

September 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.



**Water Forum**  
**20th Anniversary**  
VIRTUAL Symposium  
and Reception



Addressing Climate  
Impacts on the  
Sacramento Region's  
Water Supplies and Environment

**Wednesday, October 14, 2020,**  
**1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Featuring Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis—invited—who was instrumental in the Water Forum's formation two decades ago through her active leadership and facilitative role in the negotiations of the historic Agreement.

Learn more and register at  
<http://ow.ly/CFxa50AQBFG>

## RWA Operations and Meetings During the Emergency

RWA staff members are continuing to work remotely and are 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 [rwah20.org](http://rwah20.org).

## RWA Awarded \$8.74 Million for Climate Resiliency Projects

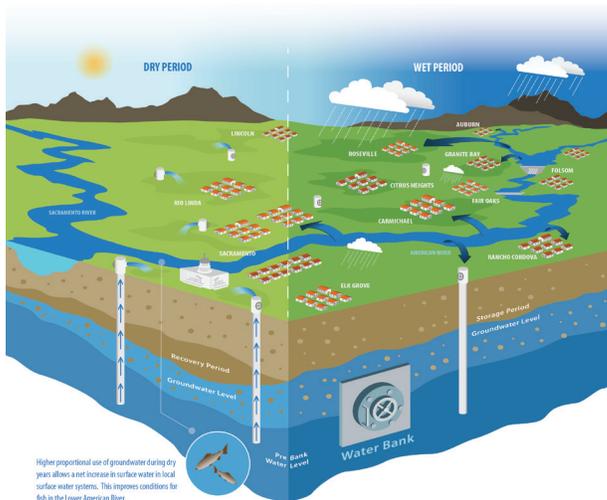
The Regional Water Authority has been awarded \$8.74 million in state grants to advance 11 projects to build water reliability in the Sacramento region, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has announced.

Part of DWR's Proposition 1 Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grant Program, funding will be used for conjunctive use facilities such as groundwater wells, transmission mains, and pumping facilities, as well as water use efficiency measures such as home leak detection and repair programs, residential irrigation and landscape rebates, and expanded public outreach efforts.

"We appreciate DWR's partnership in helping to advance water resiliency in the Sacramento region," said Jim Peifer, executive director for the Regional Water Authority and Sacramento Groundwater Authority. "Our portfolio of climate resiliency projects re-imagines how water should be managed from its mountain origins to the groundwater basin below the region's urban core. With a holistic approach, and working in partnership as a region and with the state, climate challenges can be solved."



# Interior Recommends \$870,000 in WIIN Act Funding for Water Bank



The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is recommending that Congress allocate up to \$870,000 in fiscal year 2021 funding to advance one of RWA's top priorities, the Sacramento Regional Water Bank. The federal contribution covers 25 percent of a cost share with the region.

In a letter submitted to Congress in June, DOI recommended that Congress invest in the Water Bank through the Water Infrastructure Investment for the Nation Act (WIIN Act), passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama in 2016. The act provides federal grant funding for projects that promote water storage and supply, improve waterways, and advance drinking water infrastructure.

DOI's funding recommendation is currently included in the FY21 budget passed the U.S. House of Representatives, and is awaiting action in the Senate. Each year, Congress is required to pass a

budget by October 1 for the next fiscal year. However, it is widely anticipated that Congress will delay this task until after the November election this year, instead passing a continuing resolution to continue federal government funding at current levels.

The RWA is continuing to monitor developments closely and advocate for WIIN Act funding for the Water Bank in the FY21 budget process as the legislation moves forward.

## RWA Hosts Third COVID-19 Response Briefing



The RWA in August hosted the third in a series of meetings intended to assist local water providers in responding to the COVID-19 emergency. Since March, the RWA has hosted three briefings for members to facilitate the sharing of best practices and to help troubleshoot real and emerging challenges with the COVID-19 response.

The first briefing, a roundtable discussion in late March, explored how each water provider was responding to the emergency. During RWA's second briefing in early June, as statewide COVID-19 cases began to subside, members discussed triggers and plans for safely bringing employees back into the office, as well as guidance for reopening local office buildings that had been closed because of the stay-at-home order.

RWA's most recent briefing in August, explored the potential road ahead, including the outlook for continued COVID-19 operations into the winter months; avenues for COVID-19 testing for employees; and best practices for communication with employees and customers. To this end, the RWA also initiated and is analyzing results of a new member survey to help uncover and quantify the impacts of the emergency on local water providers as a way to identify regional trends and prepare to advocate for needed financial or other assistance.

# Water Providers Move Forward with 2020 Pilot Groundwater Substitution Transfer

Local water providers are conducting a pilot project to test the region's ability to make water available in a way that benefits both local ratepayers and the environment. The current transfer is providing much-needed water to farmers in the Central Valley.

Water transfers occur in dry years across the state between willing sellers who have legal rights to a supply of water to an interested buyer in need. They are viewed as key to meeting the state's water needs during drought because of their potential to move water to places of critical need. In the Sacramento region, water transfers are one part of a long-term plan and portfolio of projects designed to increase the reliability of our water supplies, protect our local environment and address the projected impacts of climate change.

The 2020 pilot transfer is utilizing 68 groundwater wells and three interties among six participating water providers. Instead of drawing surface water from lakes and rivers, participating water providers are using more groundwater for a brief period of time. This frees up surface water to flow from our region into the Delta and to transfer recipients. The 2020 pilot transfer is slated to occur through September with an option to add October and November. RWA is monitoring groundwater levels



at participating wells on a weekly basis through March 2021 to ensure the transfer is sustainable and does not negatively impact the basin.

Pilot transfer participants include Golden State Water Company, Carmichael Water District, Fair Oaks Water District, the City of Sacramento, Sacramento Suburban Water District, and Sacramento County Water Agency.



## Strategic Plan 2025+ Completed

RWA in August finalized its work to update Strategic Plan 2025+ to guide the organization over the next five years. During virtual workshops in June, July and August, Board members solidified and adopted RWA's mission, vision, values, and goals and identified specific objectives to pursue through the year 2025.

A greater emphasis on communications emerged as a key goal within the plan with objectives focused on three main areas: providing a forum for education, discussion, and outreach on water issues affecting the region; with one voice, raising RWA's profile and credibility through outreach efforts to targeted audiences; and developing and maintaining strategic partnerships to advance RWA interests.

Other goals in the plan aim to continuously improve regional water management planning that is comprehensive in scope and guides effective water resources management in the region; lead successful water management strategies and related programs on behalf of the region; and represent regional needs and member concerns to positively influence legislative and regulatory policies and actions.

# RWA and Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority Collaboration Discussions Move to Next Phase



The RWA and Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority (SCGA) are moving into the next phase of discussions focused on the potential benefits of having SCGA move under the administrative management of the RWA in an arrangement that would be similar to the Sacramento Groundwater Authority's (SGA) staffing.

SCGA, which is currently administered by Sacramento County, is charged with overseeing the sustainability of the South American Subbasin, located south of the lower American River in the Central portion of Sacramento County. The subbasin includes portions of the

cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, and Folsom. The SCGA Board includes several water providers that are also members of the RWA and SGA. These include California American Water, cities of Folsom and Sacramento, Golden State Water Company, and Sacramento County Water Agency.

The three organizations recently agreed to move forward with discussions via a new committee that includes representatives from RWA, SGA and SCGA. Guided by a nonbinding memorandum of understanding, committee members are exploring the potential benefits from collaboration for all three organizations, as well as costs involved, needed staff support, and governance changes necessary for success.

## Water Providers Consider New Meter Collaborative

Local water providers are considering opportunities to maximize their purchase power and information sharing in a new "Meter Consortium and Planning Study," spearheaded by Citrus Heights Water District.

The study explores potential economies of scale, cost savings and other benefits for agencies and ratepayers through collectively planning and purchasing water meter technology; sharing information about meter performance; joint contracting meter installation; developing consistent meter testing protocols and other actions. Ultimately, the study could lead to a new RWA Meter Collaborative subscription program.

Study participants include the cities of Folsom and Sacramento, Golden State Water Company, Placer County Water Agency, Sacramento County Water Agency, Sacramento Suburban Water District, Carmichael Water District, Orange Vale Water Company, RWA, Fair Oaks Water District, Citrus Heights Water District, and San Juan Water District.



## Region Welcomes Two New General Managers

**Cathy Lee, Carmichael Water District:** Lee has 20 years of experience in utility operations for municipal and agricultural water suppliers. Her roles have included engineering, regulatory compliance, operation and maintenance, safety, and fiscal planning. Her background includes long-range water supply planning, groundwater management, water distribution owner/operator, and wastewater treatment plant operations. Lee holds a master's degree in civil engineering and is a California registered civil engineer.

**Tom Hennig, Rancho Murrieta Community Services District:** Hennig served as Rancho Murrieta CSD's Director of Finance since November 2018, guiding the District to more robust financial systems and enhanced cybersecurity, before becoming General Manager in June 2020. He is a dedicated public servant, who has had a diverse career, leading departments at San Joaquin County and the City of Stockton.



# Stakeholder and Public Outreach

## ACWA Virtual Conference Presentations

Local water providers were featured during two sessions during ACWA's virtual conference July 29-30.

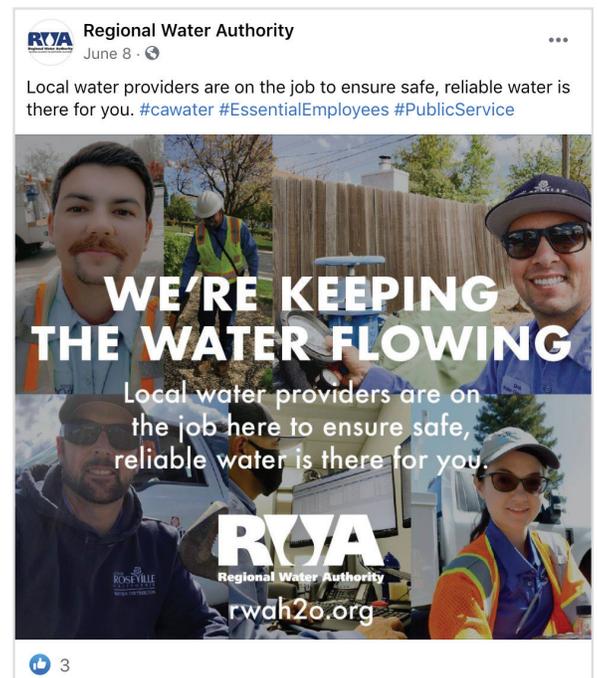
- **Adapting to Flood, Fire and Drought: A Case Study of the American River Basin** explored the experience of the American River region in evaluating climate impacts on their watershed in a new cutting-edge study and the comprehensive suite of projects designed to address increasing threats from more frequent and intense floods, fires, and droughts. RWA Executive Director Jim Peifer moderated the panel, which featured Gary Bardini of the Sacramento Area Flood Control District, Eli Ilano of the U.S. Forest Service, Tony Firenzi of Placer County Water Agency, and Tom Gohring of the Water Forum. A link to a session summary is available at [rwah2o.org](http://rwah2o.org).
- **Choosing Our Delta Destiny** explored the opportunities presented by the Voluntary Agreements in protecting fish and wildlife in the Delta and its key tributary watersheds while ensuring water reliability, as well as what's at stake if parties are not able to move past old water binaries. Moderated by PCWA General Manager Andy Fecko, the panel included Ernest Conant of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Richard Roos-Collins of the Water and Power Law Group, Maurice Hall of the Environmental Defense Fund, and David Guy of the Northern California Water Association.

## Keeping the Water Flowing

### Comstock's Article, Digital Advertising Demonstrate the Essential Work of Local Water Providers

RWA in May and June launched a short-term outreach campaign focused on promoting how water providers are "Keeping the Water Flowing" during the coronavirus emergency. The program included:

- **Viewpoints article by Fair Oaks Water District General Manager Tom Gray published in Comstock's Magazine:** The article shares Gray's experience with providing an essential public service during the emergency, illustrating the risks and rewards from serving customers and communities during these uncertain times while also discussing the potential financial hardships facing water providers. You can read Gray's article at <https://www.comstocksmag.com/commentary/keeping-water-flowing>
- **Digital advertising on Facebook and online news sites through the Google Display Network:** Ads featured the images of local water providers working during the emergency with the text, "Local water providers are on the job here to ensure safe, reliable water is there for you." The month-long campaign earned 2,800 clicks and nearly 1.2 million impressions and numerous likes, hearts, and emojis with many "thank yous" posted as comments to the ads.



Thank you to the City of Roseville and Sacramento Suburban Water District for partnering with RWA on the digital ad campaign by lending images of their employees for the advertising. The design files are available to all RWA members to customize and use in their outreach. You can find them in the RWA COVID-19 Tool Kit on drop box or by contacting RWA Outreach Coordinator Christine Kohn at [Christine@INprOnline.com](mailto:Christine@INprOnline.com).



# Legislative Update

## RWA Advocates for Federal Investment in Water Infrastructure

RWA in June held a series of meetings with local Congressional staff members to urge support for water infrastructure funding in the next round of federal economic recovery spending.

During virtual briefings with Congressional staff, members of RWA's Federal Affairs Committee made several key points, noting that water is essential to fighting COVID-19; the current emergency is threatening the financial stability of water suppliers; and federal investment in the water sector, which has been underfunded for decades, would provide high-quality jobs that are accessible to displaced workers.



RWA members have identified more than 150 construction-ready projects with the potential to deliver both immediate and long-term economic benefits to the region. Projects are estimated to create about 20,000 high-quality jobs and bring \$1.2 billion in local investment to the Sacramento region.

A fact sheet about the urgent need to invest in water infrastructure and link to interactive map of proposed projects is available on RWA's website at <https://rwah2o.org/federal-stimulus-funding/>.

## Funding for Safe Drinking Water, Economic Stimulus Emerge as Priority Topics During the Final Days of the 2020 Legislative Session

As 2020's legislative session winds down, RWA is continuing to take positions on legislation important to local water providers.

Typically, the end of session has only fiscal committee and floor actions. This year's end of session is unique in that it will have policy committee hearings. All bills must have final action by August 31st.

While there are a still a handful of bills live, generally the legislature is limiting actions to only those bills that deal with COVID-19, wildfire, or housing/homelessness. These limitations have significantly reduced the number of bills that could affect RWA. That said, RWA remains engaged on several bills related to refinements to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), employer responsibilities related to COVID-19, and small water system consolidation. Among those bills are:

- SB 414—Would create new pathways for small water system consolidation. The RWA successfully secured amendments to clarify that the bill does not allow for forced consolidation among RWA members.
- SB 1159, AB 196, and AB 685—All of which would change workplace rules and employer responsibilities amid COVID-19.
- AB 3279, AB 609, and SB 55—Which would make changes related to CEQA.

In addition, the Legislature is expected to act on budget refinements, including funding for safe drinking water. While a climate resiliency bond did not make it onto the November ballot this year, legislators have unveiled a joint \$100 billion economic stimulus plan intended to boost the economy and spur job creation. The plan includes funding for infrastructure projects that can ramp up quickly, and the RWA worked with its members to submit a list of local projects that meet that criteria. Action on economic stimulus may continue past the August 31st end of the legislative session.

*For the latest information as the issues continue to evolve, visit RWA's website at [rwah2o.org/advocacy](https://rwah2o.org/advocacy) or contact RWA Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Program Manager Ryan Ojakian at (916) 967-7692 or at [rojakian@rwa.org](mailto:rojakian@rwa.org).*

# Water Efficiency Program News

## RWA Summer Water Efficiency Advertising in Full Swing

RWA is continuing its summer advertising campaign on local radio and digital outlets to encourage residents to “Check the Soil & Save”—use a moisture meter or screwdriver to check soil moisture before turning on sprinklers.



In the Sacramento region, most household water use occurs outdoors. The Check & Save campaign tackles the problem of landscape overwatering by helping residential water customers (homeowners, in particular) solve a problem—the mystery of knowing how much water their landscape really needs to be healthy.

Messages can be heard and found on Capital Public Radio, local radio stations in conjunction with weather and traffic reports, and online on the Google Display Network and on English and Spanish Facebook. In addition to Check & Save, advertising also promotes RWA's continuing regional rebate program for Rachio 3 Smart Sprinkler Controllers and the installation of high-efficiency rotator sprinklers.

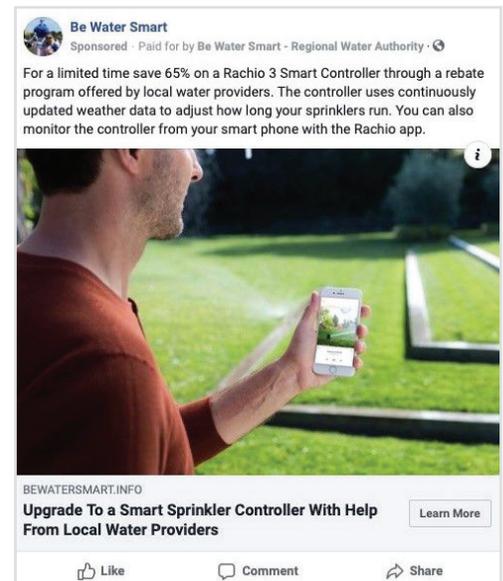
## Tools Available for Promoting Regional Rebate Program for Smart Sprinkler Controllers

Thank you to the many RWA Water Efficiency Program participants that have been actively promoting the regional rebate program for the Rachio 3 Smart Sprinkler Controllers.

For agencies without an existing rebate program for weather-based sprinkler controllers, the rebate program offers customers with an opportunity to purchase these high-tech, wifi-enabled controllers for only \$75 plus tax (65 percent off the retail price). For agencies with existing rebate programs, customers can potentially acquire the Rachio 3 at no cost by utilizing both the RWA and local water provider rebate programs.

In both cases, customers benefit by upgrading their sprinkler systems with the latest technology that not only saves water, but also promotes healthy plants.

RWA has developed several tools to help WEP participants promote the Rachio 3 rebate program to their customers. They are available in the Be Water Smart Tool Kit on drop box or by contacting WEP Program Manager Amy Talbot at [atalbot@rwah2o.org](mailto:atalbot@rwah2o.org).



*The Rachio 3 regional rebate program is funded by a \$150,000 grant from the California Department of Water Resources and is offered in partnership with the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) and its 26 member agencies for economies-of-scale pricing, coordinated program management, and marketing benefits.*

## 2019 Water Efficiency Program Annual Report Available

The 2019 Annual Report for the Water Efficiency Program is now available online. The report describes trends in the region's per-capita water use; rebate programs and partnerships with local and state agencies; results from advertising and public service announcements; tools produced to help water providers communicate a consistent regional message; results from new research to evaluate the program; and more. You can find the report on RWA's website at <https://rwah2o.org/programs/wep/>.



### RWA Water Efficiency Campaign Earns Top Award from CAPIO

RWA's Check the Soil and Save outreach program was honored with a 2020 EPIC Award from CAPIO, a statewide association of public sector communicators, which recognizes “the most creative and effective efforts” in communication campaigns.