

RESOLUTION 2021-01

A Resolution of the Regional Water Authority Regarding Response to Dry Conditions in 2021

WHEREAS, the Regional Water Authority's (RWA) mission includes protecting and enhancing the reliability, availability, affordability, and quality of water resources; and

WHEREAS, on May 10, 2021, the Governor issued a proclamation of a State of Emergency to mitigate the effects of drought conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed counties including El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter and Yolo counties; and

WHEREAS, the current hydrological situation in California is dire, with 2021 being the driest year since 1977, and the driest year since regulations governing Delta outflow requirements were enacted; and

WHEREAS, because of the hydrological conditions, the fishery on the Lower American River is expected to be under stress this summer and fall due to changes in flow and water temperature; and

WHEREAS, hydrologic conditions for 2022 are uncertain and should dry conditions continue, such a situation will exacerbate fishery conditions and lead to potential water shortages; and

WHEREAS, the Sacramento Region embraces the Water Forum Agreement and the partnerships it has developed for regional stewardship of the American River over several decades; and

WHEREAS, due to decades of proactive, long-term, integrated planning and investment in water supply reliability, the Sacramento Region water supply has been secure and reliable. These investments include building groundwater infrastructure that can both extract and recharge water as a means to meet water customers' consumptive needs while also reducing surface water demand off the American River during dry conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Sacramento Region's water customers have significantly reduced water use since the 2012 – 2016 drought; and

WHEREAS, given the hydrological conditions within the State of California and its impacts to both people and the environment, the Sacramento Region affirms its commitment to the environment by taking responsible actions to conserve water and

make operational changes to lessen the impacts of dry conditions on the people we serve and the American River and its fishery; and

WHEREAS, a number of the RWA members are regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC); and

WHEREAS, This Resolution is advisory to the RWA member agencies, since RWA member agencies may need authorization from their governing board or council or the CPUC to take actions recommended in this Resolution; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, RWA immediately calls on its member agencies to consider actions that will result in reductions in surface water diversions from the American River watershed to protect the environment of the lower American River during the current conditions and to preserve local water supplies should dry conditions persist. These actions may include, as appropriate: request customers to voluntarily reduce their water use by 10 percent; shifting of diversions from the lower American River to the Sacramento River; and/or shifting from using surface water to groundwater as a supply source as part of the region's plan for sustainability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, certain RWA member agencies have significantly reduced customer demands since the last drought and those demands have not significantly recovered, and, therefore, those agencies should be recognized in meeting the call to reduce water use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the RWA requests its member agencies provide assistance to RWA member agencies that require assistance in meeting their water supply needs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will work closely with the Water Forum to monitor fishery conditions on the Lower American River, inform its member agencies, and adjust messaging accordingly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will continue to support the Water Forum and the Bureau of Reclamation by working collaboratively and providing input to inform decisions related to operations at Folsom Reservoir, such as storing conserved water and making beneficial flow releases; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will take expedited and enhanced actions to communicate about water efficiency, and where needed, water conservation, for the benefit of the Sacramento Region's water customers and the health of the Lower American River; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will seek partnerships with Sacramento's media market to enhance regional communication and messaging; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA member agencies agree that RWA staff in concert with Water Forum staff should lead on communicating with the media regarding dry year conditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA member agencies will continue their efforts in coordinating through RWA to clearly and consistently communicate actions that member agencies' customers can take in the Sacramento Region to conserve water; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA's Executive Director is authorized to proactively communicate with the public consistent with this resolution for timely, consistent, and clear communications. This includes mobilizing existing resources and may include future requests to the RWA Board of Directors for additional funding, as needed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA encourages member agencies to provide direct and in-kind communications support to amplify the Sacramento Region's messaging, as managed by RWA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will take expedited actions to advocate for State and Federal actions and funding that support its member agencies' efforts to conserve water and take other urgent water supply reliability actions, including building water reliability infrastructure within the Sacramento Region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will support efforts to enhance dry year operations to the extent practicable and to minimize regional impacts in coordination with State and Federal partners; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA will undertake expedited and enhanced efforts to work with the Water Forum and its members to find additional ways to promote greater water efficiency, water conservation, and water supply reliability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, RWA member agencies regulated by the CPUC will manage customer demands in accordance with the requirements of the CPUC; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the RWA Executive Director is authorized, in coordination with the RWA Board Chair, to call a Special RWA Board meeting to revise this resolution and the actions therein, to adaptively manage through dry conditions as needed.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a meeting of the Authority held on May 13, 2021.