous projects to help secure the region's water future.

### *The Water Forum Agreement*

The Water Forum Agreement is an historic regional commitment to meet two co-equal objectives: to provide a safe and reliable water supply to support the region's economy and to preserve the environment of the American River.

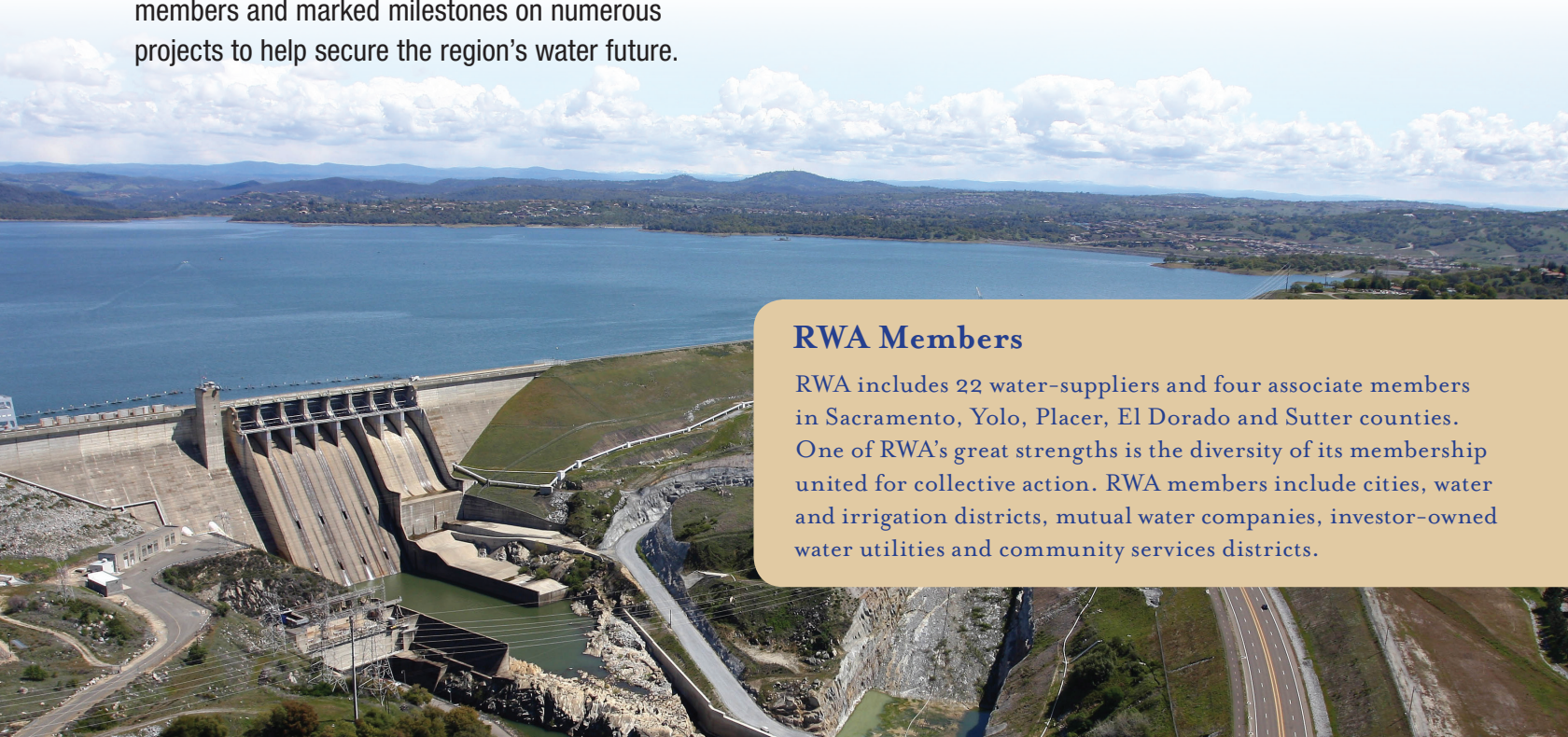
Reached in 2000, after several years of collaborative negotiations, the agreement contains seven elements – categories of complementary actions that are necessary for a solution to work. These include:

- Increased surface water diversions
- Actions to meet customer needs while reducing diversion impacts in drier years
- Support for improved pattern of fishery flow releases from Folsom Reservoir
- Lower American River habitat management
- Water conservation
- Groundwater management
- Water Forum Successor Effort

The landmark agreement provides a foundation for collaborative solutions and a process to resolve future conflicts between the Water Forum's diverse stakeholders.

### **RWA Members**

RWA includes 22 water-suppliers and four associate members in Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, El Dorado and Sutter counties. One of RWA's great strengths is the diversity of its membership united for collective action. RWA members include cities, water and irrigation districts, mutual water companies, investor-owned water utilities and community services districts.

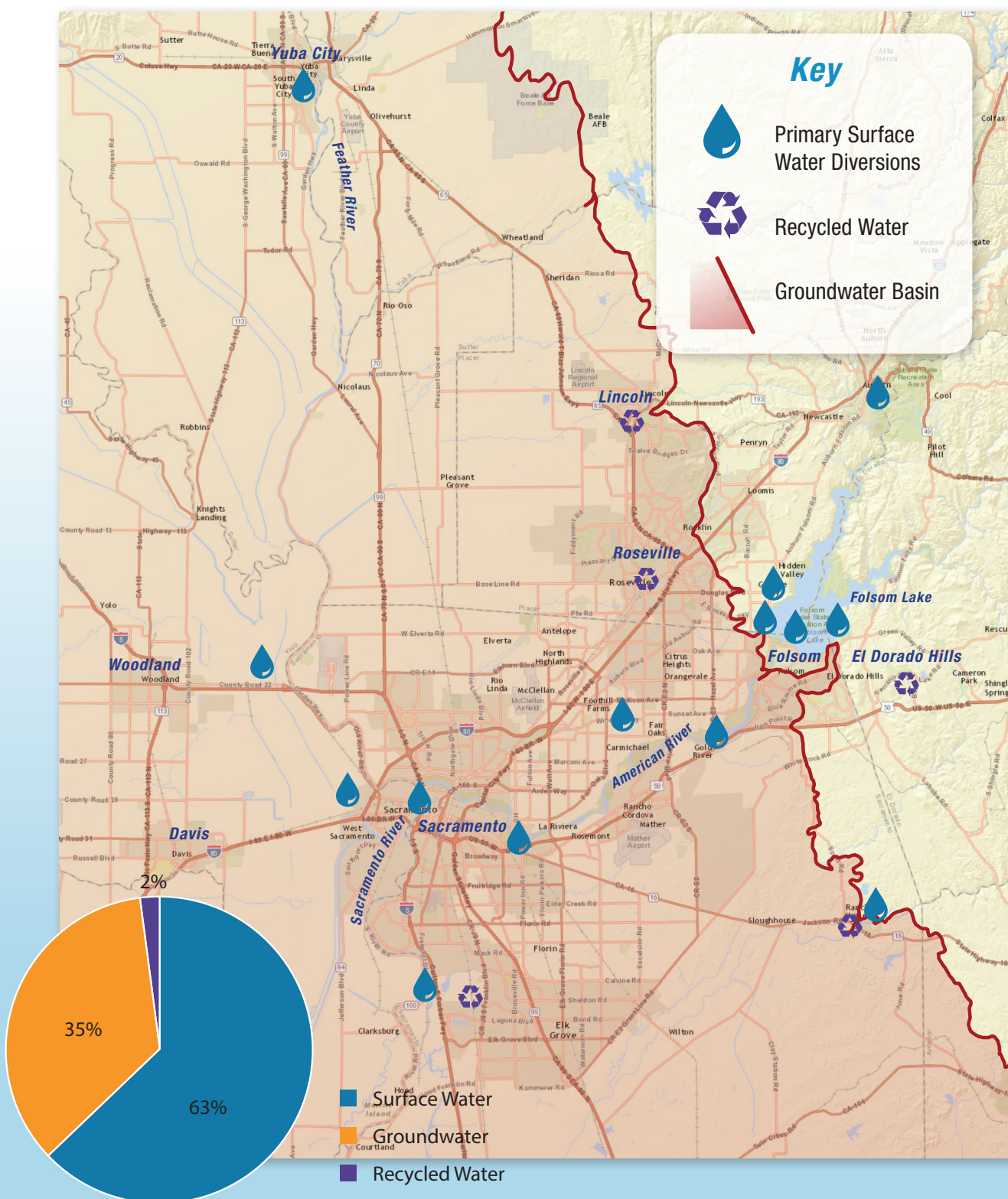


## Water Supplies in the Sacramento Region

The Sacramento region's water supplies come from a variety of local sources:

- Surface water – diverted from local rivers and directly from Folsom Reservoir, under pre- and post-1914 water rights and Central Valley Project water service contracts
- Groundwater – from productive aquifers that underlie the valley portion of the Sacramento region
- Recycled water – water treated at the region's wastewater treatment plants is increasingly used for landscape irrigation and industrial uses

Equally important to these water sources are water efficiency and conservation programs, which help ensure supplies continue to meet future needs. The region is also increasingly putting remediated groundwater to beneficial uses.



## *Leading the Way with Regional Planning*

Since 2004, RWA has led the region in collaborative planning to improve water supply and water quality for all uses in the American River basin. Today, the American River Basin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, created and managed by RWA, provides a framework to identify, evaluate and prioritize a wide variety of water resources-related projects and programs. The IRWM Plan brings together diverse stakeholders in order to maximize the benefits of integrated planning in the region.

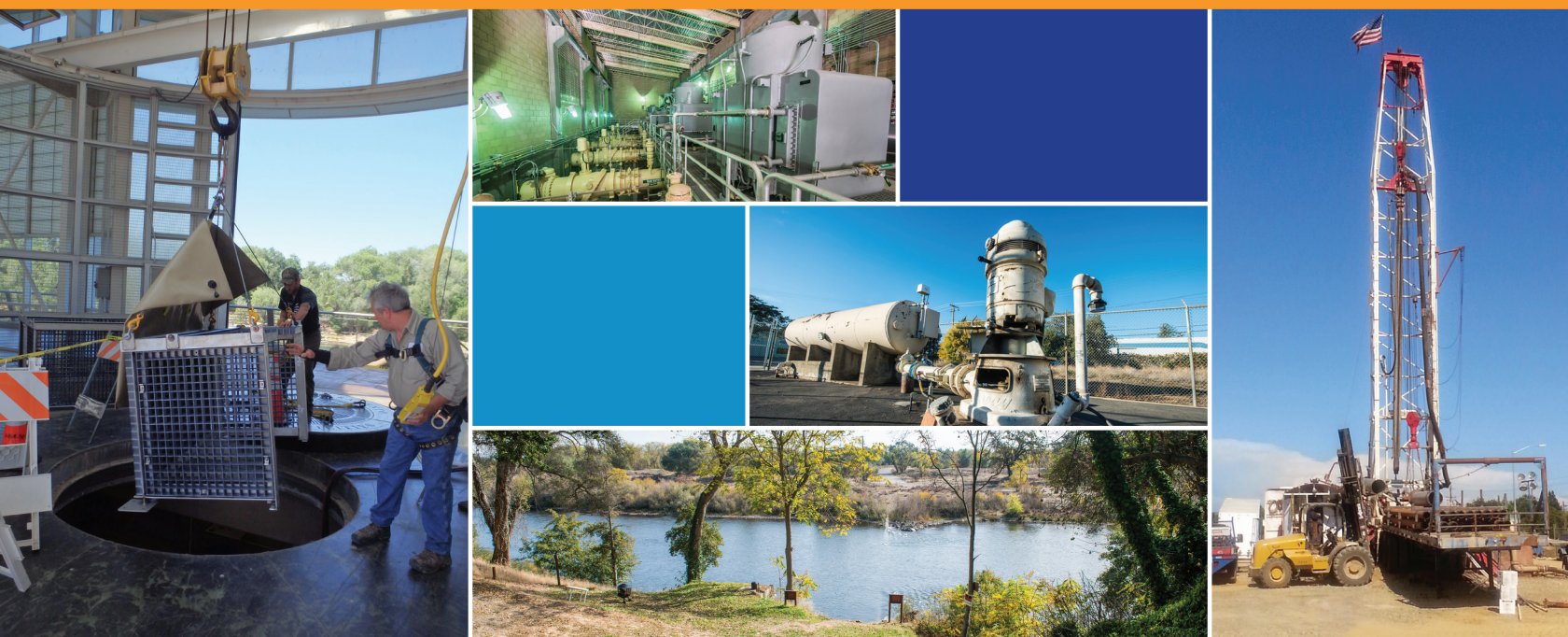
As a result of past and current planning, RWA has assisted local agencies in securing substantial grant awards to complete projects to help the region meet its planning objectives. These regional grant successes include:

- A \$22 million grant from the California Department of Water Resources in 2002 to construct 12 projects including pipelines, pumps, water treatment plant expansions and other facilities that will help the region better manage surface and groundwater supplies. Construction of all projects was completed in 2009. The expanded capacity to practice conjunctive use benefits not only the region, but other parts of the state and the environment through water transfers in dry years.
- A \$25 million grant from DWR in 2006 to help the region move forward with a variety of projects that will improve water supply, water quality and protection for the lower American River and

the lower Cosumnes River. The program, which will be completed in 2015, includes a suite of 14 infrastructure projects such as groundwater wells, surface water pipelines, water treatment plants and water recycling facilities. In addition to local benefits, the projects will generate statewide benefits by improving habitat and the quality of water reaching the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

**Conjunctive use is the coordinated use of surface water supplies during wet years and groundwater supplies during dry years. As part of the region's planning efforts, many agencies are coordinating efforts to share valuable water supplies through conjunctive use projects.**

- A \$16 million grant from DWR awarded in 2011 to fund 15 more high-priority projects for the region that further expands the range of water resources benefits to flood damage reduction, water conservation and watershed protection.
- A nearly \$10 million grant from DWR awarded from the 2014 IRWM Drought Grant Program. When complete, the 17 projects receiving funds will greatly enhance the region's water supply reliability during extreme dry conditions by increasing our ability to move water within the region through the completion of new pipelines, interties, booster pumps and groundwater wells.



## *A Commitment to Water Efficiency*

As part of the Water Forum agreement signed in 2000, each water provider in the region committed to implementing a comprehensive water efficiency plan. More than a decade later, water providers are dedicated to continuing the downward trend in water use.

In fact, the Sacramento region has significantly reduced its water use in the past decade. The number of gallons consumed per person per day has been decreasing steadily since 2001—from 290 gallons per person per day in 2001 to 218 gallons per person per day in 2010. During the 2014 drought, water use was below 190 gallons per person.

## *Innovative Water Efficiency Programs*

RWA members are committed to leading water efficiency efforts with innovative and effective residential and business programs, such as:

- Water Wise House Calls, which help reduce water use both inside and outside the home
- Rebates on water-efficient toilets, clothes washers and weather-based irrigation controllers
- Demonstration gardens that feature low-water use plants, and training for landscape professionals and homeowners
- Partnerships with parks and other large landscapes to reduce water use
- Subsidies for replacing home lawns with water-efficient landscaping
- Outreach to the highest water users to suggest ways to save

## *Progress on Water Meters*

In the Sacramento region, water meters are critical tools for managing supplies. Many water providers in the region have been fully metered for years. Others are continuing to retrofit systems, including installing state-of-the-art wireless water meter reading systems at homes and businesses. Automated meter infrastructure (AMI) provides real-time water use information, which helps water managers and customers understand how, when and why water is used. AMI technology also helps pinpoint leaks by immediately flagging unusual surges so that repairs and adjustments can be made quickly.

**More than 85 percent of water customers in the Sacramento region are now metered.**

## *Alternative Water Supplies*

Water providers in the region have been leaders in the development of alternative water supplies. Some now meet more than 10 percent of overall demand through recycled water, including leading the nation in the use of recycled water for residential landscape irrigation. Others have developed innovative agreements to put remediated groundwater from contaminated plumes to beneficial uses to offset the use of potable water.

