



**Regional Water Authority**  
BUILDING ALLIANCES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY STRATEGIC PLAN

2025+





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

RWA Members and Staff .....	1
Charting a Vision to a Resilient Water Future .....	2
Mission, Vision and Values .....	3
Key Milestones in RWA's History .....	5
Integrated Goals .....	7
Planning .....	9
Implementation .....	11
Communication .....	13
Advocacy .....	15

# RWA MEMBERS & STAFF

## RWA Members and Board Representatives

California American Water  
**S. Audie Foster, Evan Jacobs**

Carmichael Water District  
**Ron Greenwood,\* Cathy Lee**

Citrus Heights Water District  
**Raymond Riehle, Hilary Straus**

City of Folsom  
**Kerri Howell, Marcus Yasutake\***

City of Lincoln  
**Paul Joiner, Ray Leftwich**

City of Roseville  
**Bruce Houdesheldt, Sean Bigley\***

City of Sacramento  
**Jeff S. Harris, Michelle Carrey\***

City of West Sacramento  
**Martha Guerrero, Bill Roberts**

City of Yuba City  
**Grace Espindola, Diana Langley**

Del Paso Manor Water District  
**Robert Matteoli, John Lenahan**

El Dorado Irrigation District  
**Michael Raffety, Jim Abercrombie**

Elk Grove Water District  
**Tom Nelson, Mark Madison**

Fair Oaks Water District  
**Randy Marx, Tom Gray**

Golden State Water Company  
**Paul Schubert,\* Ernie Gisler**

Orange Vale Water Company  
**Robert Hunter, Joe Duran**

Placer County Water Agency  
**Robert Dugan, Brent Smith\***

Rancho Murieta Community Services District  
**Les Clark, Tom Henning**

Sacramento County Water Agency  
**Patrick Kennedy, Kerry Schmitz\***

Sacramento Suburban Water District  
**Dave Jones, Dan York\***

San Juan Water District  
**Dan Rich,\* Greg Zlotnick**

*\* Denotes Executive Committee Members*

## Associate Members

**El Dorado County Water Agency**

**Placer County**

**Sacramento Municipal Utility District**

**Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District**

**Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency**

## Affiliate Members

**Brown & Caldwell**

**California Pool & Spa Association**

**Cosumnes CSD**

**Forsgren Associates, Inc.**

**GEI Consultants**

**HDR, Inc.**

**Sacramento Association of Realtors**

**Sacramento Nevada GCSA**

**Stantec**

**West Yost Associates**

**Woodard & Curran**

## Staff

**Jim Peifer** | Executive Director

**Rob Swartz** | Manager of Technical Services

**Josette Reina-Luken** | Finance and Administrative Services Manager

**Ryan Ojakian** | Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Manager

**Amy Talbot** | Regional Water Efficiency Program Manager

**Monica Garcia** | Project Research Assistant

**Cecilia Partridge** | Executive Assistant

## Strategic Plan Consultant

**Ellen Cross** | Strategy Driver, Inc.

## CHARTING A VISION TO A RESILIENT WATER FUTURE

Water providers in the greater Sacramento region now have nearly 20 years of experience collectively working together as the Regional Water Authority. The RWA was born out of the Water Forum experience, created to help members implement new Water Forum Agreement commitments to groundwater management, water conservation and other elements.

Over time, the RWA has evolved to meet member needs and has produced many successes, including helping members secure over \$100 million in grants that support increased water supply reliability for our region. Additionally, RWA has created award-winning water use efficiency programs and a state advocacy program that has successfully influenced legislative outcomes and raised the region's profile. This success would not have happened without the leadership of our members, working together to nurture the RWA and advance our region's collective interests.

The RWA must continue to evolve, and the 2025+ Strategic Plan updates and charts a vision for addressing tomorrow's challenges. The Sacramento region faces significant threats to continued delivery of water, including maintaining local control and securing water rights, increased costs from mounting regulatory requirements, and greater demand for limited water supplies to meet the needs of the economy and environment. But, the most serious threat will be adapting to flood, fire and drought resulting from climate change. The American River Basin Study suggests that the average temperature within the watershed will increase 5 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit by 2085, resulting in enormous water management challenges. Our region is beginning to experience these effects now as the temperature in the upper watershed has increased 3 degrees since 1950. We must prepare for and address this challenge.

The 2025+ Strategic Plan is the foundation to guide solutions to our challenges and build a resilient water supply for our future. The plan focuses our efforts on continued planning, programs, and advocacy for the region. As this internal work continues to develop and expand so too must our external work to build collaborations. We must build stronger relationships with State and Federal agencies, the environmental community, social justice community, and others within the larger water community to advance our interests. The following updated goals and objectives added by the Board support these efforts and detail actions to address our biggest challenges to our collective continued success.

Our largest challenges can be overcome by continuing to collaboratively work together. We must be unified in our work.

**Kerry Schmitz**  
Chair, Board of Directors

**James Peifer**  
Executive Director



# MISSION

To serve, represent and align the interests of regional water providers and stakeholders for the purpose of improving water supply reliability, availability, quality and affordability.

# VISION

The Regional Water Authority is recognized as a leader for its integrated and collaborative approach in assisting its members' effective management of the region's water resources in support of a sustainable environment, healthy communities, a vibrant economy, and water supply reliability and resilience under future climate conditions.

# VALUES

## The Five "I" s

### INTEGRITY

We are respectful and transparent in internal and external interactions.

*Our actions are consistent with our stated intentions.*

### INNOVATIVE

We are visionary and strategic in our approach to anticipating and meeting challenges.

*We address changing circumstances proactively, cost-effectively, and with technical sophistication.*

### INFORMED

We are a trusted and reliable source of information.

*We stay current and maintain an understanding of relevant issues, evaluating and communicating how they may affect members and the region.*

### INCLUSIVE

We encourage open participation and equitable treatment amongst and by our members and other stakeholders.

*We leverage our members' collective strength to best serve the region.*

### IMPACTFUL

We accomplish meaningful outcomes for the benefit of our members, the region, and future generations.

*We communicate collective positions in a manner that both strengthens, and is strengthened by, the voices of our members.*

# KEY MILESTONES IN RWA'S HISTORY

## 2000

### APRIL

Water Forum Agreement (WFA) signed by 40 stakeholders including environmental groups, water purveyors, business and local governments. Addresses the coequal objectives of water supply reliability and environmental protection

## 2001

### JUNE

RWA established to aid water providers in implementing commitments to conjunctive use, groundwater management and water conservation made in the WFA. Ed Winkler becomes the first Executive Director

## 2002

### FEBRUARY

RWA commences Regional Water Authority Water Efficiency Program (WEP), aimed at helping RWA members comply with the conservation element of the Water Forum Agreement

### JULY

RWA awarded a \$22 million grant to implement the American River Basin Regional Conjunctive Use program (ARBCUP), increasing water supplies by more than 20,000 acre-feet annually. RWA's WEP receives over \$500,000 from Prop. 13 Urban Water Conservation grant program

## 2003

### OCTOBER

American River Basin Cooperating Agencies hands reins to RWA and SGA to implement a regional conjunctive use program

## 2005

### AUGUST

RWA receives U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Commissioner's Award for its Regional Water Efficiency Program

### APRIL

RWA receives Environmental Recognition Award from Sacramento Environmental Commission

### JUNE

RWA adopts first American River Basin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) and submits application for Prop. 50 funds

## 2007

### FEBRUARY

RWA awarded \$25 million Prop. 50 grant to implement the IRWMP

## 2008

### JUNE

John Woodling becomes the second Executive Director

### AUGUST

RWA conducts study of water system security needs with grant funding from the Office of Homeland Security

### OCTOBER

RWA receives \$2 million Urban Drought Assistance Grant from Prop. 50 to implement a variety of water-saving measures in coordination with 16 participating water suppliers in the region

## 2009

### JULY

RWA adopts first comprehensive Strategic Plan

### AUGUST

RWA secures \$5 million grant from Reclamation to accelerate water meter installations

## 2010

### FEBRUARY

RWA marks completion of 12 projects funded as part of ARBCUP

## 2011

### APRIL

RWA unveils new website BeWaterSmart.info, the region's comprehensive resource for water efficiency information

### MAY

RWA receives \$16 million Prop. 84 grant to implement 15 priority projects from the IRWMP

### DECEMBER

RWA adopts first Legislative and Regulatory agenda to guide advocacy efforts

## 2012

### MARCH

RWA partners with other Northern California organizations to found the North State Water Alliance

## 2013

### MARCH

RWA Board approves amendments to Joint Powers Agreement to promote effective advocacy

## 2014

### JANUARY

RWA coordinates regional drought response under voluntary statewide water conservation targets, resulting in a nearly 20 percent reduction in water use

### NOVEMBER

RWA awarded \$9.7 million Prop. 84 grant to implement 17 projects designed to increase water reliability during drought

## 2015

### JANUARY

RWA launches its multi-faceted Advocacy Program by dedicating resources to a contract lobbyist and internal staffing

### JUNE

RWA coordinates regional drought response under state-mandated conservation targets, resulting in a 30 percent reduction rate in 2015

### DECEMBER

RWA leads successful effort to persuade State Water Resources Control Board to incorporate a climate adjustment into conservation regulations

WEP secures \$2.5 million water-energy grant to directly install water-efficient fixtures in disadvantaged communities

## 2016

### APRIL

RWA leads successful regional effort to persuade State Water Resources Control Board to recognize the improving water supply conditions and allow water providers to match conservation targets with local water supply conditions

WEP honored with award for most effective social media campaign from the California Association of Public Information Officials

### OCTOBER

WEP honored with national WaterSense® Excellence in Education and Outreach Award by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## 2017

### JANUARY

RWA welcomes first full-time Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Manager

### FEBRUARY

RWA and Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) co-sponsor legislation to improve drought preparedness and increase water efficiency while maintaining local control over water management decisions

### DECEMBER

ACWA honors RWA and IRWD with the "Most Compelling Case" Outreach Award

## 2018

### MARCH

RWA convenes thought leaders for symposium on making safe, clean, affordable and accessible water a reality in California

### APRIL-SEPTEMBER

RWA assists members with first regionally-coordinated groundwater substitution transfer, which demonstrates the feasibility of the recovery side of a regional water banking program

### AUGUST

RWA secures key amendments to legislation requiring urban water providers throughout California to set new permanent water use targets for their service areas by 2022

## 2019

### JANUARY

Advocacy Program transitions to a permanent RWA program

### MARCH

RWA finalizes Regional Water Reliability Plan and launches new effort to pursue development of the Sacramento Regional Water Bank (Water Bank)

### JUNE

Jim Peifer becomes the third Executive Director

### SEPTEMBER

RWA awarded \$650,000 from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to advance the Water Bank

## 2020

### MARCH

RWA convenes first in a series of meetings to help members respond to the COVID-19 emergency

### MARCH-NOVEMBER

RWA assists members with expanded groundwater substitution transfers, further demonstrating Water Bank feasibility

### MAY

Board of Directors approves development of the Federal Affairs Standing Committee

Renegotiation of the Water Forum Agreement begins

RWA, in collaboration with ACWA and CMUA, leads efforts to shape and coordinate supplier feedback on the state's water loss regulation and economic model

### JUNE

Reclamation recommends to Congress that Water Bank technical studies receive up to \$870,000 in WIIN Act funding following endorsement of Gov. Newsom

RWA awarded \$8.74 million grant from the California Department of Water Resources to advance projects to build water resiliency

### JULY

WEP honored with top award for most effective outreach campaign from the California Association of Public Information Officials

### SEPTEMBER

RWA adopts Strategic Plan 2025+

RWA adopts the Major Projects Management Services and Resilience Programs, approving new RWA staff to assist members in addressing water rights regulatory issues and building a more robust water supply



**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PLANNING**

**RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE,  
HIGH QUALITY  
WATER SUPPLIES**

**COMMUNICATION**

**ADVOCACY**

## **INTEGRATED GOALS**

RWA established four Integrated Goals that represent a comprehensive approach to pursuing RWA's mission.

# **TO ACHIEVE OUR COLLECTIVE VISION**

### **PLANNING GOAL**

Continuously improve regional water management planning that is comprehensive in scope and contributes to more effective regional water resources management.

### **IMPLEMENTATION GOAL**

Lead successful water management strategies, as well as develop and undertake related beneficial programs on behalf of the region.

### **COMMUNICATION GOAL**

Based on shared values, communicate with one voice on issues of regional significance to strengthen relationships, elevate regional visibility and influence, and advance the collective interests of the region.

### **ADVOCACY GOAL**

Advocate for members and the region's needs and interests to positively influence legislative and regulatory policies and actions.

# PLANNING

CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING THAT IS COMPREHENSIVE IN SCOPE AND CONTRIBUTES TO MORE EFFECTIVE REGIONAL WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.



## Objective A

**Complete development of the Sacramento Regional Water Bank to improve water supply reliability and resilience.**

- 1 Establish a funding program to complete work to establish the Regional Water Bank.
- 2 Engage with state, federal, and local stakeholders to gain Regional Water Bank acceptance, approval, and support.
- 3 Engage with potential Regional Water Bank partners.
- 4 Establish governance to manage the Regional Water Bank.
- 5 Complete an environmental analysis to support Regional Water Bank operations.

## Objective B

**Evaluate and respond to impacts on the region's water suppliers and operations.**

- 1 Continue to evaluate and plan for adapting to climate change.
- 2 Promote the application of forecast informed reservoir operations that enhance water supplies while maintaining flood protection.
- 3 Maintain a regional integrated groundwater/surface water model, in coordination with groundwater sustainability agencies, to support regional planning and groundwater management.

## Objective C

**Lead and support planning efforts that benefit water agencies.**

- 1 Evaluate opportunities to provide coordinated responses for sections of Urban Water Management Plans on behalf of agencies.
- 2 Track next generation of regional planning requirements (e.g. Integrated Regional Water Management Plan or other requirements that may result from the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio) and respond as necessary.
- 3 Participate with other regional organizations (Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative, etc.) on planning for and responding to climate change.
- 4 Participate with the Water Forum on efforts that improve water supply reliability and ecosystem health.

## Objective D

**Plan for the sustainability of RWA and its members.**

- 1 Evaluate RWA staffing, operations, and financing models for opportunities to improve long-term organizational sustainability.
- 2 Develop a Young Professionals Program.



# IMPLEMENTATION

## LEAD SUCCESSFUL WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, AS WELL AS DEVELOP AND UNDERTAKE RELATED BENEFICIAL PROGRAMS ON BEHALF OF THE REGION.

### Objective A

**Support the securing of funding and assist in resourcing projects and programs that are regional priorities.**

- 1 Position, secure, and manage funding for the Regional Water Reliability Plan (RWRP), Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan, Water Bank, and Water Efficiency Programs and Projects.
- 2 Support and pursue funding opportunities for members and partner agencies that benefit the region.
- 3 Support programs that benefit from economies of scale in the areas of research, studies, planning, implementation, purchasing, and resource sharing (e.g. Regional Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Information Study, Meter Asset Management, and Chemical Purchasing Program).
- 4 Administer funding and financing for major endeavors such as the Water Quality Control Plan, Delta Initiatives, and Water Bank.
- 5 Advocate for and support the financing of regional infrastructure to improve water reliability and resilience.

### Objective B.

**Support members' efforts to improve water reliability and resilience.**

- 1 Continue to partner with the Water Forum to ensure the health of the lower American River as a critical component to improving water supply reliability.
- 2 Maintain the Regional Water Reliability Plan (RWRP) database and update the RWRP as needed.
- 3 Maintain the American River Basin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) database and update the IRWMP as needed.
- 4 Support intra- and interregional water transfers.
- 5 Evaluate combining the American River Basin IRWM with appropriate portions of the Cosumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba (CABY) IRWM.
- 6 Support the region's efforts on Delta initiatives and water supply regulatory initiatives such as the Water Quality Control Plan, Voluntary Agreements, and the Biological Opinions of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project.



- 7 Support compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) within the Region.
  - Provide services and support, as needed, for planning and implementation.
  - Facilitate collaboration between subbasins.
  - Align interests with RWA, Sacramento Groundwater Authority, Sacramento Central Groundwater Authority, and others as appropriate.
- 8 Support the planning and construction of regional infrastructure to improve water reliability and resilience.

### Objective C.

**Support members' water use efficiency efforts to comply with applicable state and local requirements.**

- 1 Continue to implement a regional water efficiency program that supports member agencies' compliance with state and local water efficiency and water loss requirements through cost-effective efforts/programs/initiatives.
- 2 Participate in statewide efforts related to water efficiency legislation and regulatory requirements to maintain a positive perception of the region and protect member agency interests.
- 3 Track individual member agency water use and related metrics to communicate regional water efficiency progress to the state, other regions, and interested stakeholders.



# COMMUNICATION

BASED ON SHARED VALUES, COMMUNICATE WITH ONE VOICE ON ISSUES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS, ELEVATE REGIONAL VISIBILITY AND INFLUENCE, AND ADVANCE THE COLLECTIVE INTERESTS OF THE REGION.



## Objective A

**Provide a forum for education, discussion, and outreach on water issues affecting the region.**

- 1 Assess modes for preferred internal member communication such as meetings, in-person presentations, email updates, newsletters, blogs, social media, etc.
- 2 Distribute relevant information to members.
- 3 Create a venue for members to regularly brief each other on current and emerging issues, planned messages and responses, and coordinate on topics and issues of regional significance.
- 4 Provide educational opportunities for members through speakers and experts.
- 5 Update members regularly on the status and progress of RWA's services and programs.
- 6 Educate legislators, policy makers, and the public on the challenges to and benefits of uninterrupted high-quality water services and investments necessary for its continued delivery.

## Objective B

**With one voice, raise RWA's profile and credibility through outreach efforts to targeted audiences.**

- 1 Be a champion for the Region by being a single, coordinated voice on regional matters.
- 2 Identify and cultivate RWA ambassadors/spokespersons to communicate significant topics and policy issues.
- 3 Inform key interested parties such as the media, federal, state and local officials, and the public about water management successes (e.g. Water reliability and resilience improvements) and key issues (e.g. regulatory, water accessibility, safety and affordability).
- 4 Foster consistent and cohesive regional messaging including:
  - A. Prioritizing anticipated issues and opportunities for target audiences, along with tools, materials and activities to help RWA members communicate with a consistent voice.
  - B. Developing talking points, position papers, and outreach materials on key issues.

## Objective C

**Cultivate relationships to advance RWA members' interests.**

- 1 Work with other organizations with water interests (e.g. Northern California Water Association, Association of California Water Agencies, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency and land use agencies).
- 2 Coordinate and partner with water suppliers and other stakeholders to further leverage advocacy, research initiatives and/or economies of scale related to water management.
- 3 Work with business organizations (e.g. Metro Chamber and local chambers).
- 4 Work with state and federal agencies that influence or manage resources related to regional water reliability and resilience (e.g. United States Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Water Resources, State Water Resource Control Board, and other resource agencies).
- 5 Work with the Water Forum Successor Effort on behalf of the member agencies that are signatory to the Water Forum Agreement. Support includes:
  - A. Ensuring RWA member interests are represented in the re-negotiation process including governance and succession planning.
  - B. Ensuring RWA member interests are represented in the Water Forum Successor Effort.
  - C. Participating in the Coordinating Committee and Water Caucus.

# ADVOCACY

## ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS AND THE REGION'S NEEDS AND INTERESTS TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY POLICIES AND ACTIONS.

### Objective A

**Engage relevant local, state, and federal representatives to seek support for RWA's legislative agenda to further the region's collective goals and objectives.**

- 1 Annually update RWA policy principles and federal legislative platforms to effectively advocate for the region.
- 2 Maintain and track significant water-related state and federal legislation on important policies and funding opportunities and make the information regularly and readily available electronically to members.
- 3 Advocate for positions on state and federal legislation and programs consistent with the adopted RWA policy principles and platforms.
- 4 Monitor and actively engage on actions of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) State Legislative and Federal Affairs Committees and coordinate with other organizations.
- 5 Protect member agencies' interests and work with state and federal organizations on the development of policies related to the equitable access to water.

- 6 Coordinate with external organizations, as appropriate, including but not limited to, American Water Works Association (AWWA), Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), California Special Districts Association (CSDA), Northern California Water Association (NCWA), National Water Resources Association (NWRA), California Water Foundation, California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA), and the Metro Chamber, and California Water Association (CWA).
- 7 Coordinate and partner with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and environmental justice NGOs throughout the state to advance RWA's interests.
- 8 Present regular updates from RWA lobbyist efforts and recalibrate priorities as necessary.
- 9 Maintain a volunteer standing committee as a forum for coordination, collaboration, education, and vetting on federal policy areas of regional interest and evaluate the effectiveness of the standing committee in FY2021/2022.

*Affordability: The continued delivery of high quality, reliable water service at the lowest reasonable cost. Affordability is directly related to water reliability and quality. Affordability is also affected, both positively and negatively, by legislative and regulatory policies.*

*Supershed: a region consisting of multiple watersheds that is actively managed to improve water resource resilience in support of a healthy community, economy and environment.*



### Objective B

**Evaluate, comment and advocate on state and federal water regulatory issues that may impact the region and its water reliability and resilience (e.g. WQCP, PFAS, Chrome VI).**

- 1 Track, evaluate and respond to water quality, water conservation and efficiency, water affordability, resilience, SGMA and other regulatory issues that may affect members.
- 2 Lead and participate in efforts with other organizations aligned with RWA positions and interests as appropriate.

### Objective C



Assist in the preservation of water rights and entitlements of RWA members, maintain area of origin protections, and protect and ensure water reliability and resilience.

- 1 Educate the public and decision makers and promote our region's contribution to the Delta.

- 2 Advocate to maintain the water rights priority system.
- 3 Continue to support efforts for expanding conjunctive use operations as a means of protecting water rights (e.g., exercising more surface water rights and contracts in wetter years).
- 4 Support a Water Forum lower American River Modified Flow Management Standard that is consistent with the Water Forum co-equal goals.
- 5 Leverage proximity to the Capitol to engage and be a resource to legislators on issues important to the region and promote RWA's reliability and resilience successes.
- 6 Work with the State to help implement the portions of the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio where it aligns with and benefits our region's interest.
- 7 Promote the region's collaborative efforts to comprehensively manage its water resources through an innovative Supershed approach to be resilient to fire, flood, and drought, and which serves our region and creates value to the state.



**Regional Water Authority**  
BUILDING ALLIANCES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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