

A Look Back

At the Regional Water Authority our mission is to serve and represent regional water supply interests and assist members with protecting and enhancing the reliability, availability, affordability, and quality of water resources. In 2019 our team grew stronger, our members more engaged, and we brought more expertise and resources to support our efforts than ever before. The region continued to be a statewide leader in water management and in translating that leadership into effective advocacy in the Legislature and the Governor's administration.

Our team grew in lots of ways. Most notably, we added Jim Peifer as the Executive Director of the Regional Water Authority and the Sacramento Groundwater Authority. Jim brings nearly 30 years of expertise and was well poised to lead the legislative advocacy program. 2019 also marked my first full year as RWA's Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Manager. Together, our work allowed the program to develop beyond the Sacramento region.



In 2019 the RWA advocacy team laid out overarching priorities. These consisted of prioritizing defeat of a water tax and creating a regional approach for building resilience and ensuring healthy waterways. The Legislature introduced 2,576 bills in 2019—1,799 Assembly bills and 777 Senate bills. All of the bills were analyzed keeping these priorities in mind. Key milestones in 2019 included support for Governor Newsom's new initiative to build a climate-resilient water system and ensure healthy waterways, hosting a climate resiliency tour with state legislative staff, and key congressional meetings to support the Sacramento Regional Water Bank. RWA was a key convener in showcasing habitat restoration projects, water efficiency programs, and enhancing climate resiliency through water banking.

In the coming year, funding to implement the recommendations in the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio and improve the ability of the region and state to adapt to climate change will be a leading priority for the advocacy program. The region has a comprehensive approach that connects surface water planning, groundwater planning, and environmental stewardship to improve resilience to flood, fire, and drought. The advocacy team will be dedicated to making sure the Legislature and the Governor understand this, see the value and benefit in this plan, and prioritize funding for the region in a bond.

Ryan Ojakian
Ryan Ojakian



2019 Advocacy Priorities

Safe Drinking Water and a Water Tax

Legislative efforts to fund solutions for safe drinking water through a water tax were a primary focus of the advocacy team in 2019. Ultimately, a water tax was defeated and funding for safe drinking water was passed in SB 200 (Monning). SB 200 will provide the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) with \$130 million annually over the next decade to implement safe drinking water projects around the state. Moving forward, work on safe drinking water shifts over to the Water Board where they will be making determinations on how to utilize those funds.



By the Numbers

2,576

Number of total bills introduced in the 2019 Legislative session

942

Number of bills approved by the legislature

870

Number of bills signed into law by the Governor

18

Number of hot list bills with active RWA positions

3

Number of support bills chaptered

1

Number of opposed bills vetoed

1

Number of oppose bills chaptered

Final Legislative Outcome on RWA "Hot List" bills in 2019

Bill – Author	Bill Title & Description	RWA Position
AB 658 – Arambula	Water rights: water management	Neutral – Chaptered
AB 1414 – Friedman	Urban retail water suppliers: reporting	Support – Chaptered
SB 19 – Dodd	Water resources: stream gages	Support – Chaptered
SB 134 – Hertzberg	Water conservation: water losses: enforcement	Neutral – Chaptered
SB 200 – Monning	Drinking Water	Support – Chaptered
SB 1 – Atkins	California Environmental, Public Health, and Workers Defense Act of 2019	Oppose – Chaptered
AB 756 – Garcia	Public water systems: perfluoroalkyl substances and polyfluoroalkyl substances	Oppose – Chaptered

A full analysis and text of all top priority bills are available on the RWA website at rwh2o.org.



RWA Hosts Water Resource Climate Resiliency Tour for State Legislative Staff

In October 2019, RWA hosted a tour for legislative staff to share information about the region's work to enhance climate resiliency through water banking and efficiency while protecting and restoring the environment in the lower American River.

Hosted in partnership with the Water Forum, the tour explored the Water Forum's newly-completed habitat restoration project at Sailor Bar near Fair Oaks. The project placed more than 10,000 cubic yards of gravel into the lower American River and carved a new side channel to create protected places for salmon and steelhead to spawn and raise their young. Guests also learned about the region's efforts to address water quality, flood protection and ongoing water efficiency programs. The tour culminated with a presentation on the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, the region's key climate adaptation strategy.

RWA Applauds Draft Water Resilience Portfolio

In April 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom launched a new initiative to build a climate-resilient water system and ensure healthy waterways with an executive order directing state agencies to prepare a Water Resilience Portfolio. The task: Identify and assesses a suite of complementary actions to ensure safe and dependable water supplies, flood protection, and healthy waterways for the state's communities, economy, and environment.

RWA issued a media statement applauding the initiative writing, "We are especially pleased that this administration will place premium on encouraging regional approaches for building resilience and strengthening partnerships with local water agencies," RWA's statement said. "We also appreciate that the order also calls for integrating investments, policies and programs across state government, which we believe has been a significant barrier to achieving resilient water supplies in the past."

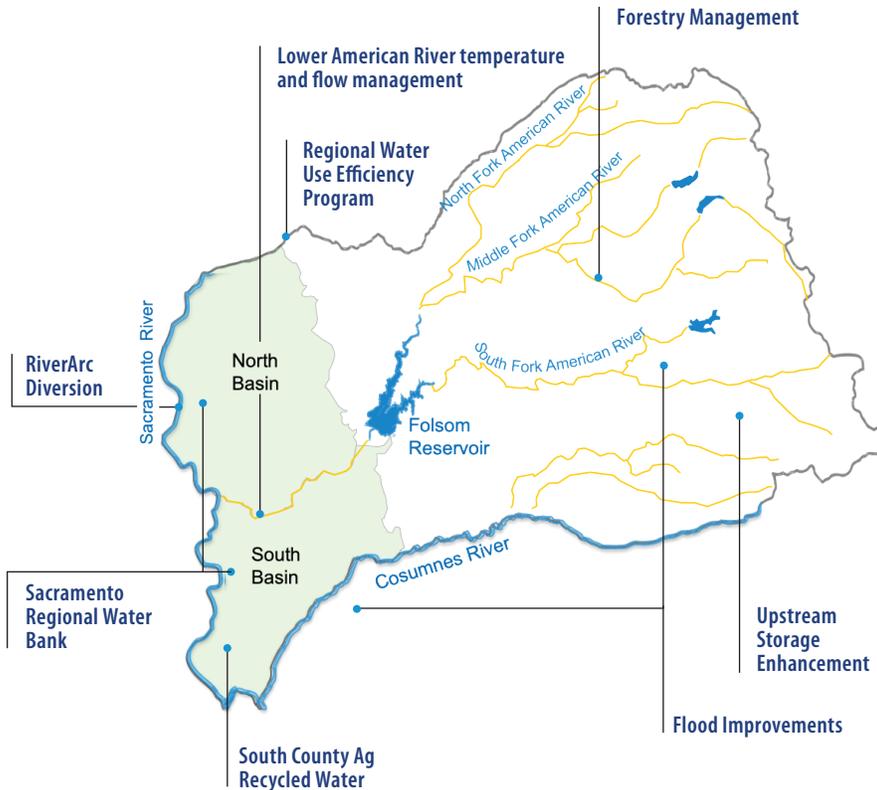
In the following months, RWA worked to build a coalition with other Sacramento region water interests to shape the Governor's portfolio, providing comments in partnership with the Sacramento Area Flood Control District, Water Forum, and Sacramento Groundwater Authority, and issuing a second joint media statement with the announcement of the Draft Water Resilience Portfolio on January 3, 2020.

"Our region has long been preparing to address the impacts from climate change on our water resources at a watershed scale," RWA's statement said. "The region's climate adaptation portfolio re-imagines how water should be managed in the face of a less reliable water supply and a greater flood threat that is expected from reduced snowpack and flashier rainstorms in a narrower wet season. While these challenges are real and daunting, we know our holistic approach will solve them."



Paving the Way for 2020 and Beyond

As Governor Newsom works in 2020 to finalize his draft Water Resilience Portfolio and develop a funding vehicle for implementation, RWA will continue working to build coalitions and successfully secure language in an expected bond measure to build climate resiliency in the Sacramento region.



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The cutting-edge American River Basin Study (ARBS) will pave the way for this outreach by demonstrating why the American River Watershed is the most logical place for the state to invest its funding to yield the greatest benefit not only for local water supplies and the environment but also potentially for statewide benefits.

According to the ARBS, temperatures in the American River watershed are projected to significantly increase by 2070, precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, and snowmelt runoff will peak earlier in season. This will have significant impacts on Folsom Reservoir and our water resources as the reservoir is used more often for flood protection, and its ability to store water diminishes.

To address these challenges, local water managers have identified a comprehensive suite of projects. Educating our state's elected leaders and regulators about the projected impacts of climate change on this region, the cascading impacts on the statewide water supply system, and our portfolio of solutions will be this program's primary focus.

STAFF

For any questions or more information, please contact RWA Legislative and Regulatory Program Manager Ryan Ojakian at 916.967.7692.

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