

The Regional Water Authority

2016 ADVOCACY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

A Note From The Executive Director

2016 was a significant year for the Regional Water Authority's Advocacy Program. Over several years we had set up the structure, identified priorities, set goals and engaged RWA members. This was the year to fully execute the program. I am proud of our team and our region for all we have accomplished.

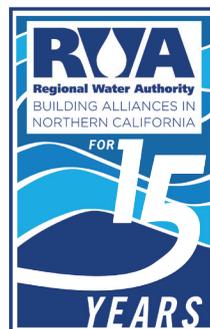
Keeping our eye on the goal of ensuring that regional needs and concerns are positively represented, our team identified Water Use Efficiency and Conservation, Water Efficiency Funding, Public Goods Charge, Water Transfers and Consolidation as key priorities. We needed to be nimble as bills were introduced, amended, gutted and in some cases brought to the floor. We increased our capacity to be both proactive on issues and reactive to changing circumstances.

We continued to build upon our success and strengthened our statewide position. I am so proud that we have continued creating strong, long-term relationships I believe will help reach RWA's ultimate goals.

There is and will always be much more work to be done, and each year we will continue to grow and position ourselves in the strongest manner possible. As RWA marked its 15-year anniversary in 2016, I am encouraged about our future and look forward to working together to continue building on our momentum.



– John Woodling



2016 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

1. EMERGENCY DROUGHT REGULATIONS

Emergency drought regulations adopted to battle California's historic drought call on water suppliers to conserve well beyond the 20 x 2020 mandate. The laudable actions taken by RWA members, and other water agencies across the state and their customers to mitigate an emergency situation should not become the "new normal."

RESULT: RWA, in partnership with water agencies throughout the state, successfully argued for changes from the mandatory water conservation regulations that were implemented in 2015. Through these efforts, the State Water Resources Control Board refocused its strategy on drought preparedness, providing for water suppliers to demonstrate adequate supplies to respond to an additional three dry years.

2. STATE FUNDING FOR TURF REPLACEMENT AND WATER EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

A major component of long-term water supply sustainability and drought resilience is decreasing outdoor irrigation. Many RWA member agencies dedicate a portion of their revenues to fund turf replacement and other water efficiency programs. State funding to augment local programs (from existing sources such as the Proposition 1 Water Bond and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund) would benefit California's water agencies and improve drought resilience.

RESULT: While state funding has been targeted at turf replacement and replacement of plumbing fixtures, it has been through a state-run program that lacks the efficiency that could be brought to bear by local water suppliers. RWA has been successful at obtaining grant funding for water efficiency programs, and will continue to advocate for water efficiency funding in 2017.

3. PUBLIC GOODS CHARGE

A public goods charge may be considered in the upcoming legislative session as a way to fund needed water supply improvements throughout the state. While there is a clear need for sensible, long-term funding solutions to assist disadvantaged communities that do not have safe drinking water, a state tax on water bills that is redirected away from local needs is not the solution.

RESULT: At the beginning of the 2016 legislative session, there was concern that SB 20 (Pavley) would become a vehicle for imposing a public goods charge. This did not arise, but the pressure for a source of public funding will continue in 2017. RWA will be diligent in advocating on the issue, consistent with our adopted policy position.

4. WATER TRANSFERS

RWA believes that transparency and open data concepts could improve the water transfer process and enable increased access to and use of the water transfer market. But, improvements to transparency and data management must not be bundled with conditions that constrain the water rights that make transfers possible or otherwise hinder water transfers.

RESULT: There was broad discussion on water transfer bills during 2016, and RWA actively advocated for sound policy. Ultimately, the only related bill that passed the legislature and became law was AB 1755 (Dodd) the Open and Transparent Water Data Act. RWA will continue to advocate for legislation that streamlines water transfers between willing buyers and sellers.

INFLUENCER OUTREACH

State Legislative Leaders

Building upon 2015 efforts, RWA staff and member agency representatives continued to hold one-on-one meetings with legislative members and staff to advocate for 2016 key issues. Meetings included those with legislators representing the five-county Sacramento region as well as members of key policy and budget committees.

In preparation for the 2016 legislative session, RWA hosted a water supply tour in November 2015 for our local legislative delegation highlighting the region's cooperative, innovative approach to water supply reliability and the important role Folsom Lake plays. As a result of this relationship building, RWA is becoming a go-to organization for legislative staff seeking information and input. In November 2016, at the request of Assembly staff, RWA is hosting a tour for staff interested in learning about water quality issues and the drinking water treatment process.

Local Leaders

Throughout the year, Advocacy Program members met with local elected officials to update them on priority policy principles and seek their future support with state legislative leaders. A key objective of this outreach effort was to develop a strong team of local elected officials RWA and its members can call upon to provide political support and advocacy for water-related issues important to this region.

LOOKING BACK: 15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY EVENT

In July, RWA celebrated 15 years of success with an event that attracted nearly 30 federal, state and local policymakers and their staff. Wrote Congresswoman Doris Matsui, "The Regional Water Authority has made our region stronger and more resilient. It has created a forum that works for the greater good of the region—through wet years and dry years, times of peace and times of conflict. Without RWA's guidance we would not be as far along in balancing the many needs within our watershed. I thank RWA for what they do and wish them well for another 15 years of service."

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017

The Advocacy Program was established to build RWA's reputation as a respected, trusted and recognized leader in California water issues and solutions. As demonstrated by RWA's prominent roles in a number of statewide organizations and initiatives, increased accessibility to and credibility with legislative staff, and reliable presence at the Capitol, the Advocacy Program is succeeding in growing that positive reputation. The program is staged to continue this trend by bringing in a full-time staff member that will focus on building stronger relationships with state and local leaders, expanding media opportunities and becoming more proactive on legislative and regulatory issues.



State Senator Ted Gaines and Assemblymember Beth Gaines recognize RWA for its achievements.

LEGISLATION HIGHLIGHTS

By the Numbers

- 20** Number of two-year bills monitored at the start of the 2016 session
- 95** Number of bills introduced in the 2016 session with identified potential impacts on RWA members
- 37** Number of 2016 bills identified as high or medium priority (“hot list”) at the start of the session
- 11** Number of hot list bills that were signed into law
- 4** Number of hot list bills vetoed by the Governor

Three of the bills signed by the Governor—SB 7, SB 814 and SB 1398—will have impacts to all RWA member agencies. A full analysis, as well as text of these three bills and all top priority bills, are available at rwah2o.org.

At the start of the 2016 legislative session, RWA identified nearly 100 new bills that had potential impacts on our members, 37 of which were identified as “hot list” bills. As the 2016 session came to a close, many of the hot list bills died, which allowed us to focus on working with our partner organizations on priority issues. Specifically, we worked to successfully modify SB 814 (Hill) dealing with excessive water use during times of drought and worked closely with Senator Leyva’s staff on SB 1398, a bill that was amended late in the session requiring water agencies to locate and remove any lead service lines found within the public water system. These two bills, along with SB 7, would have created significant and unnecessary burdens on local water suppliers before they were favorably amended. Both of these bills, with RWA’s support, were signed into law by the Governor. A recap of RWA’s involvement in these and two other pieces of legislation is provided below:

LEGISLATION	TOPIC	RWA INVOLVEMENT AND OUTCOME
SB 7 (Wolk)	Water Submeters	Over several years, RWA worked with partner organizations to ensure that submetering of multi-family residential buildings would be the responsibility of the building owner rather than the water supplier
SB 552 (Wolk)	Consolidations	RWA opposed original version along with ACWA and CMUA Amendments provide better assurances for water agencies tasked with subsuming a troubled water system
SB 1398 (Leyva)	Lead Pipe Replacement	RWA worked closely with the Senator to amend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assured water suppliers were not responsible for private water lines - Established practical approach to infrastructure replacement
SB 814 (Hill)	Excessive Water Use During Periods of Drought	RWA worked closely with the East Bay Municipal Utility District and other agencies/organizations to amend Resulted in a more practical bill that should not have major impact on RWA members
SB 1317 (Wolk)	Groundwater Extraction Permit	This bill circumvented the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. RWA worked with partner organizations to ensure that it did not pass out of the 2nd House

COALITION BUILDING

Building relationships is a critical component of the Advocacy Program. These relationships will forge long-term coalitions and build trust with key office holders to ensure that RWA has a seat at the table for future discussions.

Continuing its leadership role, RWA staff served as the chair of the Practitioner Advisory Panel convened by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to provide leadership and policy input on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implementation, as well as chair of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Groundwater Committee. RWA was also invited to participate in the Urban Advisory Group convened by the state to provide input on a framework for California's first-ever permanent water conservation targets. RWA and member agency staff and officials serve on the ACWA State Legislative Committee and the ACWA Board of Directors.

In 2016, we worked to strengthen existing relationships with state and local organizations and started creating new ones. For example, working to expand coalitions with water providers in Southern California, RWA presented its perspective on state water issues and how both North and South can work together in board meeting and lunchtime presentations to the Southern California Water Committee in July. In this same vein, the RWA Board of Directors received presentations from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the San Luis and Delta Mendota Water Authority.

The relationships built with water providers throughout the state, combined with RWA's leadership, led to a powerful letter to the State Water Resources Control Board and DWR, signed by 63 water providers and water associations, urging the state to adopt sensible policies for implementation of a long-term policy framework for water conservation. This unprecedented consensus will be important as the state's proposals move to the Legislature.

Forging partnerships will always be a key priority of this program, and in 2017 we will look to diversify our reach with groups representing the agriculture, environmental and business communities.

ADVOCACY THROUGH MEDIA OUTREACH

RWA continued both proactive and reactive media outreach to convey RWA's perspective and the region's accomplishments. Outreach included meeting with reporters to discuss regional water issues and build relationships and issuing nearly 20 press releases, media statements and opinion-editorials, including an op-ed in the *Sacramento Bee* by RWA Executive Committee member Rob Roscoe outlining the region's perspective on continued conservation in light of improved water supply conditions.

LOBBYIST PROGRAM MEMBERS

The Lobbyist Subscription Program consists of 10 member agencies (listed below) that have shared cost equally the past few years to pay for the contract lobbyist, Fernandez Government Solutions. As we move forward into 2017, that program will consist of at least one new member agency, the Elk Grove Water District. Also in 2017, a more equitable cost sharing system will be used so that small and large agencies pay a proportional share. We are able to do this without any fee increases to the member agencies. We are hoping to add more members as the program continues to provide valuable results for RWA and the region.

City of Folsom | City of Lincoln | City of Roseville | City of Sacramento | Carmichael Water District | Del Paso Manor Water District
Placer County Water Agency | Sacramento County Water Agency | Sacramento Suburban Water District | San Juan Water District

STAFF

For any questions or more information, please contact RWA Executive Director John Woodling.