

May 2020

Building Alliances in Northern California

MISSION

To serve and represent regional water supply interests and assist Regional Water Authority members with protecting and enhancing the reliability, availability, affordability and quality of water resources.



*“The overall outlook among local water providers is that they are in this for the long haul,” said RWA Executive Director Jim Peifer. As **Roseville’s Assistant Environmental Utilities Director Sean Bigley** said recently, “We’re treating this as a marathon. Job number one is to stay healthy because we’ll need to keep at this for some time.”*

RWA Operations and Meetings During the Emergency

Following the statewide stay-at-home order, all RWA employees are working remotely and available by e-mail or cell phone during the COVID-19 emergency.

RWA Board and Executive Committee meetings are scheduled to be held via teleconference or webinar at their regularly scheduled time until further notice. Board meetings occur on the second Thursday of every-other month at 9 a.m. Executive Committee meetings are held monthly, beginning at 8:30 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday.

You can find meeting dates, times, and access information at rwah2o.org.

Keeping the Water Flowing During the COVID-19 Emergency

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring extraordinary change to the world, local water providers are continuing their essential work to keep safe, reliable water flowing while also protecting the health and safety of their employees.

Some of the actions taken by RWA Members in the past several weeks have included:

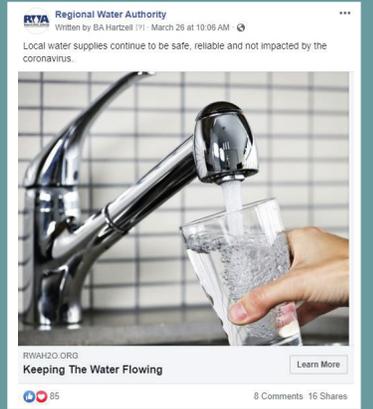
- Implementing pandemic emergency operations plans, including identifying minimum staffing levels, critical positions, business continuity plans, and available redundancy.
- Confirming mutual aid agreements with other water providers, as well as reaching out to smaller and neighboring systems to offer assistance, if needed.
- Providing relief for customers experiencing financial hardship because of COVID-19, such as suspending disconnections for nonpayment, restoring service to customers recently disconnected for nonpayment, and waiving penalties for late payments.
- Ensuring adequate supplies of disinfection chemicals and checking in with vendors on potential disruption to deliveries.
- Closing in-person offices and helping customers via phone and email.
- Asking staff to telecommute when possible and taking precautions such as social distancing when in the office.
- Using technology such as conference calls and video conferencing for staff and board meetings.
- Protecting field staff by initiating staggered and rotating shifts, using social distancing (one person per vehicle), asking crews to work from their vehicles, and allowing staff to take utility vehicles home (rather than come into the office).
- Making sure staff members have proper identification and authorization to be traveling to and from work.
- Taking steps to support employees through flexible employment policies that allow time off to care for a sick family member or children at home due to school closures.
- Providing support to local businesses. One water provider is supporting local restaurants by sharing costs with on-site staff to order food periodically.

New COVID-19 Tool Kit for RWA Members

RWA has developed a new Tool Kit on Dropbox as a resource for members looking for tools and information related to COVID-19. The Tool Kit includes sample emergency response plans, resources and tips for hosting virtual meetings, COVID-19 key messages and fact sheets (in both English and Spanish), links to online resources, and more.

Also included in the Tool Kit are graphics developed by RWA for new Facebook advertising launched in March to assure the public about the safety and reliability of local water supplies.

The Tool Kit will be updated throughout the evolving emergency and can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/RWATK>.



Water Bank Gains Governor's Endorsement, Federal Funding Eligibility



The Sacramento Regional Water Bank in March earned Gov. Gavin Newsom's endorsement as a statewide water storage project that should be eligible for funding under the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act). The act provides federal grant funding for projects that promote water storage and supply, improve waterways, and advance drinking water infrastructure.

In the letter to Department of Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, Gov. Newsom states that, "Projects like the Sacramento Regional Water

Bank, which aim to bolster resiliency by expanding conjunctive use capabilities to support sustainable groundwater management, are an important component of the state's innovative efforts to build a more resilient sustainable water system in the future."

The letter was critical for the Water Bank to be eligible to pursue possible WIIN Act funding, which requires both an official request by the Governor and determination of consistency with Proposition 1 (the Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act) by the California Water Commission, both of which are now in hand.

The next step in the process to pursue WIIN Act or other possible future federal opportunities is to complete a feasibility determination. RWA is working with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to identify the effort to make such a determination.



RWA Strategic Plan 2025+

February Workshop Explores Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

In February, RWA hosted the first of several workshops as part of a comprehensive update to its 2013 Strategic Plan, which will guide the organization through 2025.

The workshop included a presentation on survey results, which found that RWA members are aligned in several areas, including the desire for additional outreach, involvement by the full membership in the Water Bank, improved communication, and need to identify grants for smaller agencies. The survey also identified the highest-priority issues for RWA, including education, communication, transparency, cost of water, water efficiency, and advocacy. During the workshop, participants also held in-depth discussions about potential changes to RWA's mission, vision, values, and goals.

While scheduling of a second workshop is pending as we adapt to the COVID-19 emergency, RWA staff is continuing to move the strategic planning process forward by incorporating participant feedback into the mission, vision, values and goals and working to define objectives to support the goals for consideration during the next workshop.

The RWA Executive Committee is guiding the plan update, including setting a schedule and a process for gathering input from members and stakeholders, with assistance from facilitator Ellen Cross of Strategy Driver, Inc.



Legislative Update

RWA Shifts Focus to Economic Stimulus Projects Amid Rapidly Changing Conditions

After approving \$1.1 billion in new funding to help the state cope with the coronavirus pandemic, the California state legislature adjourned for an emergency recess on March 16 with a return date of May 4.

The emergency recess has disrupted the typical legislative calendar, as well as the state budget process. Gov. Newsom recently announced his intention to submit a revised budget plan in May amid conditions that have radically changed since the beginning of the year. The Governor's January budget and several legislative proposals include a multi-billion dollar bond for the

November 2020 ballot to support climate resiliency. RWA has been working to secure funding language in the bond for the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, RiverArc, and other projects.

In light of the state's rapidly changing legislative and economic conditions, RWA has shifted to identifying shovel-ready projects that create jobs in anticipation of federal stimulus and possible state stimulus funding becoming available. Because the federal stimulus is emerging first, the RWA Federal Ad Hoc Committee is working with RWA members to compile a list of water infrastructure

projects that could positively contribute to the region's post-COVID economic recovery and job creation at the local, state, and federal levels. Committee members will be reporting progress in Board Meetings, Executive Committee meetings and writing, as needed.

In addition, RWA is continuing to work on and take positions on legislation in preparation for the legislative process to move quickly. A current list of bills with a formal position, as well as other legislative updates, are available on RWA's website at rwah2o.org/advocacy.

RWA Board Adopts Federal Platform for 2020

The RWA Board of Directors at its March 19 meeting approved a new RWA Federal Affairs Platform for the 2020 legislative session and with it a new focus on influencing federal legislation and attracting federal funding for local water projects and initiatives.

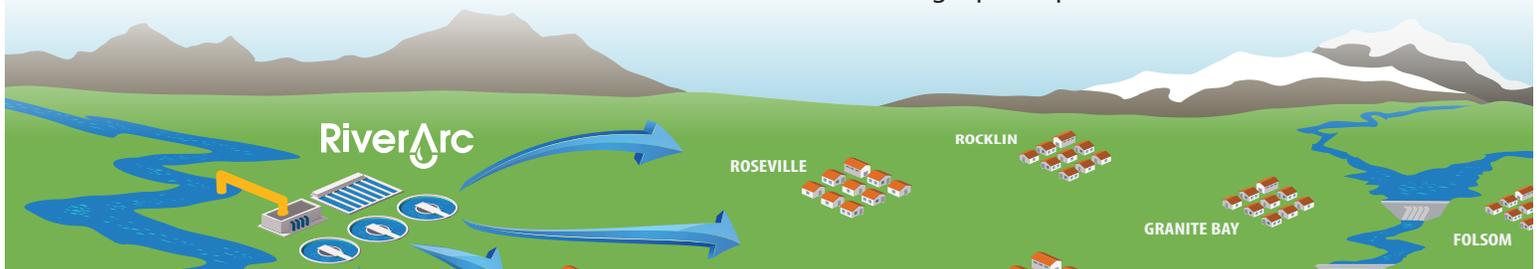
The platform outlines RWA's focus on adapting to the projected impacts of climate change and building resiliency through the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, RiverArc, habitat improvement projects on the lower American River, cold water storage at Folsom Reservoir, forest management for a healthy watershed, and addressing water quality issues such as PFAS contamination.

The platform's approval was the culmination of a months-long exploration of RWA's potential role in federal affairs through the Federal Ad Hoc

Committee. Chaired by Sean Bigley of the City of Roseville, the committee was charged with considering how a federal affairs program might be structured within the RWA.

The committee ultimately made five recommendations for the Board's consideration and use during the RWA Strategic Plan Update process. These include recommendations to form a volunteer standing committee that should be evaluated for 12 to 18 months; establish an annual federal policy platform adopted by the RWA Board; play a leadership role in statewide organizations that touch federal affairs; and consider initiating a facilitated effort to strengthen communication with congressional and other agencies.

The Ad Hoc committee is expected to sunset with the final strategic plan update.



Water Efficiency Program News

Helping Residents Cope with the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order

RWA's Water Efficiency Program developed several new outreach items and tools to support local residents as they follow the stay-at-home order during the COVID-19 emergency. The program's new "At-Home Resources" pages posted to BeWaterSmart.info include:

- Information about virtual Water Wise House Calls available from local water providers.
- The Top 3 Most Overlooked Tasks to Tackle Now with the potential to save water, improve homes, and make life easier once things pick up again.
- List of local nurseries that offer curbside pick-up.
- Water-wise activities that kids and caregivers can do together at home.
- Information about online gardening resources and virtual gardening tours and workshops.

You can learn more at bewatersmart.info/at-home-resources-page.

New artwork available on efficient landscape watering and household leaks

The new "At-Home Resources" pages come in addition to new artwork developed and tested during January focus groups to promote RWA's planned outreach on checking soil moisture before turning on sprinklers and finding and fixing household leaks. The new artwork has been compiled into a Be Water Smart Tool Kit on Dropbox along with additional resources and tools for Water Efficiency Program participants. Contact Water Efficiency Program Manager Amy Talbot for more information and to access the Tool Kit.

