

NOTICE AND AGENDA

Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees

SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1

will be held at **3:00 P.M., Tuesday, August 18, 2026**

1070 Faraday Street, Santa Ynez, CA - Conference Room

Notice Regarding Public Participation: For those who may not attend the meeting but wish to provide public comment on an Agenda Item, please submit any and all comments and written materials to the District via electronic mail at general@syrwd.org. All submittals should indicate **"August 18, 2026 Board Meeting"** in the subject line. Materials received by the District during and prior to the meeting will become part of the post-meeting Board packet materials available to the public and posted on the District's website.

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTING OF THE NOTICE AND AGENDA**
4. **ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS, IF ANY, TO THE AGENDA**
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT** - Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any non-Agenda matter within the District's jurisdiction. The total time for all public participation shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes and the time allotted for each individual shall not exceed three (3) minutes. The District is not responsible for the content or accuracy of statements made by members of the public. No action will be taken by the Board on any public comment item.
6. **CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 21, 2026**
7. **CONSENT AGENDA** - All items listed on the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine and will be approved or rejected in a single motion without separate discussion. Any item placed on the Consent Agenda can be removed and placed on the Regular Agenda for discussion and possible action upon the request of any Trustee.
 - CA-1. Water Supply and Production Report
 - CA-2. Central Coast Water Authority Update
8. **MANAGER REPORTS - STATUS, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**
 - A. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION**
 1. Financial Report on Administrative Matters
 - a) Presentation of Monthly Financial Statements – Revenues and Expenses
 - b) Approval of Accounts Payable
 2. Draft Ordinance 2026-01: An Ordinance of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1, Establishing Regulations and Fines Relating to Water Theft and Unauthorized Use of District Facilities
 3. Notice of Completion – Madera Fence Replacement Phase 2
 - B. OPERATIONS**
 1. General Update

9. **REPORT, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**
- A. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act - Eastern Management Area (EMA) Update
 - B. ID No.1 Payment Under Protest Regarding SYRWCD Groundwater Production Charges
10. **REPORTS BY THE BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF, QUESTIONS OF STAFF, STATUS REPORTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMITTEE REPORTS, AND OTHER MATTERS AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS NOT REQUIRING BOARD ACTION**
11. **CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FILING OF VARIOUS ITEMS**
12. **REQUESTS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING AGENDA:** Any member of the Board of Trustees may request to place an item on the Agenda for the next regular meeting. Any member of the public may submit a written request to the General Manager of the District to place an item on a future meeting Agenda, provided that the General Manager and the Board of Trustees retain sole discretion to determine which items to include on meeting Agendas.
13. **NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for September 15, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.
14. **CLOSED SESSION:**
The Board will hold a Closed Session to discuss the following items:
- A. **CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - EXISTING LITIGATION**
[Subdivision (d)(1) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – 1 Case]
 - 1. Name of Case: Adjudicatory proceedings pending before the State Water Resources Control Board regarding Permit 15878 and Application 22423 of the City of Solvang, Petitions for Change, and Related Protests
 - B. **CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - POTENTIAL LITIGATION**
[Subdivision (d)(4) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – Potential Initiation of Litigation By the Agency – Two Matters]
15. **RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION:**
[Sections 54957.1 and 54957.7 of the Government Code]
16. **ADJOURNMENT**

This Notice and Agenda was posted at 3622 Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez, California, and notice was delivered in accordance with Government Code Section 54950 et seq., specifically Section 54956. This Notice and Agenda contains a brief general description of each item to be considered. The Board reserves the right to change the order in which items are heard. Copies of any staff reports or other written documentation relating to each item of business on the Agenda are on file with the District and available for public inspection during normal business hours at 3622 Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez. Such written materials will also be made available on the District's website, subject to staff's ability to post the documents before the regularly scheduled meeting. Questions concerning any of the Agenda items may be directed to the District's General Manager at (805) 688-6015. If a court challenge is brought against any of the Board's decisions related to the Agenda items above, the challenge may be limited to those issues raised by the challenger or someone else during the public meeting or in written correspondence to the District prior to or during the public meeting. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any individual needing special assistance to review Agenda materials or participate in this meeting may contact the District Secretary at (805) 688-6015. Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will best enable the District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

**SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT No.1
JULY 21, 2026 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1, was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 21, 2026, in-person at 1070 Faraday Street.

Trustees Present: Michael Burchardi
Jeff Clay
Brad Joos
Mark Moniot
Nick Urton

Trustees Absent: None

Others Present:	Paeter Garcia	Racel Cota	Steve Anderson
	Dan Drugan	Kylie Kelleher	Jessica Diaz

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

President Clay called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. He stated that this was a Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Cota conducted roll call and reported that all Trustees were present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

President Clay led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTING OF THE NOTICE AND AGENDA:

Ms. Cota reported that the Agenda for this meeting was posted in accordance with the California Government Code commencing at Section 54953, as well as District Resolution No. 340.

4. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS, IF ANY, TO THE AGENDA:

There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT:

President Clay welcomed any members of the public and offered time for members of the public to speak and address the Board on matters not on the Agenda. There was no public comment. Mr. Garcia reported that no written comments were submitted to the District for the meeting.

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 16, 2026

The Regular Meeting Minutes from June 16, 2026 were presented for consideration.

President Clay asked if there were any changes or additions to the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2026. There were no changes or additions requested.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Joos, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the June 16, 2026 Regular meeting minutes as presented.

7. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

The Consent Agenda Report was provided in the Board Packet.

Mr. Garcia reviewed the Consent Agenda materials for the month of June. Various topics were discussed among the Board and staff.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Moniot, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

8. **MANAGER REPORTS - STATUS, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**

A. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

1. Financial Report on Administrative Matters

a) Presentation of Monthly Financial Statements – Revenues and Expenses

Ms. Cota announced that the Financial Statements were provided to the Board via email earlier in the day, included in the meeting handout materials, and posted on the District's website.

Ms. Cota reviewed the Statement of Revenues and Expenses for the month of June. She reported that the year-end 2025/2026 financial statements are preliminary and unaudited as invoices from vendors and consultants will continue to be submitted for purchases and services incurred in the fiscal year ended June 30, 2026. She informed the Board that the auditors from Bartlett, Pringle, and Wolf, LLP will be performing the financial statement audit during the last week of August. She highlighted various line-items related to revenue and expense transactions that occurred during the month of June 2026 and referred to the Fiscal-Year-to-Date Statement of Revenues and Expenses that provides a budget to actual snapshot from July through June. Ms. Cota stated that revenue exceeded expenses by \$373,225.26 and the year-to-date June 2026 net income was \$4,248,222.17, subject to pending expenses.

b) Approval of Accounts Payable

Ms. Cota announced that the Warrant List was provided to the Board via email earlier in the day, included in the meeting handout materials, and posted on the District's website.

The Board reviewed the Warrant List which covered warrants 27319 through 27386 in the amount of \$649,876.35.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Urton, seconded by Trustee Burchardi, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote to approve the Warrant List for June 17, 2026 through July 21, 2026.

2. Resolution No. 861: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 Calling a District Election and Requesting the County Board of Supervisors to Consolidate the District Election with the Statewide General Election

Mr. Garcia explained that the District received a request from the Santa Barbara County Elections Office for the District, in connection with the 2026 elections process, to adopt and submit a specific Resolution calling a District election and requesting the County Board of Supervisors to consolidate the District election with the statewide general election.

He indicated that Resolution No. 861 reflects various provisions of the California Elections Code and comports with the County's request for this type of Resolution.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Urton, to adopt Resolution No. 861, and the Resolution was approved by the following 5-0-0 roll call vote:

AYES, Trustees:	Brad Joos Mark Moniot Mike Burchardi Jeff Clay Nick Urton
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NOES, Trustees:	None
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ABSTAIN, Trustees:	None
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ABSENT, Trustees:	None
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3. 2026 Biennial Notice for District Conflict of Interest Code

Mr. Garcia discussed materials in the Board packet relating to the 2026 Biennial Notice for the District's Conflict of Interest Code. He informed the Board that the District will be submitting the 2026 Biennial Notice with no changes to the Santa Barbara County Clerk's Office.

4. Draft Ordinance 2026-01: An Ordinance of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 Establishing Regulations and Fines Relating to Water Theft

Mr. Garcia reported that at the May 19, 2026 and June 16, 2026 Board meetings, the Board reviewed a Draft District Ordinance Establishing Regulations and Fines Related to Water Theft pursuant to recently adopted State law, including California Government Code Sections 53069.45 and 53069.46, California Civil Codes 1882.1, 1882.2, and 1882.3, and California Penal Code Section 498. He provided an overview regarding the purpose and key provisions of the Draft Ordinance which would establish and authorize the District to impose administrative fines and to pursue other civil and/or criminal remedies for cases involving water theft and/or unauthorized use of District facilities. Mr. Garcia explained that the Ordinance would become effective immediately upon adoption and noted that District customers have been made aware of the proposed Ordinance via messaging on the District's water bills and posting on the District's website. He stated that no public comments have been submitted at this time. Following Board discussion, Mr. Garcia recommended noticing the Draft Ordinance for possible adoption at the August 18, 2026 Board meeting.

B. OPERATIONS UPDATE

Mr. Drugan reported that District staff has observed an increase in system water demands over the past month as warmer temperatures have increased water use. He noted that staff continue to coordinate closely with CCWA to monitor both water demands and water quality. Mr. Drugan explained that the District is continuing to work with its groundwater consultant regarding a potential new groundwater well for replacement capacity in response to the State's new MCL regulation for Chromium 6. He also noted that the District is nearing completion of security fencing and gate improvements along Madera Street.

9. REPORT, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

A. SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT

1. Eastern Management Area (EMA) Update

The Board packet included the Notice and Agenda for the July 23, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for the Eastern Management Area.

Mr. Garcia summarized several topics that were discussed at the recent EMA GSA meeting. He reported that the EMA will be conducting a Public Workshop regarding well registration on July 30, 2026.

10. REPORTS BY THE BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF, QUESTIONS OF STAFF, STATUS REPORTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMITTEE REPORTS, AND OTHER MATTERS AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS NOT REQUIRING BOARD ACTION

Trustee Moniot reported that he attended the Los Olivos Community Services District (LOCSD) meeting on July 8, 2026, wherein project alternatives are still being proposed and discussed among the LOCSD Board and local stakeholders.

11. CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FILING OF VARIOUS ITEMS

The Correspondence List was received by the Board.

12. REQUESTS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

There were no requests from the Board.

13. NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

President Clay stated that the next Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for August 18, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

14. CLOSED SESSION

The Board adjourned to closed session at 4:43 p.m.

A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - EXISTING LITIGATION

[Subdivision (d)(1) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – 1 Case]

1. Name of Case: Adjudicatory proceedings pending before the State Water Resources Control Board regarding Permit 15878 and Application 22423 of the City of Solvang, Petitions for Change, and Related Protests

B. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - POTENTIAL LITIGATION

[Subdivision (d)(4) of Section 54956.9 of the Government Code – Potential Initiation of Litigation by the Agency – Two Matters]

15. RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION:

[Sections 54957.1 and 54957.7 of the Government Code]

The Board reconvened to open session at approximately 5:14 p.m. Mr. Garcia announced that the Board met in closed session in accordance with Agenda Items 14.A through 14.B, and that there was no reportable action for any of the closed session Agenda Items.

16. ADJOURNMENT:

Being no further business, it was **MOVED** by Trustee Moniot, seconded by Trustee Joos, and carried by a 4-0-0 voice vote, with Trustee Burchardi absent, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:14 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Racel Cota, Secretary to the Board

ATTEST:

Jeff Clay, President

MINUTES PREPARED BY:

Kylie Kelleher, Executive Administrative Assistant

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**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1
August 18, 2026**

Consent Agenda Report

CA-1. Water Supply and Production Report. The District's total water production in **July 2026 (468 AF)** was 69 AF higher than total production in **June 2026 (399 AF)**, 9 AF lower than the most recent 3-year running average (2023-2025) for the month of **July (477 AF)**, and 56 AF lower than the most recent 10-year running average (2016-2025) for the month of **July (524 AF)**. As noted in previous Consent Reports, the District's overall demands and production totals generally have been trending below historic levels for domestic, rural residential, and agricultural water deliveries due to water conservation, changing water use patterns, and private well installations.

For the month of **July 2026**, approximately **1 AF** was produced from the Santa Ynez Upland wells and no water was produced from the 4.0 and 6.0 cfs well fields in the Santa Ynez River alluvium. As reflected in the Monthly Water Deliveries Report from CCWA, the District took delivery of **467 AF** of SWP supplies for the month, all of which was allocated to Exchange with the South Coast. According to USBR, approximately **75.1 AF** of SWP deliveries were made to Lake Cachuma for South Coast entities. Direct diversions to the County Park and USBR were **3.89 AF**.

The USBR Daily Operations Report for Cachuma Reservoir in **July** (ending July 31, 2026) recorded the end of month reservoir elevation at **747.05'** and end of month storage of **175,395 AF**. USBR recorded total precipitation at the reservoir of **0.00 inches** for the month. Reported reservoir evaporation in **July** was **2,092.6 AF**. Based on the updated maximum storage capacity of 192,978 AF (previously 193,305 AF), as of **August 10, 2026** Cachuma reservoir was reported at **90.0%** of capacity, with then-current storage of **173,586 AF** (Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, Rainfall and Reservoir Summary).

When reservoir storage exceeds 100,000 AF, the Cachuma Member Units have usually received a full allocation. Conversely, a 20% pro-rata reduction from the full allocation is scheduled to occur in Water Years beginning at less than 100,000 AF, where incremental reductions may occur at other lower storage levels. In recent years, Reclamation approved a 100% Project allocation for federal WY 2023-2024 based on extraordinary rain conditions that spilled the reservoir in early 2023. The reservoir spilled again in early 2024 and Reclamation issued another 100% Project allocation for federal WY 2024-2025. Based on prevailing reservoir conditions, the Cachuma Member Units requested a 100% Project allocation for WY 2025-2026, which USBR approved. At the beginning of December 2025, ID No.1 held approximately 4,365 AF of contractual Project supplies in the reservoir, including approximately 1,878 AF of prior year carryover supplies and 2,487 AF from the current WY 2025-2026 allocation. Due to spill conditions that occurred again this year, all Cachuma Member Agencies lost their carryover supplies, such that the District currently holds approximately 1,894 AF of contractual Project supplies in Cachuma, comprised of this year's allocation less amounts exchanged thus far with the South Coast Member Units. **By joint letter dated June 5, 2026 the Cachuma Member Units have requested a 100% Project allocation for WY 2026-2027. Reclamation granted that request by letter dated July 1, 2026, which effective October 1st will result in an additional allocation of 2,651 AF to the District.**

Water releases for the protection of fish and aquatic habitat are made from Cachuma reservoir to the lower Santa Ynez River pursuant to the 2000 Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the 2019 Water Rights Order (WR 2019-0148) issued by the State Board (SWRCB). These releases are made to Hilton Creek and to the stilling basin portion of the outlet works at the base of Bradbury

Dam. The water releases required under the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion to avoid jeopardy to steelhead and adverse impacts to its critical habitat are summarized as follows:

NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion

- *When Reservoir Spills and the Spill Amount Exceeds 20,000 AF:*
 - 10 cfs at Hwy 154 Bridge during spill year(s) exceeding 20,000 AF
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge when spill amount exceeds 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge in the year immediately following a spill that exceeded 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
- *When Reservoir Does Not Spill or When Reservoir Spills Less Than 20,000 AF:*
 - 5 cfs at Hwy 154 when Reservoir does not spill and Reservoir storage is above 120,000 AF, or when Reservoir spill is less than 20,000 AF
 - 2.5 cfs at Hwy 154 in all years when Reservoir storage is below 120,000 AF but greater than 30,000 AF
 - 1.5 cfs at Alisal Bridge if the Reservoir spilled in the preceding year and the spill amount exceeded 20,000 AF and if steelhead are present at Alisal Reach
 - 30 AF per month to “refresh the stilling basin and long pool” when Reservoir storage is less than 30,000 AF

The water releases required under the SWRCB Water Rights Order 2019-0148 for the protection of fish and other public trust resources in the lower Santa Ynez River and to prevent the waste and unreasonable use of water are summarized as follows:

SWRCB Order WR 2019-0148

- *During Below Normal, Dry, and Critical Dry water years (October 1 – September 30), releases shall be made in accordance with the requirements of the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion as set forth above (“Table 1 Flows”).*
- *During Above Normal and Wet water years, the following minimum flow requirements must be maintained at Hwy 154 and Alisal Bridges (“Table 2 Flows”):*
 - 48 cfs from February 15 to April 14 for spawning
 - 20 cfs from February 15 to June 1 for incubation and rearing
 - 25 cfs from June 2 to June 9 for emigration, with ramping to 10 cfs by June 30
 - 10 cfs from June 30 to October 1 for rearing and maintenance of resident fish
 - 5 cfs from October 1 to February 15 for resident fish
- *For purposes of SWRCB Order WR 2019-0148, water year classifications are as follows:*
 - Wet is when Cachuma Reservoir inflow is greater than 117,842 AF;
 - Above Normal is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 117,842 AF or greater than 33,707 AF;
 - Below Normal is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 33,707 AF or greater than 15,366 AF;
 - Dry is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 15,366 AF or greater than 4,550 AF
 - Critical Dry is when Reservoir inflow is less than or equal to 4,550 AF

Based on local rainfall conditions thus far in the new water year, inflows to Cachuma Reservoir have exceeded 33,707 AF and thus have triggered higher fishery release requirements from Bradbury Dam under “Table 2” of State Board Order 2019-0148 (see flow regime above).

CA-2. State Water Project (SWP) and Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) Updates.

As previously reported, in 2023 DWR declared a 100 percent SWP Table A allocation for the first time since 2006 (compared to a 5 percent allocation in 2022). In 2024, despite above normal precipitation and snowpack, and above-average storage levels in Lake Oroville, DWR took a conservative approach and limited the final Table A allocation to 40 percent. In 2025, DWR again took a very conservative approach to the Table A allocation, as follows:

- December 2, 2024 – DWR issued an initial 2025 SWP Table A allocation of 5 percent (5%)
- December 23, 2024 – Allocation increased to 15 percent (15%)
- January 28, 2025 – Allocation increased to 20 percent (20%)
- February 25, 2025 – Allocation increased to 35 percent (35%)
- March 25, 2025 – Allocation increased to 40 percent (40%)
- April 29, 2025 – Final Allocation increased to 50 percent (50%)

For the 2026 Water Year, on December 1, 2025 DWR issued a Notice to the State Water Contractors establishing an initial 10 percent (10%) SWP Table A allocation. By Notice dated January 29, 2026 DWR increased the Table A allocation to thirty percent (30%). DWR’s January Notice explained the updated allocation as follows:

A series of atmospheric rivers that arrived mid-December and continued until early January provided for above average precipitation and high runoff, contributing to storage increases in California reservoirs. However, the series of storms were warm, snowpack accumulation has been below average, and continuing warm and dry weather in January has resulted in snowpack loss. ... Considering the recent dry and warm conditions and associated forecasts, we will be carefully assessing and evaluating future allocation increases as hydrologic conditions become clearer. ... To determine the available SWP water supplies, DWR considers various factors including SWP contractors’ 2026 carryover supplies and demands, existing storage in SWP conservation facilities, estimates of future runoff, near-term and seasonal climate forecasts, SWP operational, contractual, and regulatory requirements set forth in the Federal Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act, and water rights obligations under the State Water Resources Control Board’s authority.

As noted in last month’s Consent Report, on May 15, 2026 DWR increased the 2026 SWP Table A allocation to 45 percent, which is presumed to be the final allocation amount for 2026. As of August 12, 2026 Lake Oroville storage levels were recorded at 67 percent of total capacity and 103 percent of its historic average for this time of year.

As reflected in recent meeting agendas for the CCWA Board of Directors and Operating Committee, CCWA remains focused on several important issues related to the SWP and SWP deliveries, including but not limited to: SWP operations and water supply conditions; pending and proposed water transfers; land subsidence and invasive mussel issues affecting the California Aqueduct; infrastructure maintenance and improvements; CCWA’s Urban Water Management Plan Update; and strategic planning. The next regular CCWA Board of Directors meeting is currently scheduled for August 27, 2026.



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Historical Archive and Reports Database
Lake Cachuma Daily Operations
Run Date: 08/10/2026

July 2026

DAY	STORAGE ACRE-FEET			COMPUTED*	CCWA	PRECIP ON	RELEASE - AF.				EVAPORATION		PRECIP
	ELEV	IN LAKE	CHANGE	INFLOW AF.	INFLOW AF.	RES. SURF. AF.	TUNNEL	HILTON CREEK	OUTLET	SPILLWAY	AF.	INCH	INCHES
	748.63	180,025											
1	748.57	179,848	-177	21.3	0.0	0.0	54.4	14.0	62.0	0.0	67.9	0.340	0.00
2	748.52	179,701	-147	36.7	0.0	0.0	51.9	14.0	58.0	0.0	59.8	0.300	0.00
3	748.46	179,524	-177	27.5	0.0	0.0	64.7	14.0	58.0	0.0	67.8	0.340	0.00
4	748.42	179,407	-117	84.2	0.0	0.0	59.5	14.0	58.0	0.0	69.7	0.350	0.00
5	748.37	179,259	-148	39.2	0.0	0.0	59.5	14.0	58.0	0.0	55.7	0.280	0.00
6	748.31	179,083	-176	2.7	0.0	0.0	37.2	13.9	58.0	0.0	69.6	0.350	0.00
7	748.25	178,906	-177	1.4	0.0	0.0	45.9	13.9	57.0	0.0	61.6	0.310	0.00
8	748.19	178,700	-206	-19.9	0.0	0.0	52.7	13.9	54.0	0.0	65.5	0.330	0.00
9	748.13	178,553	-147	41.0	0.0	0.0	60.6	13.9	54.0	0.0	59.5	0.300	0.00
10	748.07	178,347	-206	-12.0	0.0	0.0	60.7	13.9	50.0	0.0	69.4	0.350	0.00
11	748.04	178,288	-59	127.5	0.0	0.0	61.1	13.9	50.0	0.0	61.5	0.310	0.00
12	747.98	178,112	-176	5.4	0.0	0.0	53.1	13.9	51.0	0.0	63.4	0.320	0.00
13	747.94	177,994	-118	2.8	0.0	0.0	28.4	13.9	33.0	0.0	45.5	0.230	0.00
14	747.92	177,935	-59	119.7	0.0	0.0	60.5	13.9	41.0	0.0	63.3	0.320	0.00
15	747.86	177,759	-176	34.0	0.0	0.0	64.1	13.9	45.0	0.0	87.0	0.440	0.00
16	747.80	177,582	-177	34.6	0.0	0.0	67.7	13.9	43.0	0.0	87.0	0.440	0.00
17	747.71	177,317	-265	-80.1	0.0	0.0	58.9	13.9	43.0	0.0	69.1	0.350	0.00
18	747.65	177,141	-176	2.0	0.0	0.0	64.9	13.9	38.0	0.0	61.2	0.310	0.00
19	747.62	177,052	-89	86.6	0.0	0.0	53.7	13.9	39.0	0.0	69.0	0.350	0.00
20	747.59	176,965	-87	74.4	0.0	0.0	34.6	13.9	38.0	0.0	74.9	0.380	0.00
21	747.54	176,820	-145	32.6	0.0	0.0	45.9	13.9	39.0	0.0	78.8	0.400	0.00
22	747.47	176,616	-204	-13.5	0.0	0.0	59.9	13.9	38.0	0.0	78.7	0.400	0.00
23	747.41	176,442	-174	25.3	0.0	0.0	65.7	13.9	39.0	0.0	80.7	0.410	0.00
24	747.35	176,267	-175	-1.3	10.8	0.0	62.8	13.9	39.0	0.0	68.8	0.350	0.00
25	747.32	176,180	-87	74.3	12.3	0.0	64.7	13.9	38.0	0.0	57.0	0.290	0.00
26	747.27	176,035	-145	21.4	12.3	0.0	62.9	13.9	39.0	0.0	62.9	0.320	0.00
27	747.22	175,889	-146	2.5	12.3	0.0	49.0	13.9	39.0	0.0	58.9	0.300	0.00
28	747.17	175,744	-145	39.0	12.2	0.0	64.9	13.8	39.0	0.0	78.5	0.400	0.00
29	747.12	175,599	-145	18.1	12.3	0.0	66.7	13.8	38.0	0.0	56.9	0.290	0.00
30	747.08	175,453	-146	45.6	2.9	0.0	69.1	13.9	39.0	0.0	72.5	0.370	0.00
31	747.05	175,395	-58	125.0	0.0	0.0	59.6	13.9	39.0	0.0	70.5	0.360	0.00
TOTALS			-4,630	998.0	75.1	0.0	1,765.3	431.2	1,414.0	0.0	2,092.6	10.590	0.00
AVERAGE		177,546											

Comments: *Computed inflow is the sum of change in storage, releases and evaporation minus precip on the reservoir surface and CCWA inflow.
Indicated outlet release includes leakage from outlet valves and spillway gates.
Data based on a 24 hour period ending 0800.



Santa Barbara County - Flood Control District

130 East Victoria Street, Santa Barbara CA 93101 - 805.568.3440 - www.countyofsb.org/pwd

Rainfall and Reservoir Summary

Updated 8am: 8/10/2026

Water Year: 2026

Storm Number: NA

Notes: Daily rainfall amounts are recorded as of 8am for the previous 24 hours. Rainfall units are expressed in inches.

All data on this page are from automated sensors, are preliminary, and subject to verification.

*Each Water Year (WY) runs from Sept 1 through Aug 31 and is designated by the calendar year in which it ends

County Real-Time Rainfall and Reservoir Website link ➤ <https://rain.cosbpw.net>

Rainfall	ID	24 hrs	Storm 0day(s)	Month	Year*	% to Date	% of Year*	AI
Buellton (Fire Stn)	233	0.00	0.00	0.00	23.86	144%	144%	
Cachuma Dam (USBR)	332	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.17	167%	167%	
Carpinteria (Fire Stn)	208	0.00	0.00	0.00	21.24	124%	123%	
Cuyama (Fire Stn)	436	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.21	135%	133%	
Figueroa Mtn (USFS Stn)	421	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.88	135%	135%	11.7
Gibraltar Dam (City Facility)	230	0.00	0.00	0.00	37.90	144%	144%	12.3
Goleta (Fire Stn-Los Carneros)	440	0.00	0.00	0.00	23.94	131%	130%	
Lompoc (City Hall)	439	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.23	137%	137%	12.1
Los Alamos (Fire Stn)	204	0.00	0.00	0.00	19.98	131%	131%	
San Marcos Pass (USFS Stn)	212	0.00	0.00	0.00	51.18	148%	148%	
Santa Barbara (County Bldg)	234	0.00	0.00	0.00	26.10	142%	142%	
Santa Maria (City Pub.Works)	380	0.00	0.00	0.00	15.79	119%	119%	
Santa Ynez (Fire Stn /Airport)	218	0.00	0.00	0.00	21.85	139%	139%	
Sisquoc (Fire Stn)	256	0.00	0.00	0.00	16.30	109%	109%	

Countywide percentage of "Normal-to-Date" rainfall :

136%

Countywide percentage of "Normal Water-Year" rainfall :

136%

Countywide percentage of "Normal Water-Year" rainfall calculated
assuming no more rain through Aug. 31, 2026 (End of WY2026).

AI (Antecedent Index / Soil Wetness)

6.0 and below = Wet (min. = 2.5)

6.1 - 9.0 = Moderate

9.1 and above = Dry (max. = 12.5)

Reservoirs

Reservoir Elevations referenced to NGVD-29.

**Cachuma is full and subject to spilling at elevation 750 ft.

However, the lake is surcharged to 753 ft. for fish release water.

(Cachuma water storage based on Dec 2021 capacity revision)

	Spillway Elev. (ft)	Current Elev. (ft)	Max. Storage (ac-ft)	Current Storage (ac-ft)	Current Capacity (%)	Storage Change Mo.(ac-ft)	Storage Change Year*(ac-ft)
<u>Gibraltar Reservoir</u>	1,400.00	1,385.47	4,490	1,625	36.2%	-475	345
<u>Cachuma Reservoir</u>	753.**	746.57	192,978	173,586	90.0%	-1,248	20,419
<u>Jameson Reservoir</u>	2,224.00	2,221.56	4,587	4,311	94.0%	-51	91
<u>Twitchell Reservoir</u>	Twitchell Reservoir level has dropped below the sensor, data no longer available.						

[Previous Rainfall and Reservoir Summaries](#)



CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dessi Mladenova, Controller

FROM: Lacey Adam, Senior Accountant

SUBJECT: Monthly Water Deliveries

August 4, 2026

According to the CCWA revenue meters at each turnout, the following deliveries were made during the month of July 2026:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Chorro	153
Lopez.....	156
Shandon.....	0
Guadalupe.....	25
Santa Maria.....	814
Golden State Water Co.....	0
Vandenberg.....	348
Buellton	31
Solvang	84
Santa Ynez ID#1	467
Bradbury.....	<u>75</u>
TOTAL	2,153

In order to reconcile these deliveries with the DWR revenue meter, which read 2,155 acre-feet, the following delivery amounts should be used for billing purposes:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Chorro	153
Lopez	156
Shandon.....	0
Guadalupe.....	25
Santa Maria	750*
Golden State Water Co	65*
Vandenberg	348
Buellton	31
Solvang	84
Santa Ynez ID#1	468
Bradbury	<u>75</u>
TOTAL	2,155

*Golden State Water Company delivered 65 acre-feet into its system through the Santa Maria turnout. This delivery is recorded by providing a credit of 65 acre-feet to the City of Santa Maria and a charge in the same amount to the Golden State Water Company.

Notes: Santa Ynez ID#1 water usage is divided into 0 acre-feet of Table A water and 468 acre-feet of exchange water.

The exchange water is allocated as follows

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Exchange Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Goleta	169
Santa Barbara	112
Montecito	112
Carpinteria	75
TOTAL	468

Bradbury Deliveries into Lake Cachuma are allocated as follows:

<u>Project Participant</u>	<u>Delivery Amount (acre-feet)</u>
Carpinteria	0
Goleta	0
La Cumbre	75
Montecito	0
Morehart	0
Santa Barbara	0
Raytheon	0
TOTAL	75

cc: Daniel Brooks, Goleta WD
Mike Babb, Golden State WC
Joshua Haggmark, City of Santa Barbara
Janet Gingras, COMB
Jeromy Caldera, San Luis Obispo County
Paeter Garcia, Santa Ynez RWCD ID#1
Shad Springer, City of Santa Maria
David Trujillo, City of Guadalupe
Kelley Dyer, Carpinteria Valley WD
Mike Alvarado, La Cumbre Mutual WC
Pernell Rush, Vandenberg SFB
Nick Turner, Montecito WD
Jose Acosta, City of Solvang
Rose Hess, City of Buellton

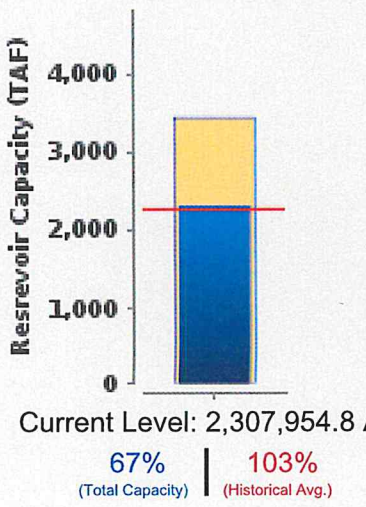


CURRENT RESERVOIR CONDITONS

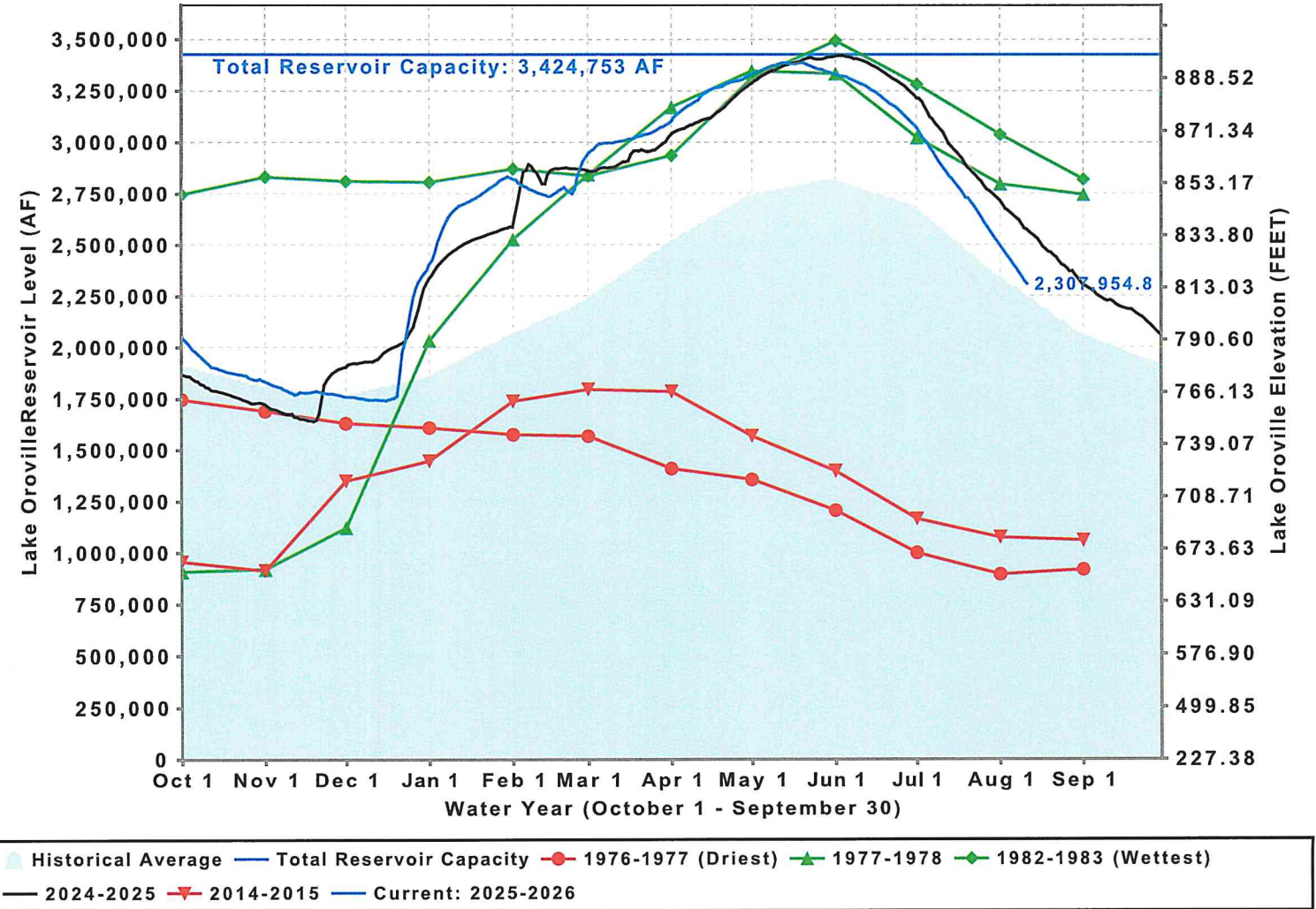


Lake Oroville Conditions

(as of Midnight - August 11, 2026)



Lake Oroville Levels: Various Past Water Years and Current Water Year, Ending At Midnight August 11, 2026



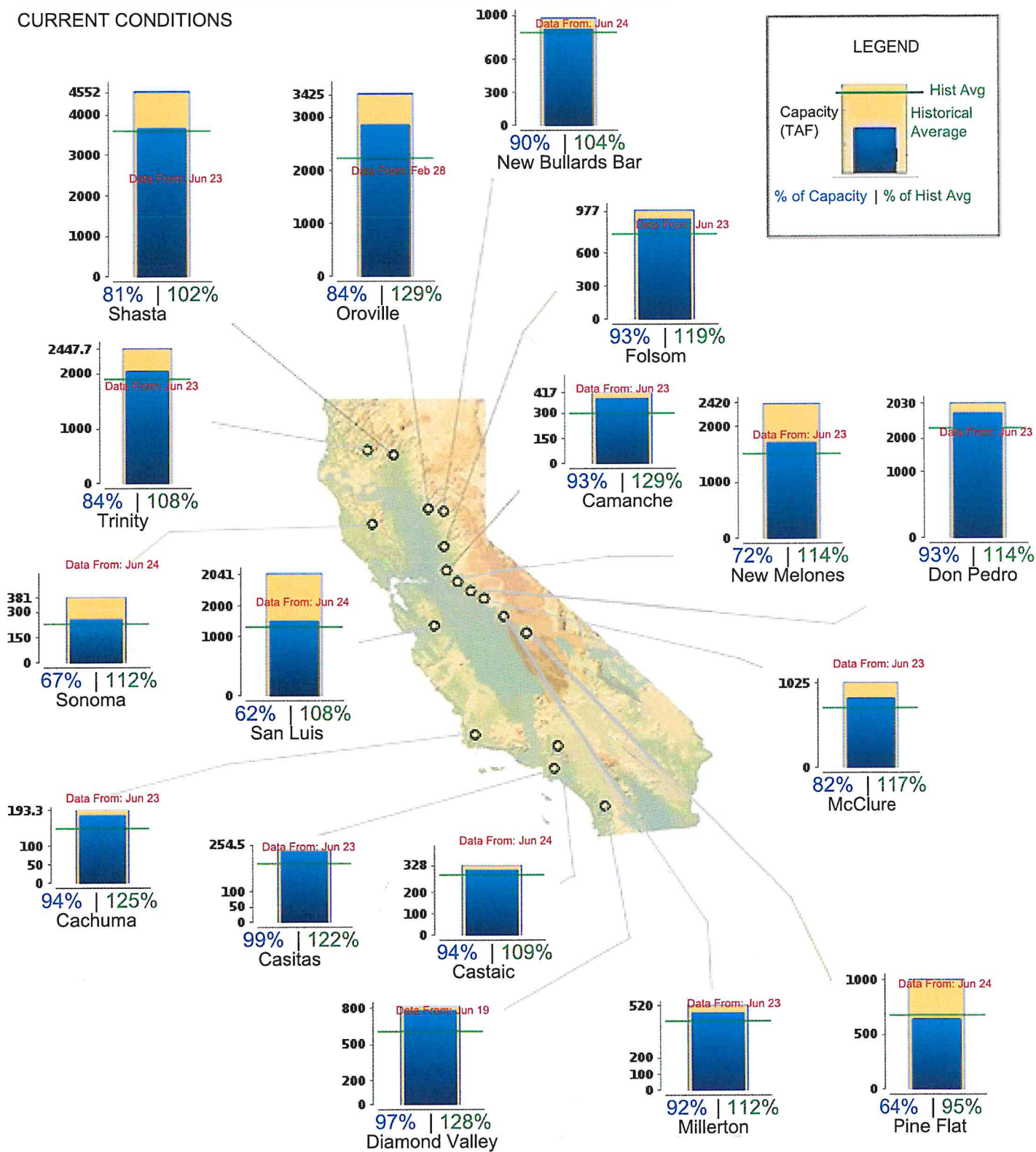


CURRENT RESERVOIR CONDITIONS

CALIFORNIA MAJOR WATER SUPPLY RESERVOIRS

Midnight - August 11, 2026

CURRENT CONDITIONS





**CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AGENDA**

**Chairman – Eric Friedman
Vice Chairman – Jeff Clay**

Thursday, July 23, 2026
9:00 AM

at 255 Industrial Way, Buellton, California 93427

Members of the public may participate by video call or telephone via
Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 262 126 264 953 144 Passcode: cb6Xw3QP
or by dialing +1 323-484-5095 and entering access Code/Meeting ID: 189 844 651#

Please note: public participation by video call or telephone is for convenience only and is not required by law. If technical interruptions to the video call/telephone occur, the chair has the discretion to continue the meeting and participants are invited to take advantage of the other participation options above.

Public Comment on agenda items may occur via video call or telephonically, or by submission to the Board Secretary via email at lfw@ccwa.com no later than 8:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. In your email, please specify (1) the meeting date and agenda item (number and title) on which you are providing a comment and (2) that you would like your comment read into the record during the meeting. If you would like your comment read into the record during the meeting (as either general public comment or on a specific agenda item), please limit your comments to no more than 250 words.

Every effort will be made to read comments into the record, but some comments may not be read due to time limitations. Please also note that if you submit a written comment and do not specify that you would like this comment read into the record during the meeting, your comment will be forwarded to Board members for their consideration.

Pursuant to Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt public records that relate to open session agenda items and are distributed to a majority of the Board less than seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting will be available on the CCWA internet web site, accessible at <https://www.ccwa.com>.

★ indicates written report

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call**
- II. Public Comment – (Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any matter within the Board’s jurisdiction. Individual Speakers may be limited to five minutes; all speakers to a total of fifteen minutes.)**
- III. Closed Session**
 - A. CLOSED SESSION: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION
Government Code section 54956.9(d)(4)
Initiation of litigation: 1 case
- IV. Return to Open Session**
 - A. Report on Closed Session Actions (if any)
- V. Election of Officers and Committee Appointments**

Staff Recommendation: Take nominations from the Board.
Motion: Elect Chairperson
Motion: Elect Vice Chairperson
Motion: Elect Treasurer
Motion: Elect Secretary

VI. Consent Calendar

- A. Minutes of the April 23, 2026 Special Meeting ★
- B. Minutes of the April 23, 2026 Regular Meeting ★
- C. Minutes of the June 25, 2026 Regular Meeting ★
- D. Bills ★
- E. Controller's Report ★
- F. Operations Report ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Consent Calendar

VII. Executive Directors Report

- A. Water Supply Situation Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- B. Water Transfers Update ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- C. Report on the Emergency Repair to the Polonio Pass Water Treatment Plant Treated Water Pipeline ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- D. Appointments to Serve as CCWA's Primary and Alternate Representatives on the ACWA/JPIA Board of Directors ★
Staff Recommendation: Appoint Peter Thompson to serve as CCWA's representative to the ACWA/JPIA Board of Directors, with David Beard to serve as alternate.
- E. Calendar Year 2027 DWR Statement of Charges ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- F. FY 2025/26 Fourth Quarter Investment Report ★
Staff Recommendation: Accept Report.
- G. Operating Committee Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- H. State Water Contractors Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.
- I. Legislative Report ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

VIII. Reports from Board Members for Information Only

IX. Items for Next Regular Meeting Agenda

X. Date of Next Regular Meeting: August 27, 2026

XI. Adjournment

2025 Urban Water Management Plan

[Dismiss](#)

[\(/2025-urban-water-management-plan\)](/2025-urban-water-management-plan)

The Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA) has prepared its 2025 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) and Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) in compliance with the Urban Water Management Planning Act. Please see Notices page under Newsroom for additional information.

[\(/2025-urban-water-management-plan\)](/2025-urban-water-management-plan)



Central Coast Water Authority

[\(https://ccwa.specialdistrict.org/\)](https://ccwa.specialdistrict.org/)

[Contact Us \(/contact-us\)](/contact-us)

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THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

[BOARD MEETINGS \(/BOARD-MEETINGS\)](/board-meetings)

AUG
27
2026

August 27, 2026

Board Meeting

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255 INDUSTRIAL WAY, BUELLTON CA 93427

TELEPHONE (805) 688-2292

[EMPLOYEE PORTAL \(HTTPS://CCWAPORTAL.SPECIALDISTRICT.ORG/#/\)](https://ccwaportal.specialdistrict.org/#/)

[PRIVACY POLICY \(/PRIVACY-POLICY\)](/privacy-policy)

[DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY \(TRANSPARENCY.HTML\)](transparency.html)

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ORDINANCE NO. 2026-01

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER
WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1
ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS AND FINES RELATING TO WATER THEFT AND
UNAUTHORIZED USE OF DISTRICT FACILITIES**

WHEREAS, the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, ID No.1 (“District”) is responsible for providing safe, sufficient, reliable, and affordable water service to its customers and for managing and protecting the District’s public water system infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, water is one of California’s most important resources, especially as the state continues to face the challenges of recurring drought conditions; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, the unauthorized use and diversion of District water supplies, and the unauthorized use of and tampering with District meters, fire hydrants, and other forms of water theft is a growing problem which jeopardizes the fairness, affordability, and financial integrity of the District’s water system, undermines water conservation, causes revenue losses to the District, damages District facilities, and endangers public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, water theft from fire hydrants can present particularized public health and safety hazards, including reduced water pressure for firefighting, potential contamination of potable water supplies, and physical damage to hydrants, pipelines, and other critical water supply infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, newly adopted State law, including but not limited to California Government Code Sections 53069.45 and 53069.46 (SB 394), authorize local agencies that provide water service to adopt ordinances prohibiting water theft and unauthorized use of water agency facilities, and imposing administrative fines or penalties for violations of such ordinances; and

WHEREAS, California Civil Code Section 1882.1 and California Penal Code Section 498 authorize civil and criminal prosecution for the unauthorized use of, diversion from, connection to, or tampering with District water supplies or water supply facilities, in addition to other unauthorized acts; and

WHEREAS, the District’s Board of Directors finds that adoption of this Ordinance is necessary to deter and penalize unauthorized use of the District public water supplies and water supply facilities, protect District assets, and help protect an equitable distribution of costs among those lawful and authorized users of District water supplies and services.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 does hereby ordain as follows:

SECTION 1. Title and Purpose

This Ordinance shall be known as the “District Ordinance Regarding Water Theft and Unauthorized Use of District Facilities.”

The purpose of this Ordinance is to further enable the District to preserve and protect District water supplies and water supply infrastructure from theft, unauthorized use, tampering, potential contamination, damage, and unnecessary costs, and to establish administrative procedures for the imposition, enforcement, collection, and administrative review of fines established by this Ordinance in accordance with applicable provisions of California law.

Rates and charges for authorized and unauthorized uses of water are set forth in the District’s Rules and Regulations.

SECTION 2. Authority

This Ordinance is adopted pursuant to California Government Code Sections 53069.45 and 53069.46; California Civil Code Sections 1882.1, 1882.2, and 1882.3; California Penal Code Section 498; the District’s Rules and Regulations and enabling act; and other applicable law.

SECTION 3. Prohibited Acts Constituting Water Theft and/or Unauthorized Use of District Facilities

It shall be unlawful and shall constitute water theft for any person to do any of the following:

- (a) Divert, or cause to be diverted, water from any component of the District’s water system without specific prior authorization from the District and without paying all applicable charges for District water and services.
- (b) Make, or cause to be made, any connection or reconnection to any component of the District’s water system, including but not limited to any District water meter, pipeline, fire hydrant, or other appurtenance without specific prior authorization from the District and without paying all applicable charges for District water and services.
- (c) Prevent any District water meter or other device used in determining the amount of water provided by the District from accurately performing its measuring function by tampering, interference, damage, bypass, alteration or other means.
- (d) Connect to, divert water from, cause water to be diverted from, tamper or interfere with, damage, bypass, or alter any District fire hydrant, hydrant meter, or fire detector check without specific prior authorization from the District and without paying all applicable charges for District water and services. Any such activity shall constitute an unauthorized connection to a District fire hydrant.
 - a. Notwithstanding the generality of Section 3(d) above, in accordance with California Civil Code section 1882.1(f), a public agency having firefighting or emergency response responsibilities during a fire, with approval from incident

command or the authority having jurisdiction over the active fire incident, shall be considered to have authorization from the District to use District fire hydrants during an active fire incident; provided, therefore, in the absence of an active fire incident, a public agency having firefighting or emergency response responsibilities, or any other person, entity, or agency shall not be considered to have authorization from the District to use any District fire hydrant without specific prior authorization from the District.

- (e) Commit, authorize, solicit, aid, abet, assist, permit, cause, or attempt any of the above acts to occur.

SECTION 4. Administrative Penalties

Pursuant to California Government Code Sections 53069.45 and 53069.46, the following administrative fines may be imposed by the District for violations of this Ordinance:

Water Theft Violation Type	First Violation	Second Violation	Third or Subsequent Violation
By Meter Tampering	Up to \$130	Up to \$700	Up to \$1,300
By Other Means – Not Involving Fire Hydrants	Up to \$1,000	Up to \$2,000	Up to \$3,000
By Unauthorized Connection To A Fire Hydrant	Up to \$2,500	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$10,000

Each day that a violation occurs or continues shall constitute a separate violation subject to a separate administrative fine. The District's General Manager shall determine applicable fines imposed under this Ordinance in accordance with the terms set forth herein.

SECTION 5. Additional Recovery by the District

In addition to administrative fines established by this Ordinance, the District may impose additional costs, fines, penalties, and charges in connection with water theft violations, including but not limited to those set forth in the District's Rules and Regulations, as follows:

- (a) Charges for water taken or diverted in violation of this Ordinance; and
- (b) All District costs to repair or replace damaged meters, valves, fire hydrants, or other water system facilities, including but not limited to all applicable labor, materials, administrative, consulting, expert, and legal costs; and
- (c) All investigation, enforcement, administrative, consulting, expert, and legal costs incurred by the District to implement and enforce terms of this Ordinance.

SECTION 6. Service Termination and Restoration

The District may in its sole and absolute discretion immediately discontinue water service to any person, entity, agency, premises, or property involved in a violation of this Ordinance, where water service shall not be restored unless and until, as determined by the District's General Manager, the following conditions are satisfied:

- (a) All violations are corrected; and
- (b) All costs, fines, penalties, and charges are paid in full or in accordance with terms and conditions accepted by the District; and
- (c) Adequate safeguards are in place to protect public health and safety, the District's water supplies, and its water supply system, and to prevent further violation(s) of this Ordinance.

SECTION 7. Hardship Waiver Requests

Any person, entity, or agency upon whom a fine described in California Government Code Section 53069.45 is imposed under this Ordinance may, within fifteen (15) calendar days a written notice of violation and imposition of fine by the District, submit a written request to the District for a hardship waiver, which request may include supporting documentation and must demonstrate that payment of the full amount of the fine would impose an undue financial burden on the responsible party. Timely requests for a hardship waiver will be reviewed and determined by the District's General Manager, who will provide written notification of the determination to the requesting party. Requests for a hardship waiver shall not apply to and are not available for fines described in Government Code Section 53069.46 and Section 3(d) and Section 4 of this Ordinance relating to water theft from and/or unauthorized connection to a District fire hydrant.

SECTION 8. Appeal Procedure

A written appeal of any determination, fine, or decision issued by the District's General Manager pursuant to this Ordinance may be submitted to the District's Board of Trustees within fifteen (15) calendar days of the issuance of such determination, fine, or decision being appealed. For purposes of this Section 8, the determination, fine, or decision being appealed shall be deemed received by the appealing party five (5) calendar days after being issued by the District, and an appealing party's written appeal shall be deemed submitted by said party on the postmarked date if delivered by mail, and on the date of transmittal if delivered by electronic mail or personal service to the District's office during normal business hours. Upon receiving a written appeal, the District will schedule the matter to be heard by the Board of Trustees at an upcoming Board meeting. Written notice of the date, time, and place of the appeal to be heard by the Board will be provided to the appealing party. The decision of the Board shall be final and conclusive, subject to judicial review in accordance with California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.5.

SECTION 9. Additional Remedies

This Ordinance supplements, and does not limit, any civil or criminal remedies available to the District under applicable law. Violations may be referred to local authorities for prosecution under California Penal Code Section 498 or pursued for civil enforcement to recover damages and penalties. In accordance with California Civil Code Section 1882.2, in any civil action brought by the District to recover damages in connection with any violation of this Ordinance, the District may recover as damages three times the amount of actual damages plus the cost of suit and reasonable attorney's fees.

SECTION 10. Public Reporting

Members of the public are encouraged to report suspected water theft to the District by contacting the District office in person, by calling the District office/hotline day or night at (805) 688-6015, or via electronic mail at general@syrwd.org. All reports shall be treated as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

SECTION 11. Severability

If any provision of this Ordinance or its application is held invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 12. Effective Date

This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption by the District's Board of Trustees.

AYES, and in favor thereof, Trustees:

NOES, Trustees:

ABSTAIN, Trustees:

ABSENT, Trustees:

Jeff Clay, President

ATTEST:

Racel Cota, Secretary to the Board of Trustees

Page left intentionally blank.

**RECORDING REQUESTED BY
AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:**

Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District
Improvement District No.1
P.O. Box 157
Santa Ynez, California 93460

THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR RECORDER
ONLY
(Gov. Code § 27361.6)

Exempt from recording fee pursuant to
Government Code § 6103

NOTICE OF COMPLETION
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT:

1. The undersigned is an agent of the owner of the interest or estate stated below.
2. The full name of the owner is **Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1.**
3. The full address of the owner is **3622 Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez, California, 93460.**
4. The nature of the interest or estate is: **The property for the project is owned in fee by the Owner.**
5. A work of improvement on the property herein described was completed and the Owner accepted the project as complete as authorized by the Owner's governing body on **August 18, 2026**, which is the completion date pursuant to California Civil Code Section 3086. The work completed includes: **Madera Fence Replacement – Phase 2: 1) removal and disposal of approximately 300 linear feet of existing chain link fencing and gates; 2) installation of approximately 50 linear feet of cedar split rail fencing; 3) installation of approximately 180 linear feet of wrought iron security fencing and gates.**
6. The name and address of the contractor for such work of improvement is: **Allco Fence Industries, 549 North 8th Street, Lompoc, CA 93436.**
7. The property for the project is located at **APN: 143-220-002.**
8. The property on which said work of improvement was completed is located in the County of Santa Barbara, State of California.

Date: _____, 2026

Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District,
Improvement District No.1

Paeter Garcia, General Manager

VERIFICATION

I, Paeter Garcia state: I am the General Manager of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1. I have read the above Notice of Completion and know the contents thereof. I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:

Date: _____, 2026

Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District,
Improvement District No.1

Paeter Garcia, General Manager

PROOF OF SERVICE DECLARATION

I, _____, declare that I served copies of the above NOTICE OF COMPLETION, (check appropriate box):

☐ a. By personally delivering copies to _____
(name(s) and title(s) of person served at _____
(address) on _____, 20____ (date), at _____ (time).

☐ b. By Registered or Certified Mail, Express Mail, or Overnight Delivery by an express service carrier, addresses to each of the parties at the address shown above on _____ (date).

☐ c. By leaving the notice and mailing a copy in the manner provided in §415.20 of the California Code of Civil Procedure for service of Summons and Complaint in a Civil Action. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on _____, 20____ (date), at _____ (City), _____ (State).

(Signature of Person Making Service)

NOTICE AND AGENDA OF REGULAR MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN
EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

HELD AT
SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT, MEETING ROOM
1070 FARADAY STREET, SANTA YNEZ, CALIFORNIA
4:00 P.M., THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2026

Optional remote public participation is available via Telephone or TEAMS

To access the meeting via telephone, please dial: +1 469-998-7311, 209762335# or via the Web at: [Join the meeting now](#)

“Join a Meeting” - **Meeting ID 294 811 517 405 Meeting Passcode: 4nNRT3**

*** Please Note ***

The above teleconference option for public participation is being offered as a convenience only and may limit or otherwise prevent your access to and participation in the meeting due to disruption or unavailability of the teleconference line. If any such disruption or unavailability occurs for any reason the meeting will not be suspended, terminated, or continued. Therefore in-person attendance of the meeting is strongly encouraged.

AGENDA OF REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Public Comment (Any member of the public may address the Board relating to any non-agenda matter within the Board’s jurisdiction. The time for public comment allotted for each individual shall not exceed three minutes. No action will be taken by the Board at this meeting on any public comment item.)
3. Consent Agenda
 - a. Review and consider approval of meeting minutes for the May 28, 2026 EMA GSA Regular Board Meeting.
 - b. Review and consider approval of Financial Statements and Warrant List for May-June, 2026.
4. Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting Report-Out
5. Action Items
 - a. Review and consider approval of easement for monitoring well with Chamberlin Ranch.
 - b. Review and approve the EMA GSA FY 2026-27 budget incorporating Board revisions proposed at the May 28, 2026 EMA GSA Board Meeting.
6. Informational Items
 - a. Receive presentation from Moss, Levy & Hartzheim and file the FY 2024-25 Independent Auditor’s Report.

- b. Verbal Report from Executive Director on the Potential for Consolidation/Streamlining of Annual Reports
 - c. Prop 68 Grant and EMA GSA Initiatives Update
 - d. Well Registration Update
- 7. Consider Date/Time and Need for Future Meetings of the EMA GSA.
 - a. Well Registration Public Workshop Thursday, July 30, 2026 4:00-7:00 PM at SYCSD Meeting Room.
 - b. Next EMA GSA CAG Meeting Thursday, August 20, 2026 at 3:00 PM.
 - c. Next Basin-Wide Joint Special Meeting Friday, September 11, 2026, at 9:00 AM at Buellton City Council Chambers.
 - d. Next EMA GSA Regular Board Meeting Thursday, September 24, 2026 at 4:00 PM at SYCSD Meeting Room.
- 8. Board of Directors Reports and Requests for Future Agenda Items
- 9. Adjournment

[This agenda was posted at least 72 hours prior to the regular meeting at 3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101, Santa Ynez, California, and ema-SantaYnezWater.org in accordance with Government Code Section 54954. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency at (805) 457-5065. Advanced notification as far as practicable prior to the meeting will enable the GSA to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.]

Paeter Garcia

From: Well Reg <wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2026 9:49 AM
Subject: *EMA Well Registration due on August 31.* Need Help? Join Our August 18 & August 20 Workshops.
Attachments: EMA_Newsletter_08.13.2026.pdf

Dear EMA Property Owner/Stakeholder,

Well registration is due in under three weeks on August 31, 2026 for all landowners in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EMA GSA). If you have already registered, thank you for taking the time to complete the process. More information on status updates and recent activities can be found in the attached newsletter.

If you do not have a well, you are still required to claim your parcel and declare that it has no well. This confirms your status as a non-well owner and keeps our records accurate throughout the EMA. Complete the form [HERE](#) to claim no wells on your property. To register your well, visit the [EMA GSA Well Registration, Metering, and Reporting webpage](#) for resources to get you started. This is where you will log in to Watermark, the online portal EMA uses to store your well data. Before logging into Watermark, first view the brief [5-minute training video](#) which guides you through the Watermark portal. Download the well registration checklist and Watermark User Guide for easy reference. The Watermark FAQs are also available online to help answer questions.

If after browsing the online resources you still need assistance or lost/didn't receive your verification code, contact EMA at (805) 457-5065 or via email at wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org. For more assistance, we invite you to attend our two upcoming workshops:

- VIRTUAL Public Workshop on **Tuesday, August 18, 2026 from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM**. Join via the Microsoft Teams link [here](#).
- IN-PERSON Public Workshop on **Thursday, August 20, 2026 from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM** at the Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room (1070 Faraday St., Santa Ynez, CA 93460). More details can be found [here](#).

The in-person workshop on August 20 will feature well registration overview presentations at **6:00 PM and 7:00 PM**, followed by open house stations where staff will be available to provide one-on-one assistance with setting up your account, online well registration, navigating the Watermark portal, and other questions. Please see the attached mailer for additional details.

Groundwater stewardship is essential to ensuring a long-term, reliable water supply in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin. Well registration helps the EMA GSA better understand groundwater use throughout the basin and supports informed, local groundwater management decisions that protect this shared resource for current and future water users.

These requirements are part of the EMA GSA's implementation of California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the Groundwater Sustainability Plan adopted for the Eastern Management Area. In 2025, the EMA GSA adopted Ordinance No. 2025-01, which establishes well registration requirements, and Ordinance No. 2025-03, which establishes well metering and groundwater extraction reporting requirements. Following registration, existing well owners and operators, excluding de minimis extractors, must install water meters by **June 30, 2027**, and begin submitting biannual groundwater extraction reports starting **October 31, 2027**. If you have any questions or comments, please contact wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org or call **(805) 457-5065**. We look forward to seeing you at the workshop and helping you complete the well registration process in person, over the phone, or via email.

Best regards,

EMA GSA Executive Director Team
WellReg-EMA@SantaYnezWater.org



Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

WARNING: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

NOW REQUIRED: Groundwater Well Registration, Metering And Reporting



Well registration provides the data needed for state-required studies and planning, helping ensure that decisions about local water management remain in local hands

Groundwater is a vital resource in the Santa Ynez River Valley, providing a dependable water supply for homes, agriculture, and businesses, especially during dry and drought years when surface water supplies are limited.

Protecting our groundwater resources requires understanding how groundwater is used today and ensuring it remains available for future generations. To support local groundwater management efforts, all well owners in the Eastern Management Area (EMA) of the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin are **required to register their wells between July 1 and August 31, 2026**.

The EMA includes the City of Solvang, the unincorporated communities of Santa Ynez, Los Olivos, and Ballard, as well as other unincorporated areas throughout the basin.

To complete your registration, use the verification code mailed to you and register your well through the online data management platform, Watermark. For guidance, see the five easy registration steps provided on the back of this page. Registration is the first step of these efforts, followed by metering and reporting.

PROJECT TIMELINE



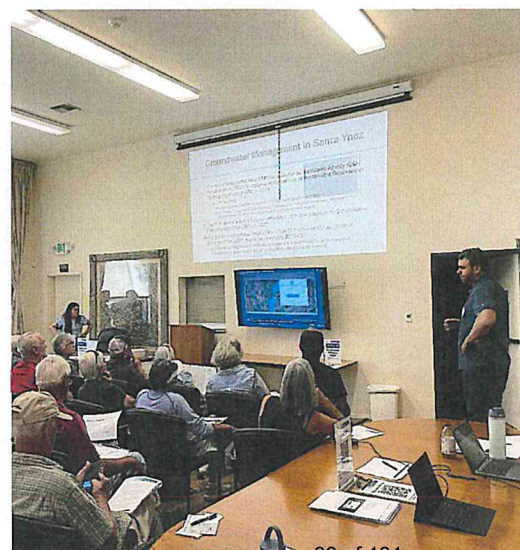
MESSAGE FROM THE EMA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you to everyone who attended our first Public Workshop on July 30! Your interest and participation helped us engage directly with more than 30 community members about the importance of registering their wells. Together, we can work to maintain local groundwater management in the Santa Ynez River Valley EMA GSA basin area. Here are some workshop highlights:



18% Registration rate to-date as of August 12, 2026 (124/700 wells registered)

- EMA's Executive Director Dan Heimel, shared with attendees a presentation about groundwater management in Santa Ynez, California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), new EMA ordinances, and well registration requirements.
- Representatives from EMA, EMA GSA agencies, and Santa Barbara County answered questions about well registration, the Watermark portal, and the County's Well Metering Assistance Program (WMAAP) and provided one-on-one support to owners registering their well(s).
- Common questions from the workshop have been added to our website on the [Well Registration, Metering, and Reporting](#) webpage.



UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

For those who missed our last workshop, **mark your calendars for our two upcoming workshops** on August 18 (Virtual) and August 20 (In-Person)! Hear from the EMA GSA Executive Director, learn about the importance of well registration, explore helpful resources, and receive one-on-one assistance from staff.

Santa Ynez EMA GSA Virtual Workshop

Date: August 18, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Join virtually with this Microsoft Teams link:

tinyurl.com/EMA-Workshop-2

Santa Ynez EMA GSA Public Workshop & Open House

Date: August 20, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Location: Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room, 1070 Faraday St, Santa Ynez, CA 93460

[RSVP NOW](#)

RSVP requested but not required

WHAT IS SGMA? HOW IS THE EMA GSA IMPLEMENTING SGMA?

For more information, please scan the QR code, or go to

www.ema-santaynezwater.org/well-registration-metering-and-reporting



Groundwater is an important source of water, especially during dry years. To protect this resource for future generations, California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires local agencies to manage groundwater sustainably. In the EMA, actions to reach these goals include well registration, well metering, and groundwater extraction reporting to support responsible groundwater management.

Here are some quick facts:

- SGMA requires local agencies in medium- and high-priority groundwater basins to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs).
- GSAs develop and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability.
- A GSP serves as a roadmap for managing groundwater resources and avoiding issues such as declining groundwater levels, reduced water quality, and land subsidence.
- Key actions for the implementation of the EMA's GSA's 2022 GSP include the adoption:
 - Ordinances No. 2025-01: outlines the requirements for well registration
 - Ordinance No. 2025-03: outlines well metering and groundwater extraction reporting requirements for the EMA GSA.

5 STEPS TO REGISTER ON Watermark

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Have these on hand to move through setup without stopping.

- ☐ An email address you check regularly
- ☐ The **verification code** letter mailed to you by your GSA
- ☐ Well completion reports & details - only if you will register wells

5 STEPS TO REGISTER

- 1 CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT**
Register and verify your email
- 2 SET UP A WATER ACCOUNT**
A folder that groups your parcels
- 3 CLAIM YOUR PARCELS**
Using your mailed verification code
- 4 REGISTER YOUR WELLS**
Or mark a parcel "No Wells"
- 5 MANAGE YOUR WATER ACCOUNTS**
Share access with the people who help

Don't Have A Well?

Property owners who do not have a well should claim their status by going to tinyurl.com/EMA-No-Well-Form



If you need assistance or lost/did not receive your verification code, contact EMA at (805) 457-5065 or via email at wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org

Paeter Garcia

From: Well Reg <wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org>
Sent: Wednesday, July 1, 2026 5:28 PM
Subject: EMA GSA Well Registration Period ****NOW OPEN****
Attachments: EMA GSA Mailer #1 Template.pdf; EMA GSA Workshop Flyer 1.pdf

Dear EMA Property Owner,

We are pleased to announce the start of the well registration period for the Santa Ynez River Valley Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EMA GSA). The well registration period will be open from July 1 to August 31, 2026.

Property owners will receive a mailer (delivered by the U.S. Postal Service) with details about well registration, along with a unique verification code needed to begin the process. A standard version of the mailer is attached for reference; however, please check your mailbox for your personalized mailer, which includes your name, address, and unique verification code. If you do not receive a mailer by July 8, 2026, please contact the EMA GSA at the information below.

To get started in the meantime, **visit the updated [EMA GSA's Well Registration, Metering, and Reporting webpage](#)**. You will find resources to support you throughout the online well registration process. The online well registration form is housed within the Watermark portal. Access the Well Registration User Guide, Frequently Asked Questions and a Well Registration Checklist on this webpage. Once you receive a verification code in the mail, you will be able to set up a Watermark account to begin the well registration process.

For additional support and information, you are invited to attend our first Public Workshop on July 30, 2026, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room (1070 Faraday St, Santa Ynez, CA 93460). The event will feature well registration overview presentations at 4:00 PM and 5:30 PM, followed by open house stations where staff will be available to provide one-on-one assistance. Please see the attached flyer for additional details.

You may RSVP for the workshop [in this form](#) as well as submit questions and comments. The RSVP is not a requirement to attend the workshop, it simply gives EMA an idea of how many people will attend to ensure adequate space and staffing. If after reviewing the available resources online, you need further assistance, you may email questions or comments to wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org, or call (805) 457-5065.

Best Regards,

EMA GSA Executive Director Team
WellReg-EMA@SantaYnezWater.org

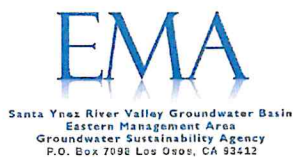
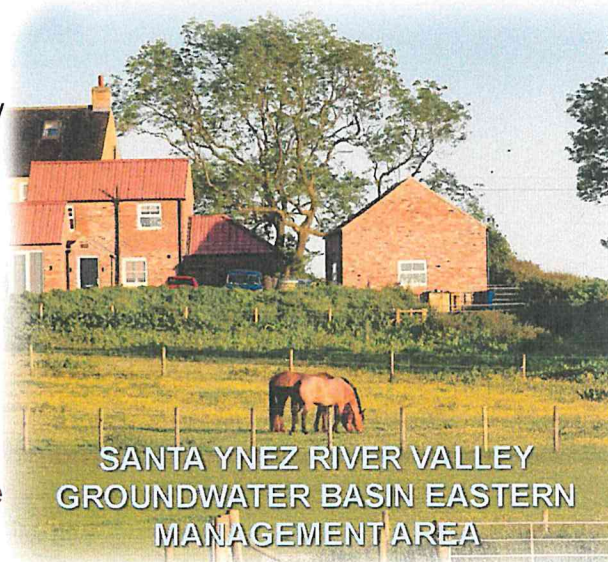


Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

IMPORTANCE OF REGISTERING OUR WELLS

Groundwater stewardship is essential for ensuring a long-term, reliable water supply in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Eastern Management Area (EMA). A key management action outlined in the 2022 EMA Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (GSA) Groundwater Sustainability Plan, was the adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-01, which includes well registration requirements for the EMA.

Well owners in the EMA must register their wells with the EMA GSA to improve our understanding of groundwater extractions in the basin and to support improved groundwater management decisions at the local level. Well owners in the EMA are required to **register all wells online between July 1, 2026 and August 31, 2026.**



**YOUR ACTION IS
REQUIRED**

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SANTA BARBARA, CA
PERMIT NO. 456

EMA GSA Contact Info:

wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org

(805) 457-5065



ANNOUNCEMENT: GROUNDWATER WELL REGISTRATION OPENS JULY 1, 2026

LOCAL EFFORTS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER

The EMA GSA is a local public agency established in April 2017 in response to the California Legislature's passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014. SGMA requires establishment of GSAs in medium and high-priority basins and for GSAs to prepare and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to actively manage groundwater supplies for all beneficial users. Key actions for the implementation of the EMA's GSA's 2022 GSP include the adoption of Ordinances No. 2025-01 and No. 2025-03.

Ordinance No. 2025-01 outlines the requirements for well registration and Ordinance No. 2025-03 outlines well metering and groundwater extraction reporting requirements for the EMA GSA. Following registration, all owners and operators of existing wells or groundwater extraction facilities within the EMA's boundaries must install water meters by June 30, 2027 and beginning October 31, 2027, must submit bi-annual water use reports to the EMA GSA. For additional information regarding these ordinances visit: www.ema-santaynezwater.org

HOW TO REGISTER

Groundwater well registration and water use information is housed on Watermark, an online data management platform set-up for the EMA GSA. Using this unique verification code specific to your property, you can:

- Create a Watermark Account
- Manage all parcels you own/operate in the EMA
- Register your wells

For a checklist of materials needed to register your wells, along with a step-by-step instructional video, please scan the QR code:

Watermark Verification Code:

Once you log into the Watermark portal, you can "claim" your property/ies using this Verification code.



NEED HELP? REGISTRATION SUPPORT WORKSHOP

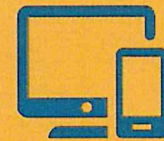
The EMA GSA will host an in-person public workshop in July 2026, followed by a virtual workshop in August to assist owners and operators with registering their wells and to answer questions. Bring the checklist information and any smart phone or device to get help registering your well in Watermark.

Public Workshop

Date: July 30, 2026

Time: 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Location: Santa Ynez Community Services District, 1070 Faraday St, Santa Ynez, CA 93460

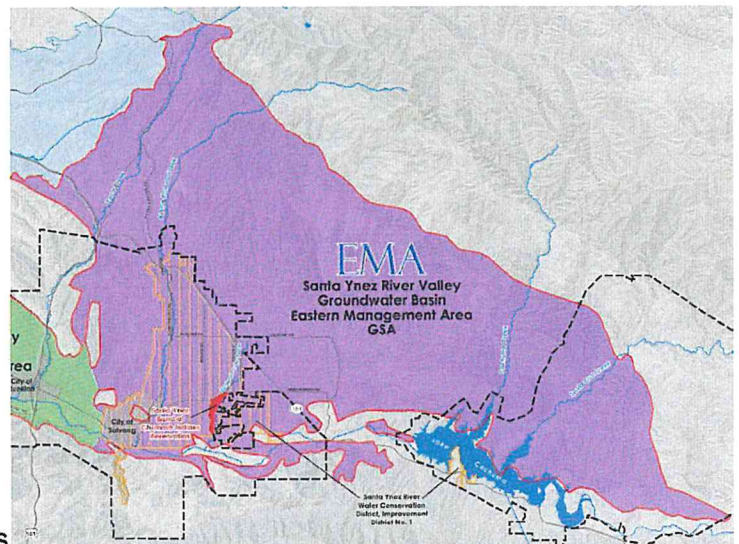


Please bring your Laptop, Tablet or Mobile phone

IS YOUR WELL IN THE EMA AND MUST COMPLY?

EMA is part of the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin. Other GSAs in the groundwater basin include the Western Management Area and the Central Management Area. EMA's region includes the City of Solvang, unincorporated townships of Santa Ynez, Los Olivos, and Ballard, and other unincorporated areas throughout the EMA. Well registration applies to the following:

- Active, Inactive, or Abandoned wells
- Agricultural wells
- Domestic wells, including de minimis extractors (≤ 2 acre-feet/year)
- Public municipal and industrial water system wells
- Private municipal water system wells



Well Registration **PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

Well owners in the Eastern Management Area (EMA) of the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin are **required to register all wells between July 1 and August 31, 2026**. To support landowners with the well registration process, join the EMA Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) at a **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** on Thursday, July 30. Hear from the EMA GSA Executive Director, learn about the importance of well registration, explore helpful resources, and receive one-on-one assistance from staff.

Public Workshop and Open House

Date: July 30, 2026

Time: 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

**Location: Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room,
1070 Faraday St, Santa Ynez, CA 93460**

Format: Participants are welcome to drop by at any time between 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM. The EMA GSA Executive Director will provide a brief overview at 4:00 PM and again at 5:30 PM. The remaining workshop time will be open house style of multiple stations with EMA GSA staff.

Agenda:

- 4:00 PM – Presentation “Well Registration Overview”
- 4:15 PM – Well Registration Open House
- 5:30 PM – Presentation “Well Registration Overview”
- 5:45 PM – Well Registration Open House

Open House Stations: Participants can sign up at any Open House Station to receive assistance with well registration*. Please see the following descriptions for each station:

- **Station #1 - Eligibility Requirements:** Clarify eligibility and well registration requirements for your specific property.
- **Station #2 - Watermark Training Tutorial:** View a brief video tutorial to learn how to register your well in the Watermark portal.
- **Station #3 - Well Registration Help Desk:** Receive individualized assistance creating your Watermark account and registering your wells.
- **Station #4 - Watermark Portal Help Desk:** Get individualized support troubleshooting issues with Watermark.
- **Station #5 - Ask the EMA GSA Executive Director:** Discuss your questions or concerns directly with the Executive Director.
- **Station #6 - County Meter Rebate Incentive:** Learn more about the County’s meter rebate program.

***Please bring your Verification Code and Checklist of well registration information** (information about your well and property, etc.)

If you misplaced your Verification Code, please bring a form of ID and a utility bill or some other document that demonstrates affiliation with the property.

For more information, please contact EMA GSA at wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org
or call (805) 457-5065



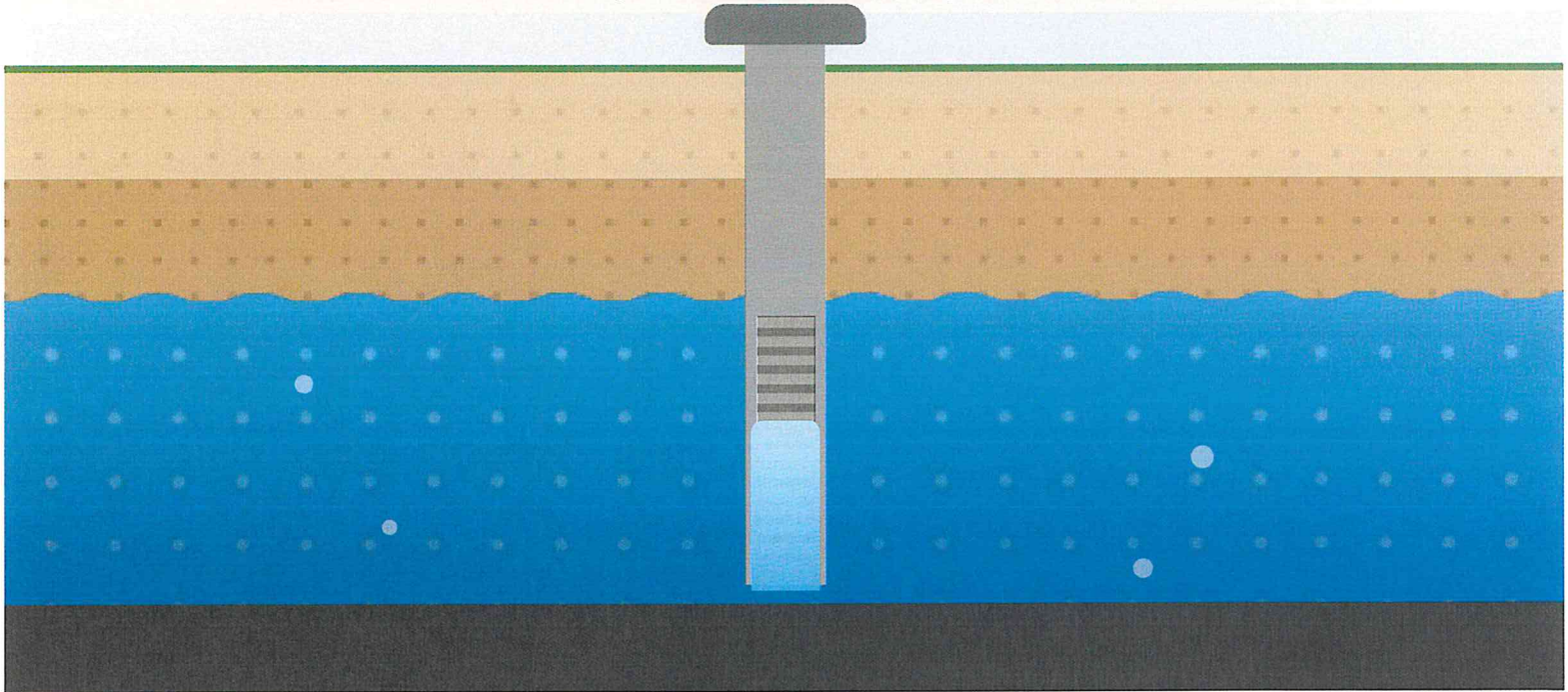
Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

REGISTER HERE



Protect our groundwater. Register your well.

Per Ordinance 2025-01, all well owners in the Eastern Management Area are **REQUIRED** to register their wells online. Improved data helps inform local decisions that ensure a safe, plentiful water supply for years to come.



Well registration is open **July 1 – August 31, 2026.**



1

Grab your mailer

Find the verification code on the letter mailed to your address through USPS



2

Register online

Claim your parcel and wells in just a few minutes on the Watermark portal.



3

Need help?

Come to the registration workshop July 30, 4:00–7:00 PM, 1070 Faraday St.

Register at ema-santaynezwater.org

wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org · (805) 457-5065

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Santa Ynez Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Well Registration Public Workshop

July 30, 2026

Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room

WELCOME

WORKSHOP STAFF



Santa Ynez River Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency

- Dan Heime
- Nate Page
- Charlotte Arnao
- Vikesh Dheeriya



Stantec

- Emily Ng
- Erika Chan

EMA GSA Board of Directors

- City of Solvang Councilmember Elizabeth Orona
- City of Solvang Councilmember Mark Infanti, Alternate
- Trustee Brad Joos, EMA GSA Chair
- Trustee Mike Burchardi, Alternate
- Director Brett Marymee
- Director Steve Jordan, Alternate
- County Supervisor Joan Hartmann
- Meighan Dietenhofer, Alternate
- Douglas Circle, Agricultural Director
- Mary Heyden, Alternate

Special thanks to our agency member representatives for volunteering!

Paeter Garcia, Dan Drugen
(Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1)

Jose Acosta (City of Solvang)

Matt Scrudato (Santa Barbara County Water Agency)

WELCOME

AGENDA

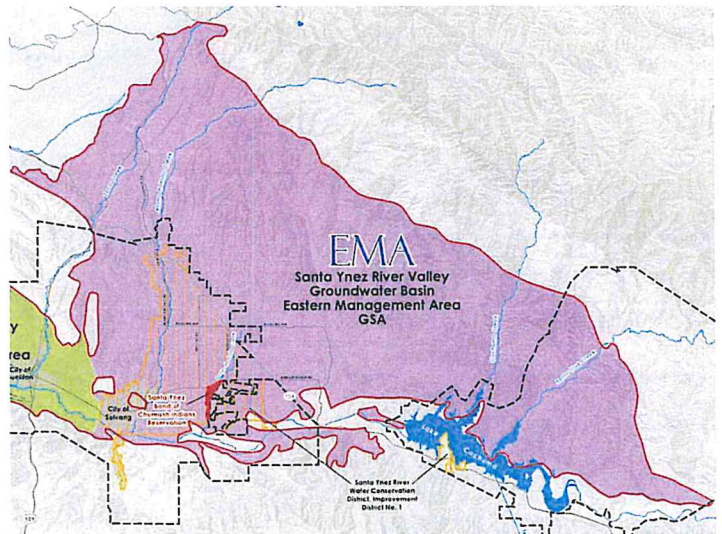
- Welcome and Purpose of Workshop
- Well Registration Requirements
- Well Registration Resources
- Open House Overview

Groundwater Management in Santa Ynez

- Eastern Management Area (EMA) Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) established in 2017 in response to the passage of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014
 - SGMA required:
 - Establishment of GSAs in medium- and high-priority basins
 - For GSAs to implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to actively manage groundwater for all beneficial users and for long-term water supply
- Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin adopted Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) in 2022
- Key action of EMA's 2022 GSP was the adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-1 and Ordinance No. 2025-03
 - Requires all owners and operators of existing groundwater extraction facilities within EMA's boundaries to following registration, metering, and reporting requirements

Well Registration Requirements

- EMA's region includes City of Solvang, along Alamo Pintado Creek, the Santa Ynez Uplands and north shore of Lake Cachuma
- All water users in EMA's region must register, even if you do not have a well
- All wells must be registered online by **August 31, 2026**
- Bi-annual water use reports must be submitted starting **October 31, 2027**



How to Register Your Well

- Groundwater registration is housed on **Watermark**, an online data management platform
- Every property owner should have received a **unique verification code** for your property
- **Well registration checklist** walks you through the registration process (handout available at Station #2)



Well Registration CHECKLIST

1. Unique verification code (you should have received this in the mail)
2. Smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer to access the EMA GSA Watermark Well Registration Portal [please be sure you can access your email on the device you are using]
3. Name and contact information of Property Owner, and Well Operator if different than the Property Owner
4. The following information is required for well registration, if available:
 - a. Groundwater Extraction Facility Parcel Number and State Well Number
 - b. Physical address of each well
 - c. Date of construction
 - d. Well depth, perforated intervals(s), diameter of well casing in inches, well casing material
 - e. Well pump information
 - i. Manufacturer/model of the well pump and motor
 - ii. Horsepower of the motor
 - f. Water use information, including the purpose(s) and uses(s) of water extracted from each well
 - g. List of Parcels that the well serves (could be just one)
 - h. Well status (e.g., active, inactive, abandoned)
5. If applicable, the following information may also be required.
 - a. A statement that a well does not exist on the property
 - b. Source(s) of additional water serving the property
 - c. Information about installed Flow Meter:
 - i. Manufacturer/model and type of Flow Meter
 - ii. Recording Units of Flow Meter (e.g., gallons, cubic feet, acre feet)
 - d. De Minimis Extractors must self-certify that they pump less than two-acre feet of water per year for domestic purposes through documentation, including:
 - i. Metered well production records
 - ii. Aerial photographs of irrigated area
 - iii. Electrical usage
 - iv. Other technical justification to support self-certification

This checklist was developed in compliance with EMA GSA Ordinance No. 2025-01. For more information, visit the EMA GSA website at www.emagsa.org

San Joaquin River Valley Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Ordinance No. 2025-01 Implementation

Well Registration Resources

- Frequently Answered Questions Handout
- Watermark User Guide
- Watermark Video Tutorial
- Well registration checklist
- Well registration ordinance

All resources are available
on our website at:

www.ema-santaynezwater.org/well-registration-metering-and-reporting



WELL REGISTRATION

streamlined form to claim no wells on your property.

Groundwater well registration is provided by Watermark, an online data management system funded through assessments on property owners. The portal opened July 1, 2026. The registration deadline is Aug. 31, 2026. Click the buttons below for more information, or view this [step-by-step tutorial](#) on how to use Watermark.

EMA GSA Well Registration - Watermark Portal User Guide
SYNOPSIS EMA GSA

WATERMARK ONE **VIDEO**

Watch on **YouTube**

[Well Registration User Guide](#) [Well Registration Walkthrough](#) [Well Registration Portal](#)

[Well Registration Checklist](#) [Well Registration Ordinance](#)

JUL 30 2026 **WELL REGISTRATION PUBLIC WORKSHOP 4:00-7:00 PM**

[RSVP & Comment Form HERE](#)
[READ MORE >](#)

KEY DATES

Well Registration Period: July 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026

OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW

Open House Map

Station Descriptions

Station 1: Clarify well registration requirements

Station 2: Brief video tutorial on well registration in Watermark portal

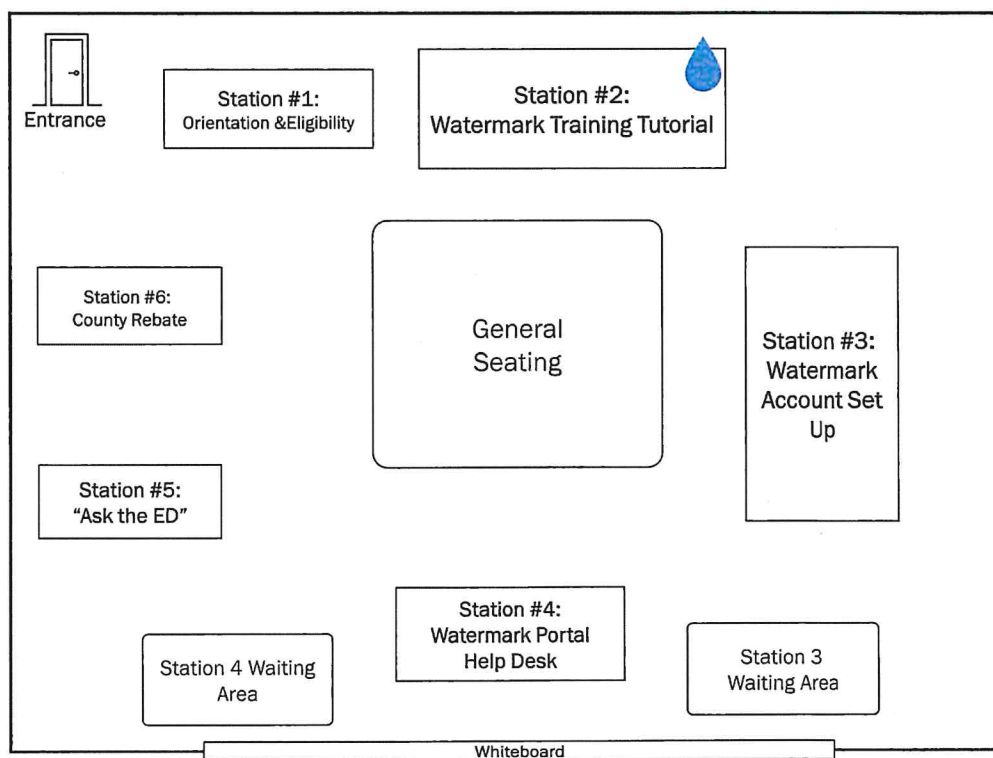
Station 3: Individualized assistance for portal setup

Station 4: Individualized support with Watermark issues

Station 5: Discuss questions or concerns with the EMA GSA Executive Director

Station 6: Information about the County's rebate program

 **Well Registration Overview Presentations at 4:00 and 5:30PM**



Santa Ynez EMA GSA Public Workshop & Open House
FACILITATION PLAN
Agenda, Stations Checklist

Date: July 30, 2026

Time: 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Format: In-Person at Santa Ynez Community Services District Meeting Room (1070 Faraday St, Santa Ynez, CA 93460)

- 4:00pm - 4:15 - Presentation "Well Registration Overview"
- 4:15 – 5:30 - Well Registration Open House
- 5:30 – 5:45 – Presentation "Well Registration Overview"
- 6:00 – 7:00 – Well Registration Open House

Purpose: Provide an overview of importance of well registration and share information landowners need to register their wells.

Key Audiences:

- Landowners who have wells on their property
- Curious or concerned customers and community members within GSA jurisdiction

Notifications:

- Mailer #1 Flyer with Verification Codes- Mailer to be sent out June 26
- Website for Well Registration – June 30
- EMA Email Announcement – July 1
- Mailer #2 Postcard Reminder – July 16
- Email #1, with Workshop #1 Flyer attached – July 1
- Board Meeting - July 23
- Email #2 – July 23
- Verbal/written notification in groundwater related meetings the GSA reps attend
- Outreach through individual GSAs' communication channels (e.g., websites, email databases)

Post-Event Engagement/Documentation:

- Workshop Summary: Stantec to develop

Workshop Agenda, Structure, and Discussion Points

Time Start	Time End	Agenda Item	Presenter	Notes
2:00PM	3:45PM	Meeting Room Setup	All	Room reservation begins, group sets up room.
3:45PM	7:00PM	Doors Open	All	--
4:00 PM	4:15 PM	Well Registration Overview	Dan	- Dan provides an overview of the EMA GSA, SGMA, and the GSP, connecting and highlighting EMA Ordinances. introduces team and agenda. - EMA to develop presentation.
4:15 PM	4:25 PM	Open House Stations Overview	Emily	- Emily explains the various stations for individuals to work through, based on individual need and support. - Includes buffer time for people to shuffle to their stations
4:25 PM	5:30 PM	Open House Stations	All (See Staffing Plan below)	- Individuals roam freely around meeting room based on support needed and specific questions they have in mind. - Stantec and Confluence team will be staffed at the stations (see below).
5:30 PM	5:45 PM	Well Registration Overview	Dan	- Dan to provide overview presentation again for those who are joining the workshop. - Stations paused during this presentation.
5:45PM	7:00 PM	Open House Stations	All (See Staffing Plan below)	- Stations resume. - Individuals roam freely around meeting room based on support needed and specific questions they have in mind. - Stantec and Confluence team will be staffed at the stations (see below).
7:00 PM	8:00 PM	Meeting Room Clean Up	All	--

Open House Station Staffing and Facilitation Plan

Open House Station – Staffing Plan				
	Workshop Station	Staff 1 – Station Lead	Staff 2 – Floaters* rotate as needed	Staff 3 – Floaters* rotate as needed
1	Orientation & Eligibility	Erika	Paeter Garcia (SYRWCD ID 1)	
2	Watermark Tutorial Video	Dan Drugan (SYRWCD ID 1)		
3	Watermark Account Setup	Charlotte	Emily	Jose Acosta (City of Solvang)
4	Watermark Portal Help Desk	Nate	Vikesh	
5	Ask the EMA GSA Executive Director	Dan		
6	County Meter Rebate Incentive	Mike Scrudato (County)		
*Floaters will rotate to other stations depending on where the crowd is the largest. Staff will have individuals fill out a sign-in sheet for their station and work their way down the list. See next page for more information on the Open House Stations and Facilitation Plan.				

Open House Stations – Facilitation Plan + Checklist				
	Workshop Station	Description	Est. Time per Individual	Materials Needed
1	Orientation & Eligibility	Station will welcome individuals to the event, direct them to Resource Table with resources, and correct station. If no wells on parcel, station will direct individuals to scan QR code to <u>complete streamlined form claiming no wells</u>. Staff will direct individuals to move to Station 2 to watch the training video before following directions themselves. If needed, as backup, station can troubleshoot if parcel is in EMA jurisdiction.	5 min.	• Comment Card + Box • 2 Laptops for Google Form claiming no wells or <u>SGMA Data Viewer</u> to verify if parcel is in jurisdiction (if needed) • Handouts: ○ Open House Map ○ FAQs ○ Well Registration Checklist ○ Watermark User Guide
2	Watermark Tutorial Video	Station will play MLJ's Watermark Training video will be on loop. A staff member will be available to answer any questions as they come up during the video.	12 min.	• 1 Laptop to play back video loop (with captioning) • Handouts: Watermark User Guide
3	Watermark Account Setup	Station will assist individuals in creating their Watermark account. • If individuals do not have an accessible email, we will need to send them home. • Send individuals to independently register their wells in the main seating area. If issues arise, tell them to join Station #4 for more help. • If don't have verification code, send to Station #4 for Nate. • If multiple parcels, Enter verification code from mailer, enter Verification Key (from email address) and click look up. ○ Select and claim parcels in list on account. Choose which Water Account to claim them too. *You can split parcels between multiple Water Accounts • Any issues longer than 15 minutes, send to Station 4 if crowd grows too big.	15 min.-20 min	• Sign in Sheet, clipboard + 5 Pens • 1 laptop for SGMA Data Viewer • Handouts: ○ Well Registration Checklist ○ Watermark User Guide
4	Watermark Portal Help Desk	Station will troubleshoot any issues with Watermark, including: • Lost verification code lookup (Nate) • Difficulties accessing Watermark account • Registering your wells • Any other issues that arise in Station 3 that require additional assistance	15 min.	• 1 Laptop to access Watermark if needed from admin side • Sign in Sheet, clipboard, + 5 pens • Handouts: N/A
5	Ask the EMA GSA Executive Director	Station will be catch-all for any questions/concerns individuals want to ask Dan, including: • Extraction Fee • Well registration, metering, reporting • Future water availability	5 min.	• 1 Laptop • Sign in Sheet, clipboard + 5 pens
6	County Meter Rebate	Station to be staffed by the County.	5 min.	• 1 Laptop • Sign in Sheet, clipboard + 5 pens • Handouts

	Incentive Program	Provide more information about the next step following well registration, which is well metering. Station will share information on how individuals can apply for the rebate.		
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Materials Checklist		
Needed materials	Quantity	Responsible party
Projector	1	Santa Ynez CSD Meeting Room to provide
Laptops and Chargers	6	Stantec and Confluence staff each to provide for workshop stations.
Sign-in Sheets (Stations 3-6)	3	Stantec
Clipboards	6	Stantec
Handouts / For Printing		EMA to print all handouts and bring day-of. Stantec to develop.
1. Open House Map	75	EMA
2. FAQs	75	EMA
3. Well Registration Checklist	75	EMA
4. Watermark User Guide	75	EMA
5. Overview Presentation Slides	75	EMA
6. County Meter Rebate Resources	75	EMA
Wayfinding Signs (8.5x11)	1 of each sign, 6 total	Stantec
1. Station 1 – Eligibility Requirements		
2. Station 2 – Watermark Training Tutorial		
3. Station 3 – Well Registration Help Desk		
4. Station 3 – Watermark Portal Help Desk		
5. Station 5 – Ask the EMA GSA Executive Director		

6. Station 6 – County Meter Rebate Incentive Program		
Acrylic Stands for Wayfinding Signs	6	Stanlec
Extension cord and power strip	3	Stanlec & EMA
Facilitation kit with 50 pens, markers, scissors, tape, comment card box, etc.	1	Stanlec



Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Well Registration CHECKLIST

1. Unique verification code (you should have received this in the mail)
2. Smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer to access the EMA GSA Watermark Well Registration Portal [please be sure you can access your email on the device you are using]
3. Name and contact information of Property Owner, and Well Operator if different than the Property Owner
4. The following information is required for well registration, if available:
 - a. Groundwater Extraction Facility Parcel Number and State Well Number
 - b. Physical address of each well
 - c. Date of construction
 - d. Well depth, perforated intervals(s), diameter of well casing in inches, well casing material
 - e. Well pump information
 - i. Manufacturer/model of the well pump and motor
 - ii. Horsepower of the motor
 - f. Water use information, including the purpose(s) and uses(s) of water extracted from each well
 - g. List of Parcels that the well serves (could be just one)
 - h. Well status (e.g., active, inactive, abandoned)
5. If applicable, the following information may also be required.
 - a. A statement that a well does not exist on the property
 - b. Source(s) of additional water serving the property
 - c. Information about installed Flow Meter:
 - i. Manufacturer/model and type of Flow Meter
 - ii. Recording Units of Flow Meter (e.g., gallons, cubic feet, acre feet)
 - d. De Minimis Extractors must self-certify that they pump less than two-acre feet of water per year for domestic purposes through documentation, including:
 - i. Metered well production records
 - ii. Aerial photographs of irrigated area
 - iii. Electrical usage
 - iv. Other technical justification to support self-certification

This checklist was developed in compliance with EMA GSA Ordinance No. 2025-01.

For more information, visit the EMA GSA website at <https://www.ema-santaynezwater.org/>



Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Well Registration

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What if I don't have a well?

If you received a mailer but don't have a well on your property, you are still required to claim your parcel and declare that it does not have a well. This confirms your status as a non-well owner and keeps our records accurate throughout the EMA. We have developed a streamlined form to enable you to declare no wells on your property without going through the full registration process. Complete the form <> to claim no wells on your property. If you prefer, you can also log into the Watermark Well Registration Portal using the ID printed on the Well Registration flyer mailed to you, then select "No Wells on Parcel" for your property.

How do I verify that my property is within Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (EMA GSA) jurisdiction?

If you received a mailer notification then our records indicate that your parcel is located in the EMA GSA's jurisdiction. For additional assistance, you may contact the EMA at (805) 457-5065, via email: wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org, or by mail: P.O. BOX 7098, LOS OSOS, CA 93412. Please be ready to provide your property address(es) and/or APN(s).

I have a small property. Am I exempt? Do I need to register my well?

All groundwater extraction facilities or wells within the EMA GSA jurisdiction are subject to the well registration requirements of EMA GSA Ordinance 2025-01. This includes De Minimis groundwater extractors of 2.0 acre-feet or less per year. This will allow EMA to improve its understanding of all groundwater extraction throughout the basin and better inform management decisions.

Who can I contact for assistance with well registration?

For assistance accessing the EMA GSA Watermark Well Registration and Reporting Portal (EMA GSA Watermark Portal), property owners/operators can direct questions to EMA GSA at (805) 457-5065 or wellreg-ema@santaynezwater.org.

Who has access to my well registration information?

All well registration information input in the EMA GSA Watermark Portal becomes the intellectual property of the EMA GSA and is only accessible by EMA GSA staff. This



Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin
Eastern Management Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Well Registration

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are there any fines or penalties for those who fail to comply?

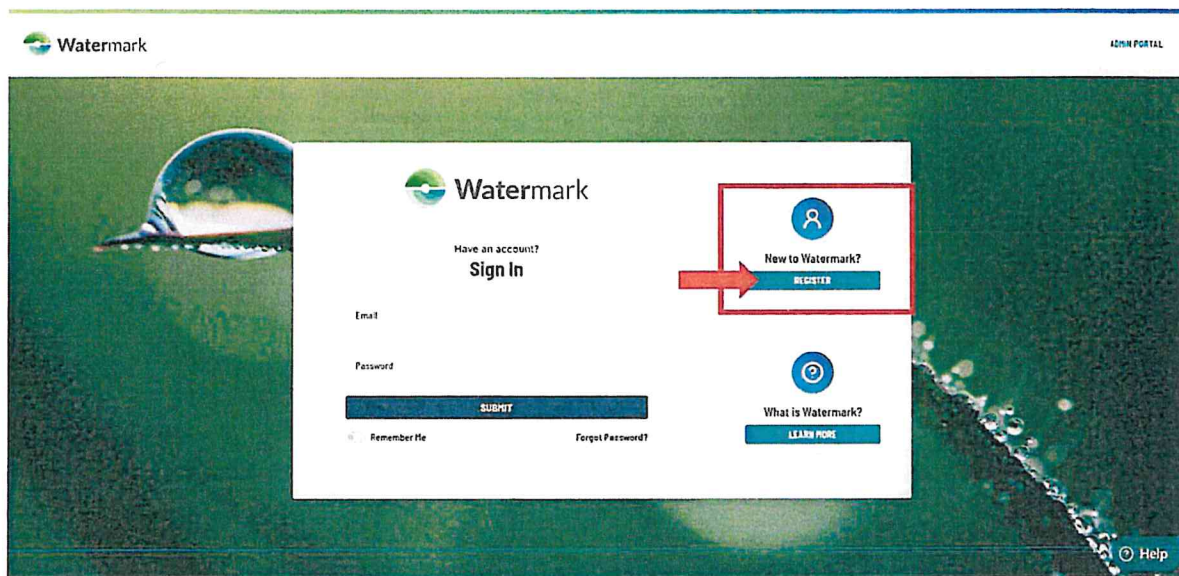
Failure to comply with well registration and/or reporting requirements may result in administrative and civil penalties or other remedies in accordance with Water Code Section 10732, as may be determined by the EMA GSA's Board of Directors.

Do these requirements apply equally to all well owners and operators?

Yes, all existing Groundwater Extraction Facilities located within the boundaries of EMA, except River Extractors, including De Minimis Extractors, shall be registered with the EMA GSA within sixty (60) days of receiving a registration form from the GSA.

Create Account

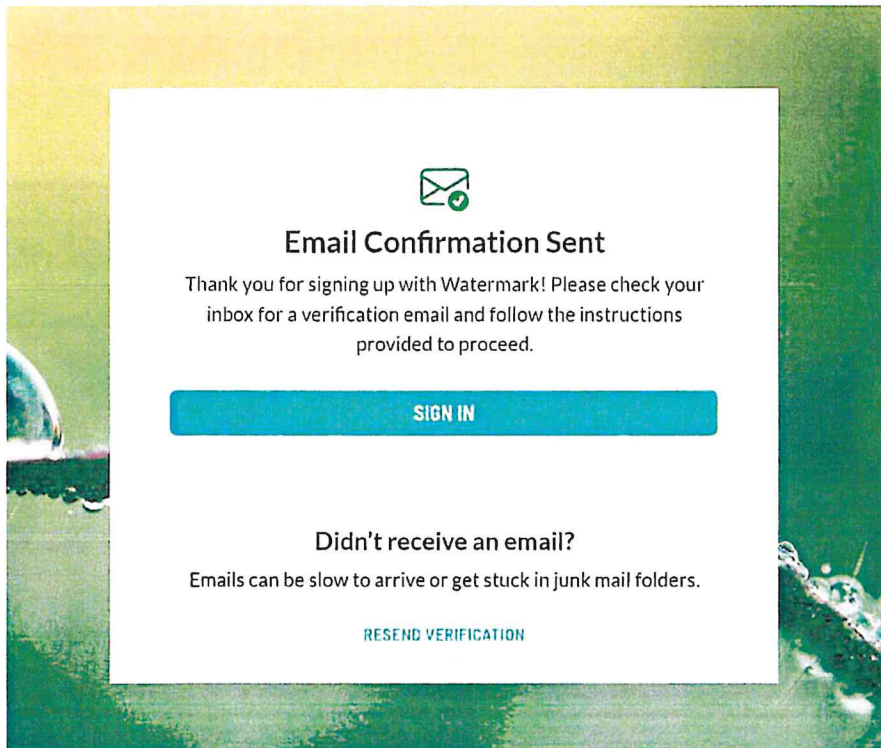
1. Open a web browser on your device.
2. Visit watermark.mljenvironmental.com
3. Click on **Register** to the top right of the white box
4. Complete and submit the form by clicking the **Sign Up** button.
5. You will now be prompted to confirm your email address.



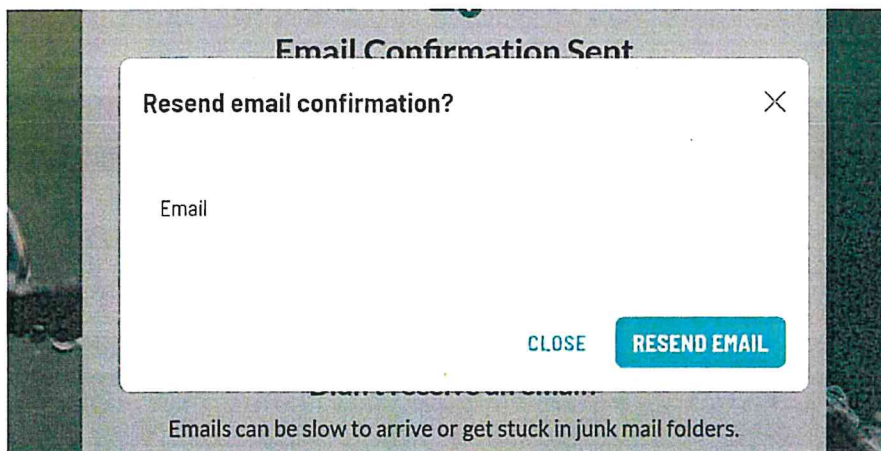
*Note: If you already have a Watermark account with a different GSA, please skip account creation and **Sign In** with your existing username and password credentials.*

Create Account – Email Confirmation Sent

Upon completion of the Create an account form you will be prompted to confirm your email address. Please check your inbox for a verification email.

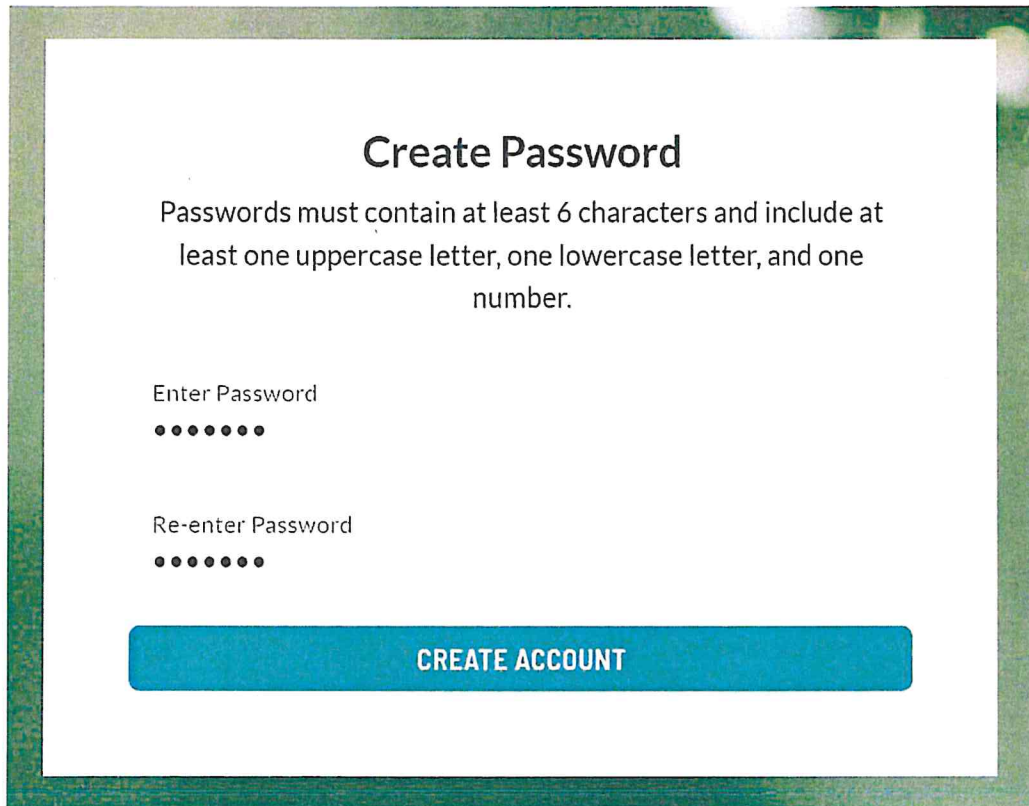


*Note: If you **DID NOT** receive the email, you can resend the email via the **Resend Verification** button.*



Create Account – Create Password

The confirmation email will prompt you to create a password. Upon submission, your Watermark Account will become active.

A screenshot of a web form titled "Create Password". The form is enclosed in a white rectangular box with a green border. At the top, the title "Create Password" is centered in a bold, black font. Below the title, a paragraph of instructions states: "Passwords must contain at least 6 characters and include at least one uppercase letter, one lowercase letter, and one number." This text is also centered. There are two input fields, each consisting of a text label followed by a row of seven black dots representing masked characters. The first input field is labeled "Enter Password" and the second is labeled "Re-enter Password". Both labels are left-aligned. At the bottom of the form, there is a wide, teal-colored button with the text "CREATE ACCOUNT" in white, uppercase letters, centered on the button.

Create Password

Passwords must contain at least 6 characters and include at least one uppercase letter, one lowercase letter, and one number.

Enter Password
•••••••

Re-enter Password
•••••••

CREATE ACCOUNT

Getting Started

Upon successfully creating your Watermark Account password, you will be redirected to the Getting Started page. On this page you will find instructions to begin using Watermark.

You can continue by clicking **Get Started** at the bottom of the page.



Getting Started

Welcome to Watermark. The easiest way to manage your water use and comply with CSEA regulations.

We understand that complying with new regulations can be a daunting task, but with Watermark, you have a reliable partner to guide you through the process. Onboarding to Watermark is a simple and straight-forward process that consists of three easy steps:



Create a Water Account

A Water Account is a tool that allows you to track your water use, and keep up-to-date information that CSAs need for tracking and management purposes.

You can create multiple water accounts, which can be helpful if you're managing water use for multiple businesses or clients.



Add Your Parcels

The second step is to add your parcels. These are the areas of land that you own or manage, and you will need to add them to your water account to track your water use on each parcel.



Add Your Wells (if required)

The final step is to add your wells (if required by your local CSA). This involves locating on a map and entering information about the wells you use to extract groundwater. If your local CSA does not require well registration at this time, you may skip this step.



Walkthrough Guide

Download this user guide if you would like a walk through document to reference as you onboard to Watermark.

 [Walkthrough](#)

GET STARTED



After clicking the Get Started button, you will navigate directly to the Add Water Account page. Complete the fields in the following pages and click the **Submit** button at the bottom of the page.

Add Water Account

CANCEL

Name your account for easy reference

Water Account Name

Optional

?

If a Water Account Name is not defined, a name will be generated for you.

GSA
Choose...

?

Affiliated GSA for this Water Account.

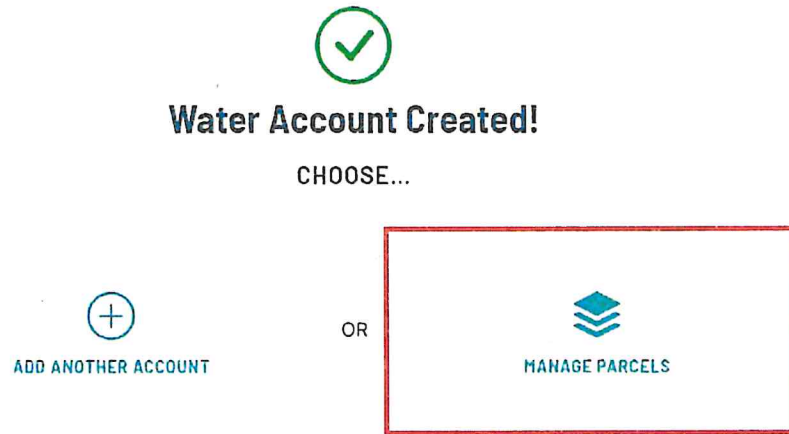
NEXT

?

Help

Adding Parcels

After creating a Water Account, you will have the option to add another Water Account, or to claim parcels to your Water Account. Most users will choose to add parcels. Users who want to group parcels under different Water Accounts may choose to add another account before adding parcels.



Adding Parcels – Transfer from ILRP

If you have an Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) account with a Water Quality Coalition, you may choose to import parcel data from that account instead. Select this option to sign into your ILRP account and import parcel data from there.

Add Parcels to Water Account

ACCOUNT Test Mid Kings Account ▾

Select a method to Add Parcels to your Water Account

Verification Code

Transfer from ILRP

XXXX-XXXX-XXXX



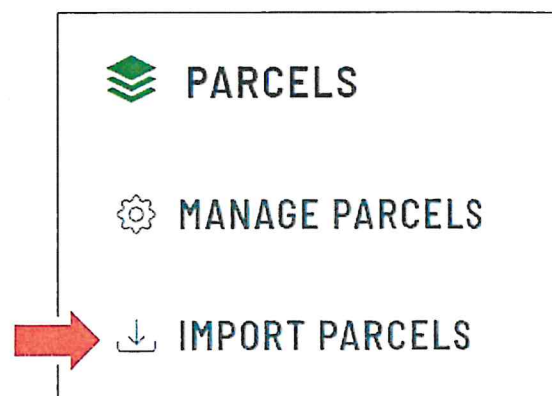
If you are the owner or an authorized representative, enter the verification keys you have received to associate parcels with your account.

Import parcel data from the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program by logging in to your ILRP account. You can import data from multiple ILRP accounts into a single water account.

ADD BY VERIFICATION CODE

TRANSFER MY PARCELS

*Note: You can return to this page at any time by clicking the **Import Parcels** link found under the **Parcels** section of Watermark.*



Adding Parcels – Claim by Verification Code

If you don't choose to import parcel information from your ILRP account, you may instead claim parcels by verification code.



Claim Parcels by Verification Code

Have you received a mailer?

Select the GSA that sent your mailer and enter your verification key.

GSA
Mid-Kings River GSA



Verification Key

On the Claim Parcel by Verification Code page, you will select your GSA from the drop-down menu and input the **Verification Key** that was provided to you in the letter you received in the mail. Click **Look Up** to proceed.

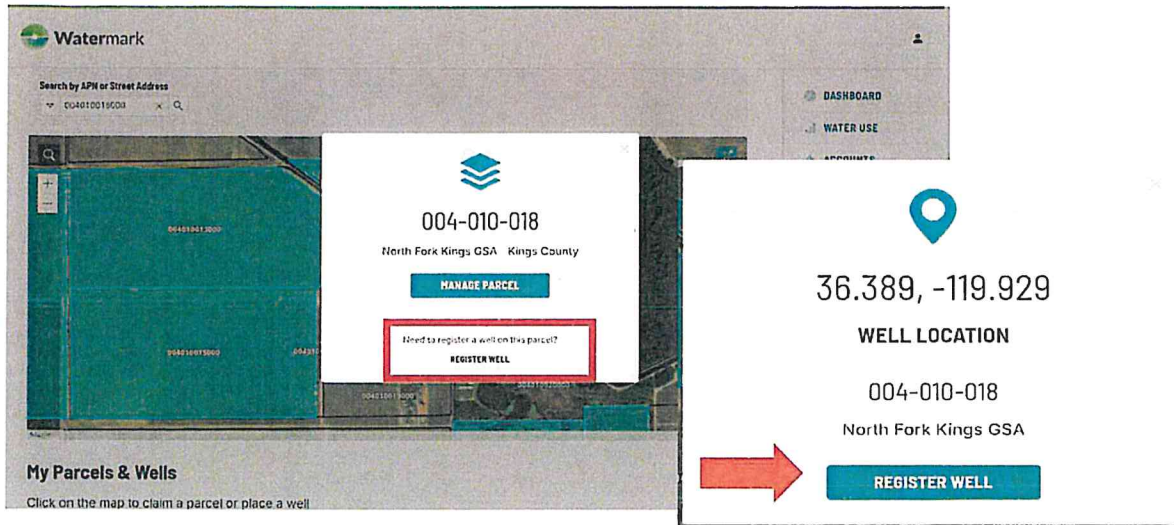
CHANGE CODE

Register Wells

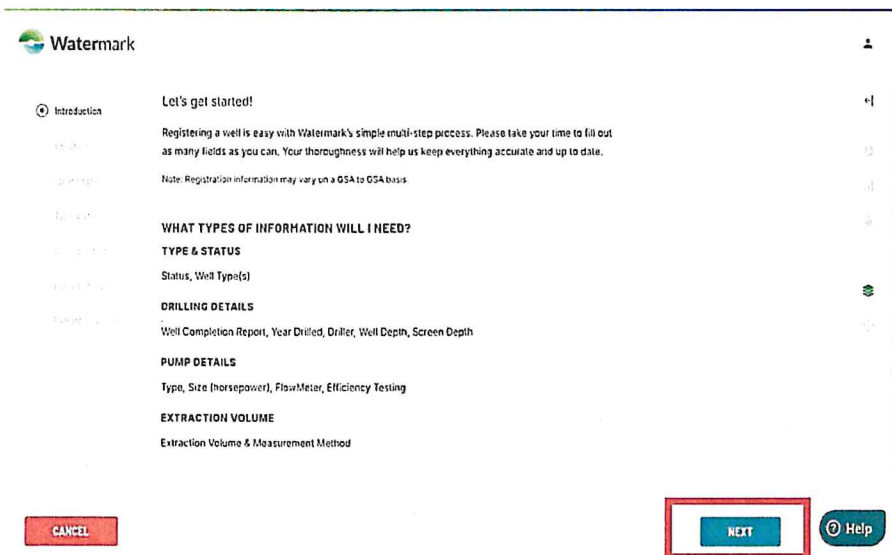
Once you have finished claiming parcels, you can register wells associated with your parcel. From your Parcels page, zoom in using the + button at the top left corner of the map to locate the APN your well is in.



To register your well(s), click on the highlighted blue area of the map within your claimed parcel, and proceed to choose the **Register Well** button. A message box confirming the latitude/longitude coordinates associated with the Well will pop up, go ahead and click on the **Register Well** button to navigate you to the **Well Registration** page.



On the **Well Registration** page, you will see the introductory page that gives you a breakdown of the information you need to complete your registration.



Please review this carefully and click the **Next** button located in the bottom right corner of the page to proceed to the next set of information forms related to the well that you need to complete.

Complete each section to the best of your knowledge. Once each section is filled, click **Next** to save and proceed to the following section. Continue to fill the fields with the relevant well information until you get to the last section and then click **Submit** to complete well registration.

Watermark

Introduction

Location

Identification

Type & Status

Drilling Details

Pump Details

Extraction Volume

+ 2024 WATER YEAR

OCT 2023	Not Available	NOV 2023	Not Available	DEC 2023	Not Available
JAN 2024	Not Available	FEB 2024	Not Available	MAR 2024	Not Available
APR 2024	Not Available	MAY 2024	Not Available	JUN 2024	Not Available
JUL 2024	Not Available	AUG 2024	Not Available	SEP 2024	Not Available

BACK

SUBMIT

Help

Note: The last section of the well registration **Extraction Volume** doesn't need to be filled to complete registration. If it does not apply, you can leave it blank and click submit.

Well Registered!

Choose what to do next

+

ADD MORE WELLS

Go to your well list and register additional wells

OR

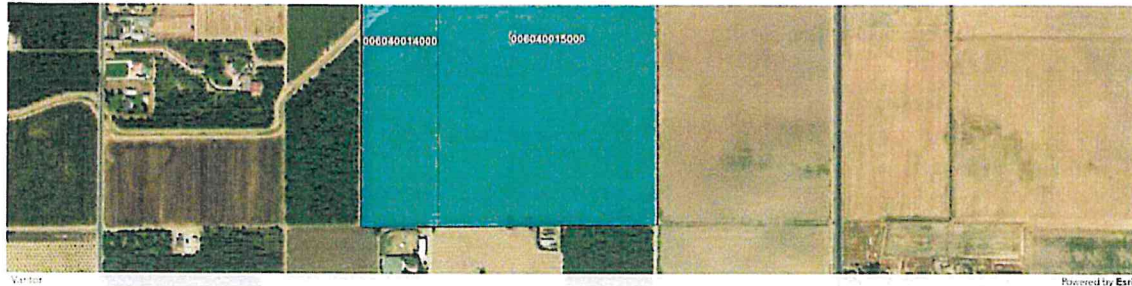
📄

VIEW THIS WELL

See details for the well you just registered

Upon submitting the registration form, you will have the option to Add More Wells or to Manage the Well Record for the well you just registered. Once you have registered all your wells, return to the parcels page by clicking **Parcels** from the menu to the right of the screen.

If you have no wells on a parcel, mark **No Wells** on your parcel page. Click the cog to the right of the associated parcel to choose this option.



My Parcels & Wells

View your parcels and wells on the map

Parcels Wells

APN	COUNTY	GSA	WELLS
009-010-021	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
009-010-022	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
006-032-012	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
006-032-014	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
006-040-014	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
006-040-015	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED
014-080-068	Kings	Mid-Kings River GSA	ACTION REQUIRED

- Manage Parcel
- Unclaim Parcel
- No Wells On Parcel**

Water Accounts – Overview

The **Water Account** page is where you can find an at-a-glance view of your accounts – along with supporting information such as primary contact, parcel count, and well count.

Water Accounts

[JOIN BY CODE](#)[ADD ACCOUNT](#)[WATER USE](#)[ACCOUNTS](#)[PARCELS](#)[WELLS](#)[SUPPORT](#)[GET STARTED](#)

Create a  **Water Account** to track your water use, and keep up-to-date information that GSAs need for tracking and management purposes.

 If you're managing water use for multiple businesses or clients, you can create additional water accounts.

My Accounts

Account Name	Primary Contact	Mailing Address	Parcel Count	Well Count	
Sample Account	Evan Dunham edunham@gmail.com	1234 Fake Street Folsom, CA 95630	5	0	
Another Account	Evan Dunham edunham@gmail.com (555)123-4567	1234 Fake Street Folsom, CA 95630	0	0	
HLJ Farms	Evan Dunham edunham@gmail.com	1234 Fake Street Folsom, CA 95630	4	0	

[ADD ACCOUNT](#)

Manage Water Account

[CANCEL](#)

Access Code

123456789

[INVITE MEMBER](#)

ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Account Name
HLJ Farms

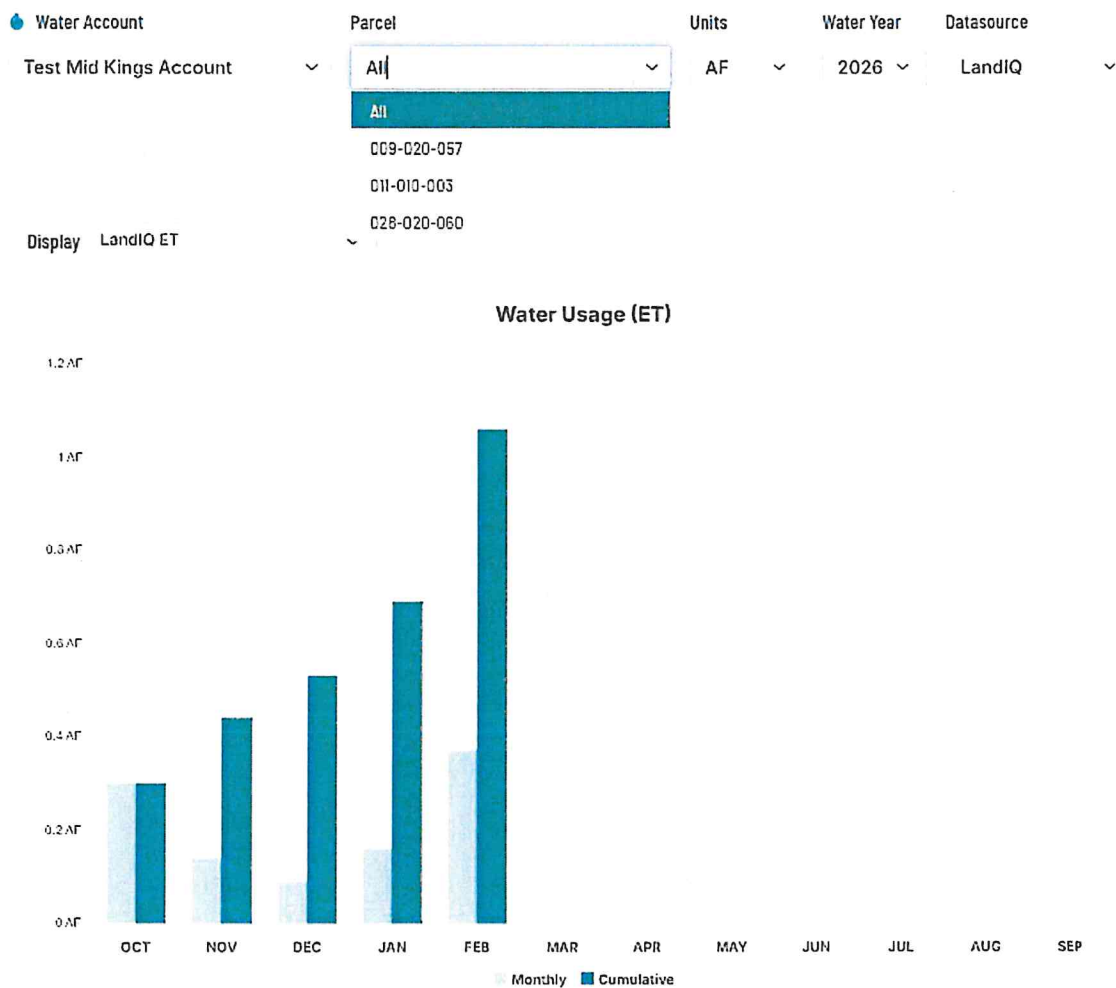
Options

 If a Water Account Name is not defined, a name will be generated for you.

If you would like to share a Water Account with another person, click the account name. This will take you to a page with an **Access Code**. You may share the access code directly by clicking **Invite Member**.

Water Use

After initial setup of your water account(s), you can navigate to the **Water Use** page. Here, you will be able to view your monthly water usage. You can toggle between water accounts, parcels, units, water years, and data sources.



If you didn't add groundwater extraction volume during the Well Registration process, the data you will see here is evapotranspiration (ET) data from LandIQ. Scroll down on the Water Use page to see a monthly breakdown of your water usage.

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July 31, 2026

Board of Directors
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District
3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101
P.O. Box 719
Santa Ynez, California 93460

**HONORARY
TRUSTEE:**
Harlan J. Burchardi
1969-2020

TRUSTEES:

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Mark Moniot

DIVISION 2
Jeff Clay

DIVISION 3
Nick Urton

DIVISION 4
Michael Burchardi

TRUSTEE-AT-LARGE
Brad Joos

GENERAL MANAGER
Paeter E. Garcia

**RE: Payment Under Protest – Groundwater Production Charges for
Period January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026**

Dear Board of Directors:

The Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 (ID No.1) has received a semi-annual demand for payment of groundwater production charges from the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District (SYRWCD) for the period of January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026. For reasons including but not limited to those set forth in previous correspondence to SYRWCD,¹ ID No.1 hereby submits its payment under protest.

As noted previously, ID No.1 is particularly concerned with SYRWCD's pump charge in the Zone E sub-area of the Eastern Management Area (EMA). The few activities that SYRWCD continues to carry out in Zone E (well registration, production reporting, annual report) unnecessarily duplicate activities that the EMA GSA is now conducting for all groundwater producers throughout the entire EMA (including Zone E) in its legal role as the exclusive sustainable groundwater agency for the EMA. (Water Code § 10723.8(d).) From a governance standpoint, ID No.1 remains very concerned that one class of pumpers in the EMA must pay two pump charges for "groundwater management" – one to SYRWCD and one to the EMA GSA – while other pumpers must pay only one charge to the GSA. For purposes of Proposition 26, SYRWCD is not providing directly to those required to pay the Zone E charge any specific benefit, privilege, service, or product for the management, protection, conservation, augmentation, replenishment, or enhancement of groundwater supplies that is not provided to other pumpers in the EMA who are not required to pay the Zone E charge.

ID No.1 looks forward to working with SYRWCD to address and resolve this matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Paeter E. Garcia
General Manager

¹ See, e.g., June 28, 2022; January 31, 2023; April 26, 2023; June 6, 2023; July 31, 2023; January 31, 2024; April 23, 2024; June 19, 2024; July 30, 2024; January 31, 2025; April 23, 2025; June 17, 2025; July 31, 2025; February 2, 2026; June 5, 2026; and June 15, 2026; all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

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https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/solvang-marks-1-million-federal-grant-for-wastewater-plant-award-builds-on-recent-support/article_48543a1b-354a-4d58-9d18-9416757c18f7.html

Solvang marks \$1 million federal grant for wastewater plant; award builds on recent support

Lisa André landre@syvnews.com

Aug 12, 2026



The Water Division's state-certified water operators perform daily, monthly and annual testing of Solvang's drinking water to verify safe supply of municipal water.

Courtesy image



City officials and U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal last Wednesday celebrated a \$1 million federal grant for upgrades at Solvang's wastewater treatment plant, the latest federal contribution to a multi-year modernization effort.

The \$1 million Community Project Funding award, secured by Carbajal through the House appropriations process, will help replace aging infrastructure, improve operational reliability and strengthen emergency preparedness at the plant that serves Solvang and the Santa Ynez Community Services District.

It comes on top of other recent federal support for the same project, including roughly \$2 million previously reported, bringing the combined federal contribution higher as the city advances a larger upgrade estimated at \$18 million to \$25 million.

Design work is expected to finish this year, with construction targeted for 2027 and completion by 2029, according to officials. The city continues to pursue additional financing, including through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program.

Carbajal has described the investment as essential for the region.

"These federal investments in Solvang are about strengthening the foundation of our North County communities," he said in his November 2025 announcement of the \$1 million award. "By modernizing Solvang's wastewater treatment plant, we're not only upgrading critical infrastructure but also ensuring clean water, safe community spaces, and stronger emergency preparedness for generations to come."

The upgrades aim to meet updated water-quality standards, modernize electrical and control systems, and position the plant for long-term reliability.

Lisa André covers lifestyle and local news for the Santa Ynez Valley News and Lompoc Record, editions of the Santa Maria Times. She can be reached at landre@syvnews.com



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July 17, 2026

Paeter E. Garcia
General Manager
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1
P.O. Box 157
Santa Ynez, CA 93460

Subject: Victory for Ratepayers: NMFS Revises Flawed Critical Habitat Petition

Dear Paeter,

Ten years ago, United Water began working to correct a mistake the federal government made more than twenty years ago, one they refused to acknowledge or fix, even as our ratepayers footed the bill. We're glad to share that this work has paid off.

In March 2025 United Water Conservation District (United Water) filed a petition requesting that they make this right – correct their mistake and revise the critical habitat designation for southern California steelhead. On June 29, 2026, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a 12-Month Finding and Proposed Rule stating that "Based on our review of the best scientific and commercial data available, we find that the petitioned action to remove this reach from the critical habitat designation is warranted. Consequently, we are proposing to remove this reach from the critical habitat designation for Southern California steelhead." This marks an extraordinary win for our ratepayers and sets a groundbreaking precedent for regulatory accountability. When we work together, we make a difference.

Below, we lay out the federal review process, the science this successful petition relied on, the price of an erroneous designation, and the costly unwarranted regulatory demands this effort sought to correct.

Federal Review Process

In March 2025, United Water submitted a petition to the Secretary of Commerce requesting that NMFS revise the critical habitat designation for southern California steelhead under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The petition requested a correction of the mis-designation of an approximately 9-mile segment from the confluence of Hopper Creek and the Santa Clara River upstream to the face of Santa Felicia Dam.

In July 2025 NMFS made a 90-day finding in the Federal Register that the petition presented substantial scientific information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. They initiated a formal public comment period and a year-long review process.

On June 29, 2026, NMFS published a 12-Month Finding and Proposed Rule to Revise Critical Habitat Designation for Southern California Steelhead in the Federal Register. Another public comment period is open through August 28, 2026, with a final rule to follow.



A Determination Based on Clear Science

United Water’s petition is grounded in decades of fish surveys, habitat assessments, water quality monitoring, reports, and studies. The evidence is clear on four points:

- **The listed species is not present.** NMFS designated this as occupied critical habitat, but the habitat is not and was not occupied. The federally listed southern California steelhead is not currently present, and no anadromous steelhead have ever been confirmed in lower Piru Creek, neither before designation or after, despite numerous surveys that continue through today.
- **The habitat does not meet ESA criteria.** The habitat never met ESA criteria, nor did it meet NMFS own required criteria related to rearing, spawning, and migration. This is documented by many of NMFS’ own quotes and surveys by state wildlife agencies. Following the designation, NMFS tried to get United Water to improve the habitat, but the law says habitat must meet criteria at the time of designation.
- **Eligible for exclusion but not excluded.** This hydrologic unit was eligible for exclusion and met all exclusion criteria, but NMFS did not exclude it and did not provide evidence or a clear reason.
- **Flawed economic analysis and true costs.** NMFS’s original estimate of \$322,000 of economic impacts for the designation understated actual costs by orders of magnitude, United Water has since incurred millions in costs with no measurable benefit to the species.

United Water conducts extensive annual scientific fieldwork, including fish population surveys and studies, flow monitoring, habitat restoration, and invasive species management. Our work demonstrates a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship in balance with responsible and sustainable water resources management.

What This Has Cost So Far... and What Was Coming

From the critical habitat designation in 2005 to date, United Water and its ratepayers have borne approximately \$80 million in costs tied to the erroneous designation below the Santa Felicia Dam, including mandatory water releases, lost water, environmental studies, staff time, consultant costs and legal fees. In addition, United Water has had to make extensive operational changes and purchase supplemental water. NMFS’ original estimate of \$322,000 in economic impact has proven to be off by close to 250 times.

How \$80 Million Has Impacted Rates

Impact of NMFS’ \$80M in Water and Compliance Costs	Rate
As a percent of water rates (average over ~20 years)	28%



NMFS has requested much more. Approximately \$158 million in additional capital expenditures at the dam; a fish passage structure, habitat improvements, and a new release channel. The listed species is simply not present below the dam therefore the requested actions have no scientific justification and cannot benefit the species.

If NMFS's additional requested expenditures were imposed on United Water, the cost would ultimately fall on ratepayers. Spread across five years, \$158 million translates to a 77% average increase in water rates, or a \$223 average increase per acre foot, for projects that serve no legitimate conservation purpose.

What \$158 Million Would Mean for Ratepayers

Potential Rate Impact of NMFS \$158M in Pending Requests	Projected Increase
Percent increase in water rates (average over 5 years)	77%
Dollar increase per acre foot (average over 5 years)	\$223

Water affordability is a pressing concern for all of us. A rate increase of this magnitude, driven not by infrastructure need nor true environmental benefit but by a flawed regulatory designation, would be an unacceptable burden. That is precisely why United Water has fought for this petition and the substantial cost savings it represents for ratepayers. This first-of-its-kind determination highlights that we must hold regulatory agencies accountable for the facts and best science.

In conclusion, the determination on this petition represents a remarkable moment of success and hope for our region and for water agencies nationwide. United Water remains committed to working together and to advocating for what is right. We thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Guardado'.

Mauricio Guardado

General Manager, United Water Conservation District

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Reclamation Publishes Final Environmental Impact Statement for Future Colorado River Operations

Preferred alternative provides framework for post-2026 river operations with flexibility to adapt to changing needs

Media Contact: Communications@usbr.gov

For Release: Jul 31, 2026



Reclamation releases Final Environmental Impact Statement for future Colorado River operations.

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Reclamation has released the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which designates a preferred course of action for future management of

Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The preferred alternative establishes an adaptive decision framework to be used to develop operating guidelines designed to ensure reliable operations in the Colorado River Basin while maintaining the flexibility to respond to changing conditions over a 10-year period through 2036. The framework also preserves the opportunity for the Basin to continue working towards consensus agreements, and if successful, be incorporated into future operations.

The framework will be used to develop operating guidelines for operations at Lake Powell and Lake Mead that can be adjusted for shorter and longer term periods.

"The Department has a responsibility to ensure the Colorado River system remains reliable and resilient for the millions of Americans, communities and industries that depend on it," **said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum**. "This framework provides the flexibility to respond to changing hydrologic conditions while preserving the opportunity for the Basin States to continue working toward durable, consensus-based solutions."

The framework establishes the operational principles, sideboards—key thresholds and ranges for operational elements—and a process that will govern development and issuance of operating guidelines through 2036. Operational sideboards were chosen to ensure that the Department would have flexibility and environmental compliance to operate the system in a way that is responsive to actual hydrologic conditions and allows for the incorporation of Basin-wide innovative water management solutions. The sideboards, which are analyzed in the Final EIS, provide for annual releases from Lake Powell between 5.0 maf and 12.0 maf, Lower Basin shortages of up to 3.0 maf, the ability to store up to 8.0 maf and 3.0 maf of conserved water in Lake Powell and Lake Mead for future use, respectively, and the opportunity for voluntary Upper Basin conservation up to 200 kaf, subject to hydrology.

The Department would issue operating guidelines, within these sideboards, at anticipated 2-year periods, unless consensus-based agreements provide for a longer duration. It also establishes a structure under which operating guidelines will be developed, reviewed and periodically updated. This approach provides certainty regarding a decision process over the next 10 years while preserving the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions.

"This plan strikes a balance between flexibility and predictability for the Colorado River system that is vital to the 40 million people who rely on it given unprecedented hydrologic

conditions and the potential for considerable impacts on water users,” **said Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Andrea Travnicek**. “It also allows a new flexibility to respond to changing conditions and potential consensus.”

The Colorado River provides water for more than 40 million people and fuels hydropower resources in seven states. It serves as a vital resource for 30 tribes and two Mexican states, sustaining 5.5 million acres of farmland and agricultural communities throughout the West, while also supporting critical ecosystems and protecting endangered species.

Drought conditions over the past 25 years, combined with expectations of continued dry conditions, have made development of future operating guidelines for the Colorado River particularly challenging. The combined contents of Lake Powell and Lake Mead have not been this low since before Glen Canyon Dam began filling in 1963, and since 2000 water use has exceeded total system inflow in most years. The Colorado River Compact apportioned 7.5 million acre-feet to both the Upper and Lower Basins based on the estimated pre-compact average inflow (1906-1921) of approximately 18 million acre-feet. However, inflows from 2000 to 2024 have only averaged 12.9 million acre-feet and the unregulated inflow into Lake Powell this year as of July is estimated to be only 3.5 maf.

Between 2020 and 2024, the average consumptive use in the Colorado River Basin was 13.1 million acre-feet. That is broken down by:

- Upper Basin Use: 3.8 million acre-feet (29%).
- Lower Basin Use: 6.5 million acre-feet (49%).
- Mexico Use: 1.4 million acre-feet (11%).
- Evaporation: 1.4 million acre-feet (11%).

This Final EIS is the culmination of a NEPA process that was initiated in June 2023. Over this three-year period Reclamation engaged extensively with Basin stakeholders and that input is reflected in the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS and the Preferred Alternative.

Reclamation received more than 18,000 comments, including 785 unique submissions from the public, tribes, states, federal agencies and others after releasing the draft EIS in

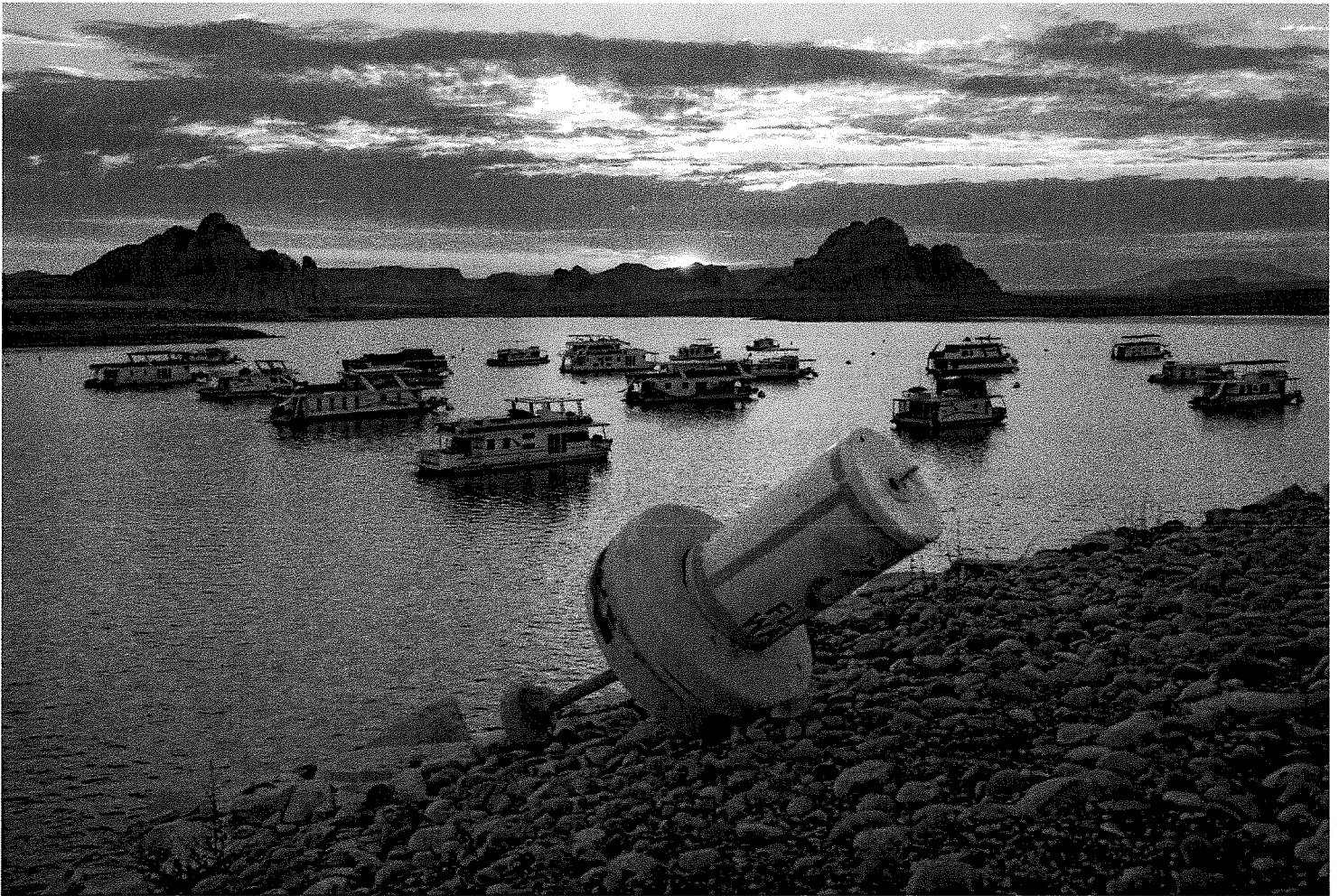
January 2026. Reclamation evaluated substantive comments and updated the final EIS, with public input helping to shape the preferred alternative.

The Final EIS is available on Reclamation's [website](#).

The final EIS addresses only domestic river operations. A separate binational process addressing water deliveries to Mexico is nearing completion and the Department is committed to continued collaboration with Mexico. The Department will conduct all necessary and appropriate discussions regarding post-2026 operations and implementation of the 1944 Water Treaty with Mexico through the International Boundary and Water Commission in consultation with the Department of State.



Trump administration spares Southwest from harshest water cuts in new Colorado River plan



A formerly floating buoy now sits high and dry above Lake Powell at the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area on July 15 near Page, Ariz. (John Locher/Associated Press)

The Trump administration's plan, announced Friday, allows the federal government to reassess every two years.

It aims to strike a compromise between two quarreling groups: the three downstream states of California, Arizona and Nevada, and the upstream states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico.

The 10-year plan is designed to deal with “unprecedented hydrologic conditions,” said Andrea Travnicek, the Interior Department's assistant secretary for water and science.



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

California dodges a bullet on Colorado River cuts

July 23, 2026

The agency said in its announcement that “drought conditions over the past 25 years,” and the likelihood of continued dry conditions, made it “particularly challenging” to come up with new rules.

The Trump administration's statement did not mention climate change. But extensive research shows global warming, driven by the use of fossil fuels and other emissions of planet-heating gases, is intensifying extremely hot and dry conditions.

Under the two-year deal, which has not yet been released, officials say California will cut its use of Colorado River water by about 12% through 2028, Arizona will take about 31% less and Nevada 28% less.

The Interior Department called it a flexible approach “to respond to changing conditions” through 2036.

The Interior Department said the three lower states used 49% of the water from 2020-24, while the upper states used 29%. The agency said 11% evaporated from reservoirs and along the river, and Mexico used the remaining 11%.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is not requiring water cuts for the four upstream states — Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico — over the next two years.

The Trump administration is providing \$350 million for the lower states to conserve water and \$100 million for the upper states. The money comes from the Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act, and will pay cities to leave water in Lake Mead, and farmers and ranchers to leave fields dry.

About three-fourths of the water that's taken out of the river is for agriculture — hay, lettuce, broccoli and other crops.

The Trump administration published its plan in a final environmental impact statement. It will soon release more details in what's called a record of decision, and in guidelines for 2027 and 2028.

“This is an important milestone, but it is not the finish line,” said JB Hamby, California’s Colorado River commissioner.

He said California’s use of Colorado River water has already decreased to its lowest level since 1949, and the state is agreeing to cut back more because “the Colorado River no longer reliably produces enough water to support all the uses and expectations built around it.”

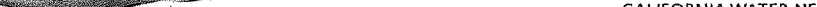
Southern California’s cities get nearly one-fourth of their water from the river. Managers of the Metropolitan Water District, which supplies nearly 19 million people, said the federal plan represents a vital step, but they’re disappointed it contains no water reductions for the upstream states, and those states should step up.

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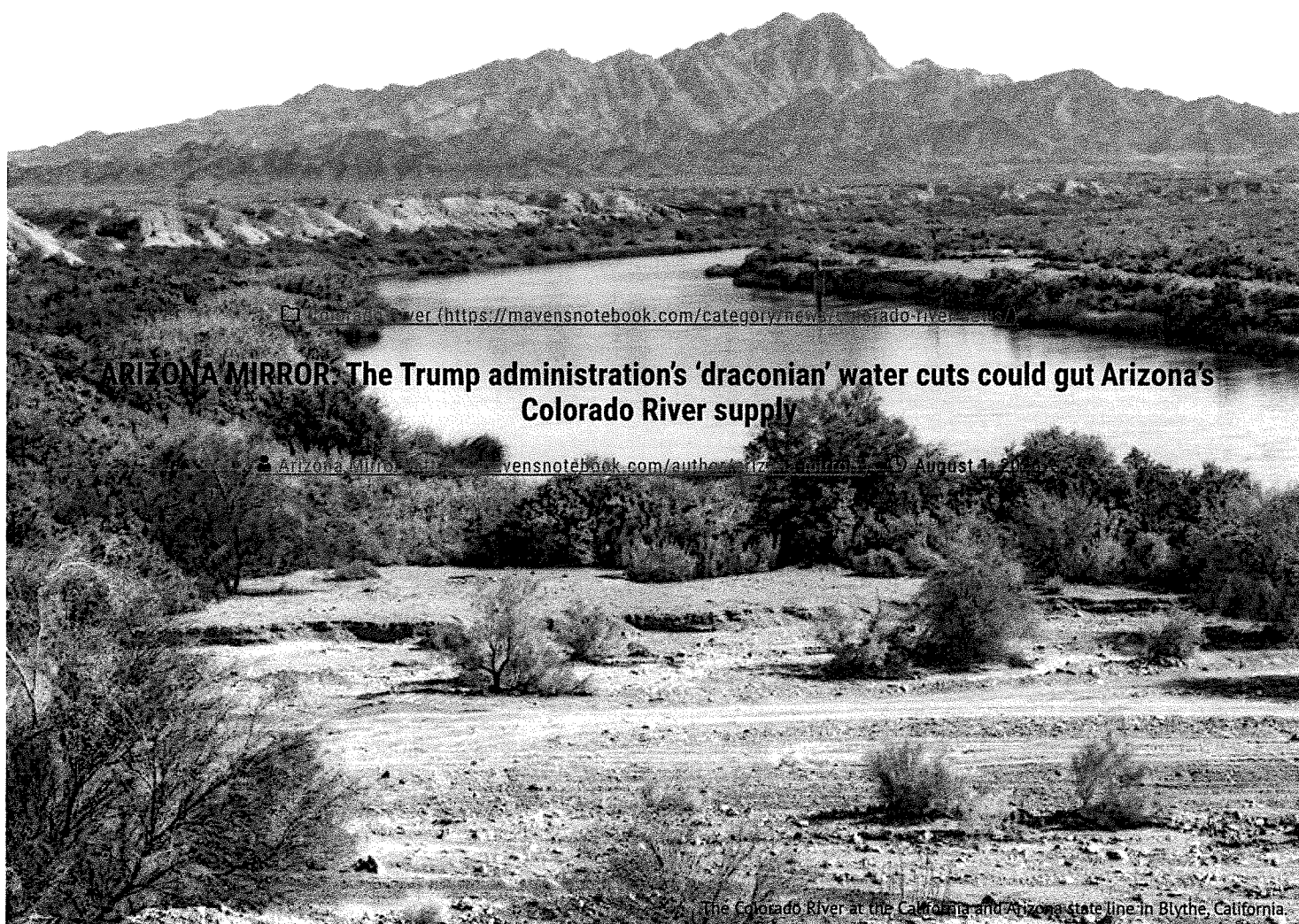
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The Colorado River at the California and Arizona state line in Blythe, California.

Hobbs says the reductions threaten farms, chipmakers and national security as the state weighs its legal options

By Caitlin Sievers, Arizona Mirror

A new federal plan (https://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/post2026/final-eis/docs/ES/P26_FEIS_ExecSummary_508.pdf), released Friday could mean cuts of up to 77% to Arizona's share of Colorado River water, in the midst of a 25-year megadrought, something that state leaders say would cause catastrophic harm to the state's economy.

"Such reductions would devastate Arizona's water users and its economy," the Arizona Department of Water Resources said in a statement denouncing the plan.

The Lower Basin states — Arizona, Nevada and California — and the Upper Basin states — Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming — have been attempting to negotiate (<https://azmirror.com/2026/02/03/arizona-faces-outsized-burden-if-colorado-river-states-miss-february-deadline/>) an updated water usage agreement for more than two years. So far, they've been unsuccessful. (<https://azmirror.com/2026/02/13/arizona-blasts-upper-basin-states-for-refusing-cuts-as-colorado-river-talks-fail/>)

"For many months it has been clear that the direction of Colorado River (<https://mavensnotebook.com/category/news/colorado-river-news/>) negotiations has been an exercise in lowering expectations, particularly for a long-term, seven-state agreement on operating this vital river system," ADWR said in the statement.

The Colorado River is a vital source of drinking water for 40 million people in the seven states, Mexico and 30 Native American tribes, and it provides water for farming operations and hydroelectricity.

All seven states were parties to the Colorado River Compact, a 1922 agreement governing the river's water use that allocates 7.5 million acre-feet of water each year to be shared by the Upper Basin states and another 7.5 million to be used among the Lower Basin states.

An acre-foot of water is enough to cover an acre of land to a depth of one foot, or about 325,851 gallons. That's enough to provide three homes in Arizona a year of water, on average.

Since forming the compact, the states have updated their water usage guidelines several times, even though the apportionments remain the same. But Lower Basin states face cuts mandated by the federal government during times of drought and Upper Basin states do not.

The existing water usage rules expire at the end of the year, so setting new rules is imperative to the states as the river's water supply continues to decline due to a 25-year drought spurred on by climate change (<https://mavensnotebook.com/tag/climate-change/>).

Water officials in Arizona and the Lower Basin states have criticized the Upper Basin states for their refusal to agree to any federally mandated water usage cuts of their own. While the Lower Basin states insist that every state take their fair share of cuts, Upper Basin states have argued that they've never used their full allotment and already face regular cuts and shortages based on physical availability of water.

Riley Snow, director of the water law department at Rose Law Group, told the Arizona Mirror that he viewed the Upper Basin's refusal to take mandatory cuts as a "tragedy of the commons."

"I just don't feel like it's good policy," he said. "It's not good for the Southwest, essentially, especially Arizona (and California, to not get what they're entitled to under the compact just because the Upper Basin is in a drought and feeling like they need to hold on to everything that they can."

Arizona faces an outsized burden when it comes to reductions because the Central Arizona Project, a series of canals that supplies Colorado River water to the Valley and the Tucson area, is one of the newest users of the river water, making it legally one of the first to be cut.

But Snow said now isn't the time for Arizonans to panic, as the state has prepared for potential Colorado River cuts via groundwater banking and increasing efficiency. Beyond that, 70% of the state's water goes toward agriculture, where adopting more efficient practices, fallowing land and growing less thirsty crops could make a big difference.

After negotiations with the Upper Basin were unfruitful earlier this year, the Lower Basin states in May offered their own proposal to reduce their shared usage by 1.25 million acre-feet annually in 2027 and 2028, with about a 30% cut for Arizona.

This proposal was aimed at helping to stabilize water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the system's two key reservoirs, whose water levels fell this month to their lowest level (<https://qanr.usu.edu/coloradoriver/files/research/reservoir-moment.pdf>) since 1957.

Without a major turnaround in hydrologic conditions, water levels in Lake Powell are expected to fall by next spring to below "minimum power pool (<https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/news-release/5326>)," at which point the Glen Canyon Dam's hydroelectric turbines would be unable to operate.

The Trump administration's "preferred alternative" plan, part of an Environmental Impact Statement released Friday, could reduce the Lower Basin's allocation by 3 million acre-feet per year, slashing Arizona's water supply from the river by more than 75%. But there's still a possibility that the federal government could implement the Lower Basin's proposal instead.

The federal government's new river usage rules, which are still being negotiated, will be released later this year.

"While this (Federal Environmental Impact Statement) still contains unacceptable options that include the federal government forcing Arizona to take the majority of draconian water cutbacks, implementing the Lower Basin agreement would protect Arizona from massive water cuts, distribute reductions more fairly across the Lower Basin States, and provide stability and protection to the water supply that our communities rely upon," Gov. Katie Hobbs said in a statement.

In March, Arizona retained the high-powered law firm Sullivan & Cromwell to represent the state in possible litigation among the Colorado River Basin states and the federal government.

But Snow, who represents water law clients in both Arizona and Utah, told the Mirror that he doesn't see any litigation in the immediate future.

Instead, he said that Arizona and the other Lower Basin states should focus on convincing the Trump administration to implement the proposal they presented in May and to put some federal funding behind it. After that, he said, the states can come together to create a long term seven-state solution.

Hobbs said forcing Arizona to take on such devastating cuts will have repercussions across the American economy and national security.

“Arizona provides the agricultural produce, critical minerals, weapons defense systems and cutting-edge semiconductors that feed America, protect America and fuel America's high-tech economy,” Hobbs said in the statement. “No other state in the Colorado River basin can say the same. We developed the Lower Basin Proposal to increase water resiliency for the region and ensure that no single state was bearing the burden alone.”

Arizona politicians from across the political spectrum released statements on Friday, agreeing that the state shouldn't bear the brunt of the cuts without sacrifice from the other basin states.

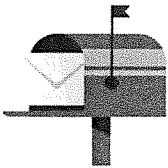
“Arizona recognizes the serious condition of the Colorado River, and we are prepared to be part of a responsible solution,” Arizona Senate President Warren Petersen said in a statement. “What we will not accept is a federal plan that protects some states while placing a devastating and disproportionate burden on Arizona. Our state has already conserved enormous amounts of water and made difficult sacrifices to protect this river.”

Arizona Senate Democrats urged the federal government to build its rules for 2027 and 2028 around the Lower Basin proposal.

“Water is the foundation of our communities and our economy,” Senate Democratic Whip Rosanna Gabaldón said in a statement. “Our farmers, tribal nations, businesses, and families have worked for decades to use water responsibly. Arizona should not be punished for leading on conservation while others refuse to do their part.”

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NEVADA CURRENT: Nevada faces 'unrealistic reductions' in 'fundamentally flawed' Colorado River plan, officials say

[Nevada Current](#) (<https://mavensnotebook.com/author/nevada-current/>) © August 1, 2026

Hoover Dam. Photo by Deposit Photos (<https://depositphotos.com/photo/hoover-dam-and-lake-meard-8175698.html>)

By Jennifer Solis, Nevada Current

The federal government has released its long-awaited 10-year plan to manage worsening water shortages along the Colorado River (<https://mavensnotebook.com/category/news/colorado-river-news/>), including deep cuts to Nevada's allocation of the drought-stricken river.

Following months of negotiations – and years of states failing to reach an agreement on their own – the Bureau of Reclamation on Friday published a final environmental impact statement laying out their framework for how to manage the river's largest reservoirs, Lakes Mead and Powell, after current guidelines expire in October.

The proposal does not outline specific operating plans, but does call for the development of river operating plans every two years through 2036, unless the basin states reach a consensus agreement. The first of those plans for 2027 and 2028 will likely be released in the coming days.

"This framework provides the flexibility to respond to changing hydrologic conditions while preserving the opportunity for the basin states to continue working toward durable, consensus-based solutions," Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement.

The guidelines published Friday spared Nevada, Arizona, and California from the most severe water cutbacks that had been proposed over the course of negotiations, instead using water cuts originally proposed by the Lower Basin states.

The plan would require Lower Basin states to reduce their water use by 1.5 million acre-feet over the next two years, with Nevada on the line for a reduction of 50,000 acre-feet.

However, under the Bureau of Reclamation's preferred method of managing the dwindling Lake Powell and Lake Mead, Lower Basin states could be required to cut their use by as much as 3 million acre-feet annually during especially dry years.

Nevada would face the lowest mandatory reductions on an acre-feet basis under the preferred alternative, with a maximum curtailment of 210,000 acre-feet annually during especially dry years under the guidelines. Nevada also has the smallest allocation of Colorado River water among the three lower basin states.

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo said the federal plan "seeks to impose unrealistic reductions on Nevada and our water users," and "could have devastating economic and environmental impacts on Nevada."

The governor called for "shared sacrifice from all water users across the Colorado River Basin."

Upper Basin states – Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah – will not be subject to mandatory water cutbacks under the plan, however, the plan does outline a range of reservoir releases in the upper Colorado River to protect downstream reservoirs from reaching critically low levels.

The final environmental impact statement instead sets a target for voluntary water cuts in Upper Basin states of up to 200,000 acre-feet, about 5% of the Upper Basin's annual water use of 3.8 million acre-feet.

John Entsminger, Southern Nevada Water Authority General Manager and Nevada's lead negotiator on the Colorado River, echoed the governor, saying that "any plan built around significant reductions for only three of the seven basin states that share the river is fundamentally flawed by its nature."

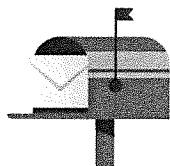
"While our community is prepared to manage through short-term reductions to protect the Colorado River system, as the basin's smallest water user, Nevada cannot solve the river's imbalance alone," Entsminger said. "Long-term solutions must recognize that the Colorado River's challenges are basin-wide and require basin-wide participation."

Lombardo and Entsminger said they remained committed to finding a seven-state consensus agreement.

The Upper Colorado River Commission said they are waiting on final reports to "provide a more comprehensive assessment of the federal operating plan," but plan to impose mandatory cuts to water users and advance conservation programs to boost water storage (<https://mavensnotebook.com/tag/water-storage/>) in Upper Basin reservoirs.

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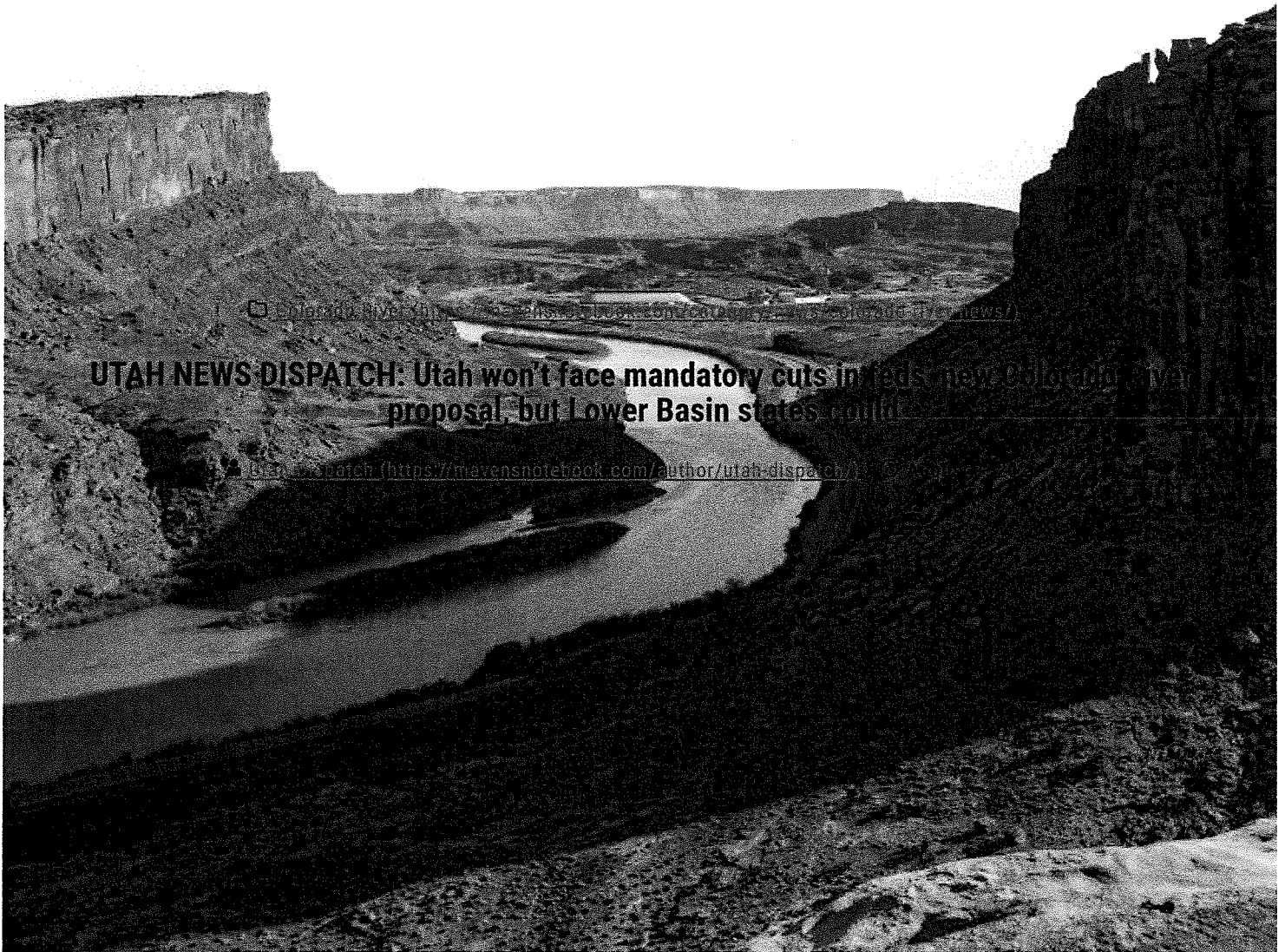


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By Annie Knox, Utah News Dispatch

After Utah and six other states along the [Colorado River](https://mavensnotebook.com/category/news/colorado-river-news/) (<https://mavensnotebook.com/category/news/colorado-river-news/>) failed to reach a deal on how to share its dwindling water supply, the federal government on Friday released its own 10-year outline.

Under the proposal from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Lower Basin states of Arizona, California and Nevada would share in cuts of up to 3 million acre-feet per year. The framework doesn't mandate cuts for Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

Instead, it identifies a conservation goal for the Upper Basin — 200,000 acre-feet per year — about as much as Utah's Deer Creek and East Canyon reservoirs together can hold. The plan would also allow for smaller annual releases from Lake Powell of down to 5 million acre-feet, compared to the current 6 million acre-feet, with new operating guidelines every two years.

Utah's chief Colorado River negotiator, Gene Shawcroft, praised the proposal on Friday, telling reporters it recognizes the reality of the water available, not just the demand. But he emphasized it provides a broad framework, with the details to follow in coming days.

"I would just simply say, this is a bridge, not a destination," Shawcroft said in a virtual news conference. "It certainly could be a bridge over troubled waters, but perhaps a bridge over no waters. We just aren't quite sure."

He and Amy Haas, executive director of the Colorado River Authority of Utah, were still reading through the 2,600 pages contained in the bureau's environmental impact statement released Friday.

Haas said the state will know more about what it's contending with when it gets a copy of a two-year operations plan for 2027 and 2028 in coming days, though the exact timeline wasn't clear.

The Colorado River provides water to 40 million people across the U.S. and Mexico, contributing 27% of Utah's water supply. It's shrinking because of drought, overuse and hotter temperatures linked to [climate change](https://mavensnotebook.com/tag/climate-change/) (<https://mavensnotebook.com/tag/climate-change/>).

This year's record-high temperatures and lowest snowpack on record aren't helping. Normally, Colorado River runoff is about 13 million acre-feet, Shawcroft said. Now it's 3.5 million acre-feet.

He told reporters: "We're in a dire situation."

On Friday, Arizona's Department of Water Resources called the proposal's cuts for the Lower Basin "unacceptable," saying such reductions would devastate Arizona's water users and its economy."

The agency described negotiations over many months as "an exercise in lowering expectations, particularly for a long-term, seven-state agreement on operating this vital river system."

The disagreement could find its way into a courtroom soon. [Arizona](https://azmirror.com/2026/02/03/lawmakers-prepare-for-colorado-river-water-fight-with-unanimous-vote-boosting-legal-fund/) (<https://azmirror.com/2026/02/03/lawmakers-prepare-for-colorado-river-water-fight-with-unanimous-vote-boosting-legal-fund/>) and [Utah](https://www.fox13now.com/news/colorado-river-collaborative/utah-) (<https://www.fox13now.com/news/colorado-river-collaborative/utah->

[legislature-stashes-1-million-for-colorado-river-litigation](#)) have both taken steps this year to build up litigation funds.

“For Utah, litigation is never our plan A,” Haas told reporters Friday. “Whether it’s a plan B, depending on the context of this document, that remains to be seen. But litigation is not going to get us anywhere on this river. It’s not going to get us more water.”

At issue in the negotiations is who absorbs necessary cuts. Upper Basin states argue they use less water than Lower Basin states, don’t have huge reservoirs to store water in dry years, and [lack legal authority](#) (<https://nevadacurrent.com/2026/02/13/colorado-river-states-miss-deadline-compromise-nowhere-in-sight/#:~:text=Entsminger%2C%20Nevada's%20lead%20river%20negotiator,impact%20the%20agency's%20strict%20timeline.>) to place significant restrictions on water users.

The proposal out Friday is adaptable and allows the states to keep negotiating, said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.

“This framework provides the flexibility to respond to changing hydrologic conditions while preserving the opportunity for the Basin States to continue working toward durable, consensus-based solutions,” Burgum said in a statement.

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, in a joint statement with his counterparts in the other upstream states, said they're encouraged that incoming operating guidelines “will better reflect existing water supply, which must underpin any practicable plan going forward.”

They went on to say that both the upper and lower divisions of the basin “are feeling the pain of severe drought. This is a reality that all states, and the federal government, will need to address practically, which is why a seven-state agreement will provide the best outcome for all water users in the Colorado River Basin.”

Water use is outpacing the river’s flows, and that overconsumption adds up. The combined amount of water in Lake Powell and Lake Mead is at its lowest point since before Glen Canyon Dam began to fill up in 1963, the bureau said in its Friday news release.

If water levels dip to critical lows, as forecasts suggest they could by late this year, the nation’s two largest reservoirs could fail to produce power. If their depths continue to slide, they’ll fail to send water downstream.

Conservation and recreation groups have called for an end to the gridlock, saying it’s dragging on in the background while hotter and drier conditions are driving up wildfire risks, air quality concerns and restrictions on the water supply.

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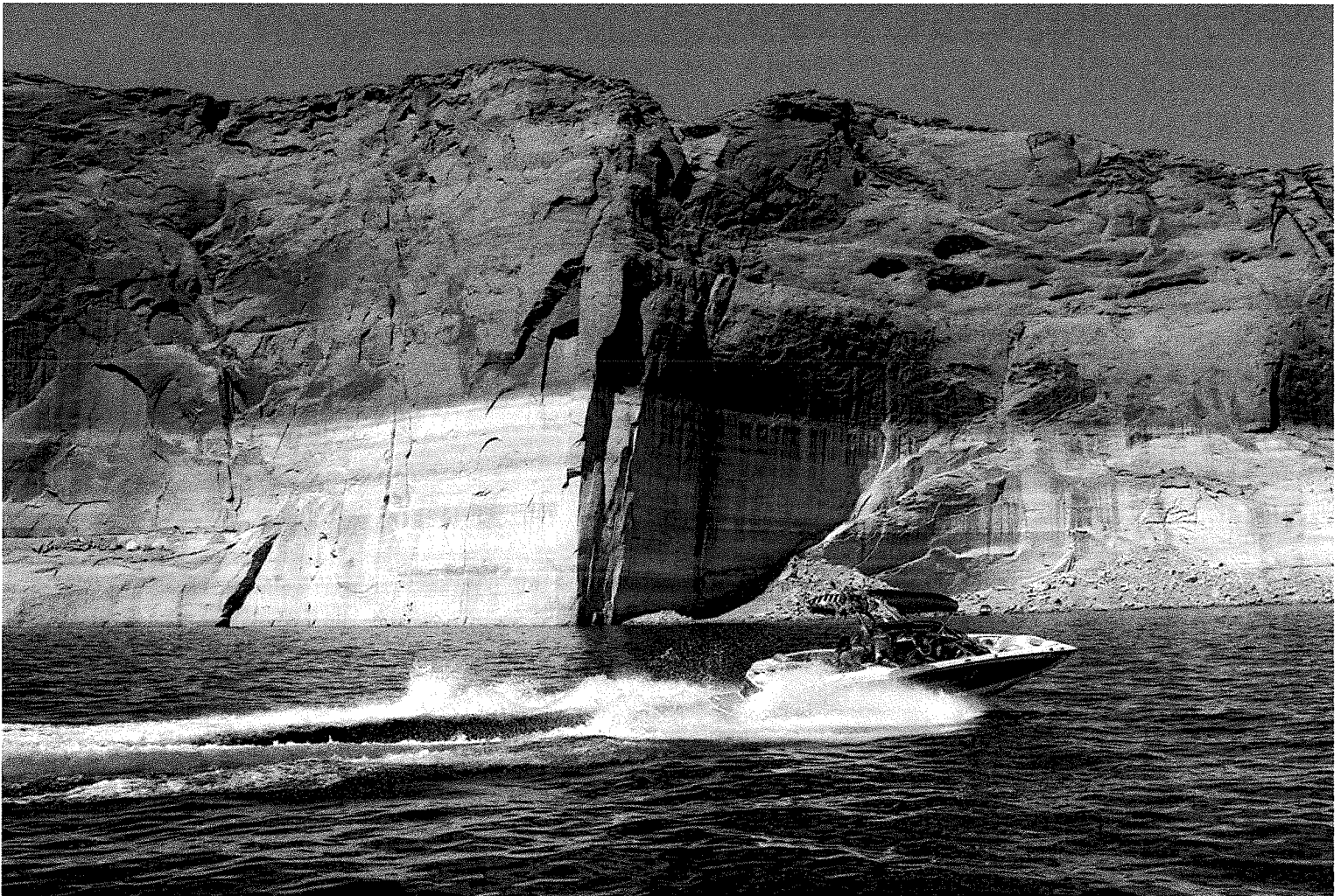
WATER

Band-Aid, not a cure: federal Colorado River plan leaves states guessing every two years



BY RACHEL BECKER
AUGUST 5, 2026

Republish



A boat passes by the tall bleached "bathtub ring" on the rocky banks of Lake Powell in Page, Arizona on Aug. 01, 2026. Photo by Justin Sullivan, Getty Images

IN SUMMARY

- States failed to reach a Colorado River deal, so the feds are likely to impose a stopgap plan cutting California's supply 10% through 2028.
- Worse than the cuts, though, is the uncertainty. Here's what that means for California.

Dire water conditions, missed deadlines and uncertainty on the Colorado River are complicating critical water decisions in California.

No single state, water agency or federal official has shown the power, or the will, to break the deadlock among Colorado River basin states over how to share the dwindling supplies.

Years of fraught negotiations have failed to yield consensus even as major reservoir storage plummets **to record lows** — ratcheting up the tensions, and the stakes, for the states' negotiators.

Now, key agreements for managing the river are expiring at the end of this year. These include agreements reached in 2007 that lasted nearly two decades, which took fewer than three years to craft.

This round of talks has already taken longer — and, so far, produced nothing so durable.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the federal steward for the river under the Department of the Interior, last week **released** a **10-year framework** that establishes rough parameters for managing the river, but imposes no specific long-term plan.

The federal provisions include cuts of up to 40% to the shared supply of California, Arizona and Nevada in the lower basin. They also allow releases from Lake Powell, which collects flows from the upper basin, to dip low enough they risk violating a legally required threshold for water deliveries to downstream states.

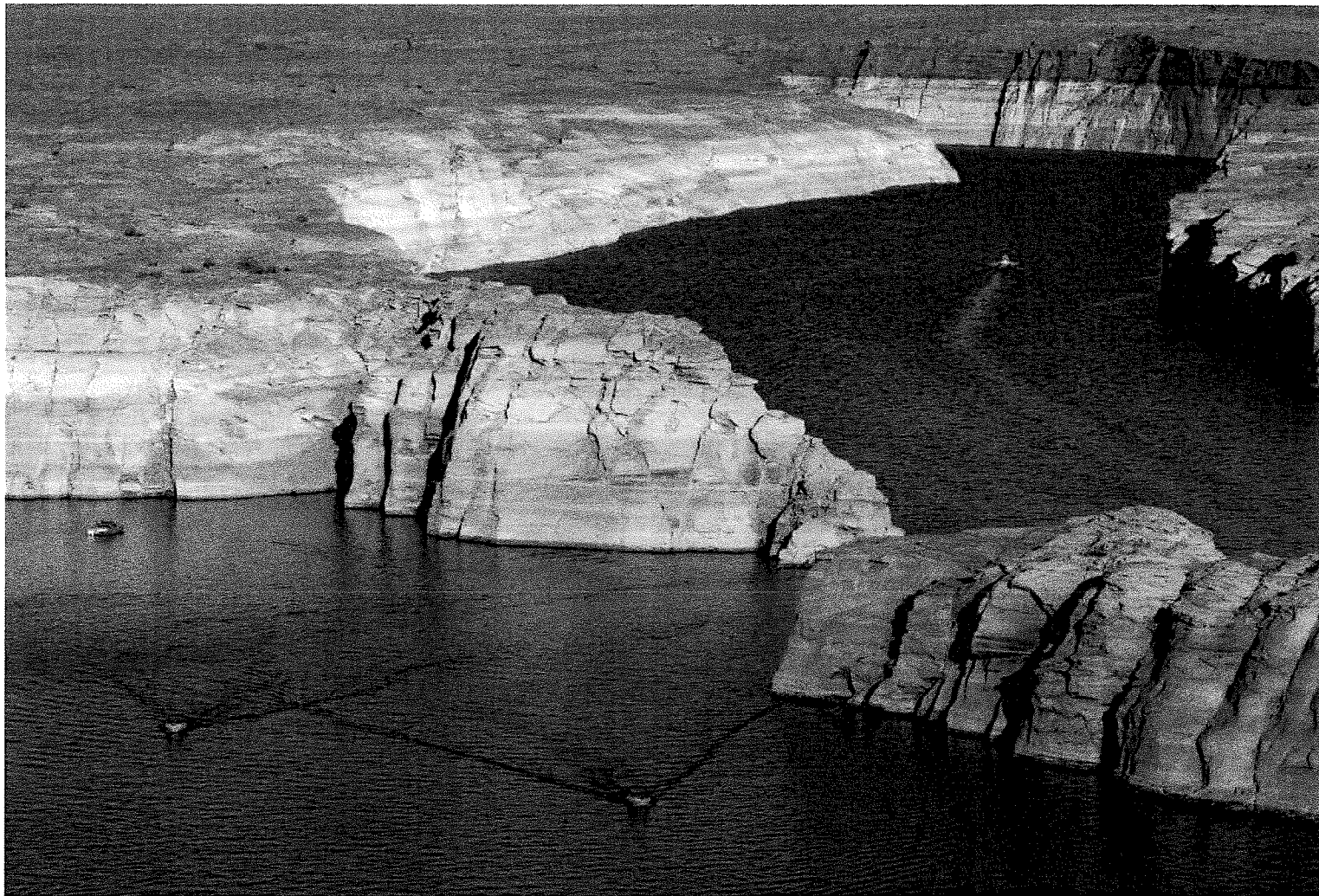
These dramatic cuts are an upper limit for future operations: The federal government plans to roll out more detailed management plans every two years if the states continue their impasse.

The agency will release the first of those plans any day, imposing cuts in the downstream states of California, Arizona and Nevada — an estimated 10% cut to California's supply through 2028, or roughly 440,000 acre-feet a year.

No mandatory cuts are expected in the upper basin states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico, according to those involved in negotiations. The Los Angeles Times first reported the split.

It reflects the limits of federal power and political will: The Interior Department can force cuts in the lower basin, but has no comparable authority to impose cuts in the upper basin states — the limits of which the Congressional Research Service said are the subject of “ongoing debate.”

This isn't the long-term plan that California's water suppliers were hoping for.



A tall bleached “bathtub ring” is visible on the rocky banks of Lake Powell as boats navigate the waters in Page, Arizona on July 30, 2026. Photo by Justin Sullivan, Getty Images

Building anything to store, move or make more water typically takes decades and billions of dollars. Without longer-term certainty about how states will share the river's water supply among 40 million people, millions of acres of agriculture, and two states in Mexico — cities and irrigation providers are struggling to plan how to close the gaps.

“A cut is never fun, but you can deal with it. But not if you say, ‘Well, we have a cut here, and then maybe a cut in two years, and maybe another cut in two more years,’” said Bill Hasencamp, Metropolitan Water District’s manager of Colorado River resources.

“We need to plan for our future. And this deal does not let us do that.”

The future of Southern California’s water

In California, where the availability of water is never certain, nature-defying engineering keeps dry parts of the state flush with water even when little falls from the sky.

Much of that engineering converges around one Southern California supplier: the Metropolitan Water District. The giant wholesaler imports water from Northern California and the Colorado River to supply cities and other retailers serving 19 million people across six counties.

Metropolitan’s imports are so central to the region that when its Northern California supplies dropped to a trickle during the most recent drought, **6 million Southern Californians faced unprecedented water restrictions in 2022.**

Southern California isn’t facing such serious shortfalls again yet. But uncertainty over the Colorado River compounds the risks the next drought will bring.

“There’s a good chance it’ll be as bad as it’s been, and there’s a reasonable chance that it’ll be worse,” said Hasencamp’s colleague, Keith Nobriga, whose job as an operations manager at Metropolitan is helping the district prepare for the future amid climate change.

The uncertainty also throws a wrench in Gov. Gavin Newsom’s administration’s water machinations to the north. Metropolitan’s board will play an outsized role in deciding the fates of **Sites Reservoir** and the **Delta tunnel** because of the district’s water needs and spending power.

Both multibillion-dollar projects, decades in the making, aim to send more of Northern California’s water south. Metropolitan is also planning a large-scale water recycling and reuse program, called **Pure Water Southern California**, with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts.

Metropolitan has already committed hundreds of millions of dollars to the Delta tunnel’s planning costs and about \$31 million for Sites. The board hasn’t committed to receiving water or contributing to construction for

either yet, though board votes on whether to approve the tunnel and recycled water project could come as soon as next year.

Subtracting one part of the equation, such as the Colorado River, could change the calculus for the others. But Metropolitan has to know how much water it stands to lose, and for how long.

The consequences of picking the wrong path could leave Southern California thirsty during the next drought, on one hand, or unnecessarily increase water rates, on the other.

Nobriga compares his job to insurance planning. The costs of nudging these water projects along, he says, are like paying an insurance premium.

“We’ll keep these projects alive. We’ll keep looking down the road,” he said. “And if it gets to a point where we really think these droughts are imminent, then we’ll ... construct and pay the big money for one or several of these projects. And we don’t know which ones yet.”

Agriculture in limbo

California uses the largest share of the Colorado River’s water among the states. And the Imperial Irrigation District uses the largest share of that to supply half a million acres of alfalfa, grasses, winter vegetables and other crops in the southeast corner of the state.

As climate change and a megadrought plunged the Colorado River into its driest decades in over a century, the Biden administration struck a deal with the Imperial Irrigation District, trading more than **half a billion federal dollars** for short-term water conservation.

Growers cut irrigation to their alfalfa and other forage crops for weeks at a time, and the district conserved enough water to add more than 12 feet to Lake Mead on the Colorado River, according to Tina Shields, water manager for the irrigation district.



Eric Montoya Reyes stands next to an irrigated field near the Salton Sea on Sept. 24, 2024. Many Imperial Valley farmers are leaving hay fields dry for part of the year under a multimillion dollar federal deal to conserve water in the Colorado River. Photo by Allen J. Schaben, Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

Now, those conservation programs are coming to the end of their funding and regulatory lifetimes. Starting new ones would require new plans and approvals to address the environmental impact of reduced irrigation runoff that **feeds the Salton Sea**.

Seeking those permits and environmental approvals “needs to be done on a longer term, not on a two-year term,” Shields said. “Because it’ll take us at least a year to negotiate, probably longer, the environmental actions necessary to move forward.”

In the meantime, negotiations are ongoing with other California water users about how they’ll share the coming cuts, including who is going to pay for it, Shields said. The district has not yet committed to anything.

“The district’s perspective is: We’ve done a lot. We’re doing a lot. It’s challenging to do more,” she said.

Art of the deal

Though the U.S. Department of the Interior has not yet released its plan for the river's next two years, those involved in negotiations expect that it will call for reductions and conservation in California, Arizona and Nevada similar to what **the states proposed in May**.

The three lower-basin states then must agree among themselves and with the federal government on how to implement it. After that, individual water suppliers in California will seek approvals from their boards for their share of the cuts.

Jay Weiner, an attorney representing the **Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe**, whose reservation lies on both sides of the Colorado River, compared the plan to a Band-Aid, not a long-term path to sustainability.

"To a large extent," Weiner said, "it leaves us at the mercy of this coming winter."

The Trump administration relied on the states reaching consensus rather than imposing terms — an approach that so far hasn't broken the deadlock.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs called for the federal government to step in and broker a deal. But federal leverage looks different in the upper and lower basins. Lower basin stakeholders say there are other strings the federal government could pull upstream, such as forcing water out of reservoirs, but isn't. And cloistered negotiations and hardline positions among negotiators have driven an impasse.

Arizona negotiator Tom Buschatzke publicly lambasted the upper basin in **The Denver Post** for failing to propose "One. Single. Gallon." of mandatory, verifiable reductions. Colorado negotiator **Becky Mitchell** wrote in **The Colorado Sun** that had the lower basin states lived within their means, "the reservoirs would not be in crisis today."

Elizabeth Koebele, a political science professor at the University of Nevada, Reno said that negotiations have been most productive when participants had strong working relationships. Without clear federal leadership, she said, the same conflicts keep resurfacing.

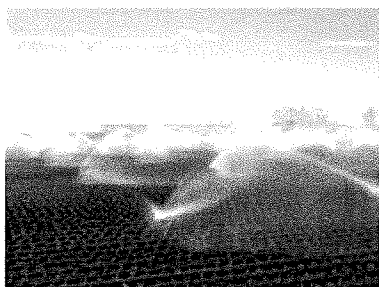
The fraying relationships, she said, could stem from turnover. But years of constant crisis have also worn people down. "We have been governing in crisis for a long time, and so every time we meet at the table, there's this big problem to solve," she said. "The house is on fire."

While the lower basin may sue the upper over deliveries that dip below a legally required threshold, both sides would risk the uncertain outcomes of litigation.

“In essence, this federal action has 40 million people living from paycheck to paycheck on water supply,” said Mark Gold, an environmental scientist and board member of the Metropolitan Water District.

That paycheck comes due again in two years with the same states, and the same asymmetry of power, still in place. Until then, the interior secretary can still force deeper cuts on the lower basin. No one, right now, is willing to force the upper basin to do the same.

READ NEXT



Growers brace to give up some Colorado River water

JANUARY 17, 2023



No deal on the Colorado River despite Trump administration deadline

NOVEMBER 11, 2025



Trump’s office called 7 governors to D.C. for Colorado River talks. Here’s what California said

JANUARY 31, 2026

Monthly Briefing

A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News

JULY 2026 • Issue #288

Board Member Quote of the Month



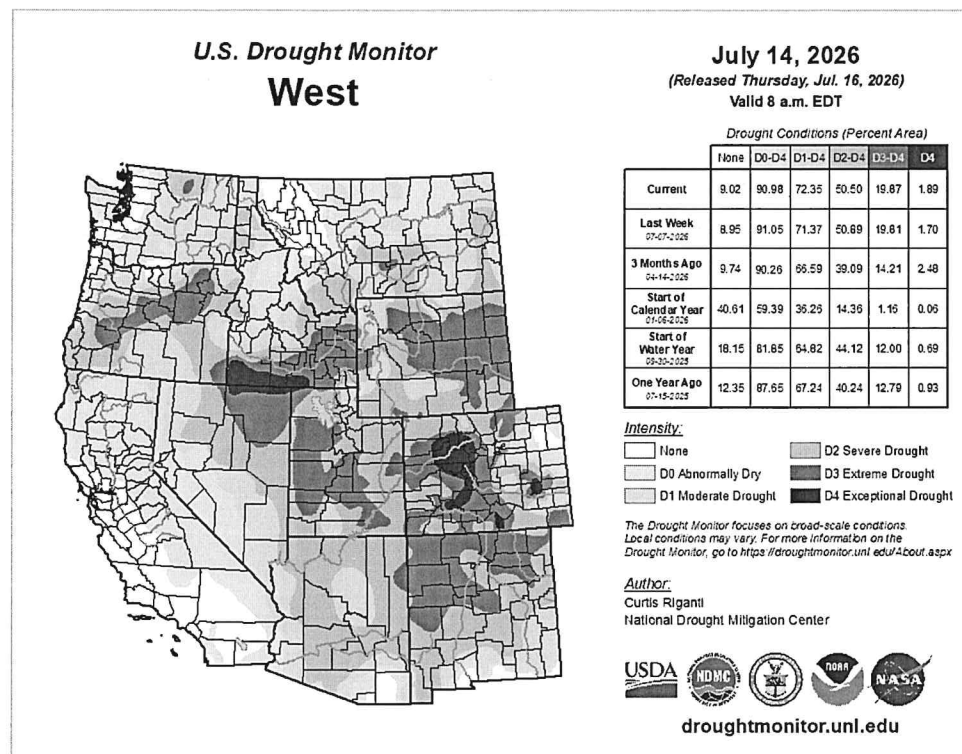
"As a father and a farmer, I think about the future every day. I don't know if my kids will choose to farm, and that's a decision they'll make someday. But I do know they deserve the opportunity. If we want agriculture to have a voice tomorrow, we have to help build that voice today. Every decision we make today shapes the opportunities our children will have tomorrow. Food security doesn't happen by accident—it depends on people who are willing to grow our food, manage our water, and stand up for agriculture. Watching this year's Family Farm Alliance interns engage with these issues reminds me that the future of farming isn't something we can take for granted. We have to invest in it, mentor it, and make sure the next generation has a seat at the table."

—Steve Benson, Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors, Brawley, California

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Washington Update: Congress Tackles a Full Water Agenda as the Alliance Presses Western Priorities



The July 14 U.S. Drought Monitor shows conditions continuing to deteriorate across much of the West.

Congress returned from its Independence Day recess facing one of its busiest legislative calendars in years, with major water, agriculture, defense, and spending bills all competing for limited floor time before lawmakers depart for the August recess. While political disagreements have slowed progress on several measures, important opportunities remain for advancing western water infrastructure, drought response, and agricultural priorities.

Among the most significant pieces of legislation is the annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, which funds the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and many of the federal programs that support water infrastructure throughout the West. Although debate over overall federal spending levels has delayed action, both the House and Senate proposals continue investing in critical water resources, navigation, flood control, and infrastructure programs that are essential to many Family Farm Alliance members.

Closely related is the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), Congress's bipartisan legislation that authorizes Corps of Engineers projects every two years. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee unanimously advanced its version of WRDA

this month, while the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee continues work on its companion legislation. Of particular interest to western states are provisions that strengthen the Corps' authority to address drought, improve water conservation efforts, enhance partnerships with local sponsors, and continue investing in water infrastructure that supports both agricultural and community needs.

Meanwhile, discussions continue over a potential third budget reconciliation package, often referred to as "Reconciliation 3.0." While negotiations have slowed over spending priorities and budget offsets, the proposal remains one of the few legislative vehicles capable of delivering significant funding this year. The Administration has requested approximately \$11 billion in supplemental agricultural assistance to help producers facing trade disruptions and weather-related disasters. The Family Farm Alliance has also been working aggressively with Congress to ensure that meaningful Bureau of Reclamation drought funding is included should a reconciliation package ultimately move forward.

To support that effort, the Alliance recently issued an Action Alert asking members to contact their congressional delegations and emphasize the urgent need for drought assistance across the West. As conditions continue to deteriorate in many regions, additional federal resources are becoming increasingly important for maintaining water supplies, supporting agricultural production, and helping rural communities respond to prolonged drought.

The long-awaited Farm Bill also appears to be gaining momentum. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman recently released the committee's discussion draft, beginning what many hope will be the final phase of negotiations on the first comprehensive Farm Bill reauthorization since 2018. The proposal emphasizes conservation, rural development, forestry, agricultural research, and expanded drought authorities while leaving several politically divisive issues for future negotiations in an effort to build bipartisan support. Although questions remain about the timing of committee action, the Alliance continues working with lawmakers to ensure the final legislation includes strong support for agricultural water infrastructure, watershed resilience, conservation programs, and western water priorities.

Taken together, these legislative efforts represent some of the most significant opportunities this Congress to strengthen the West's water future. While political dynamics continue to slow the legislative process, the Family Farm Alliance remains actively engaged with Congress, the Administration, and our partners to ensure western irrigated agriculture has a strong voice throughout every stage of these negotiations.

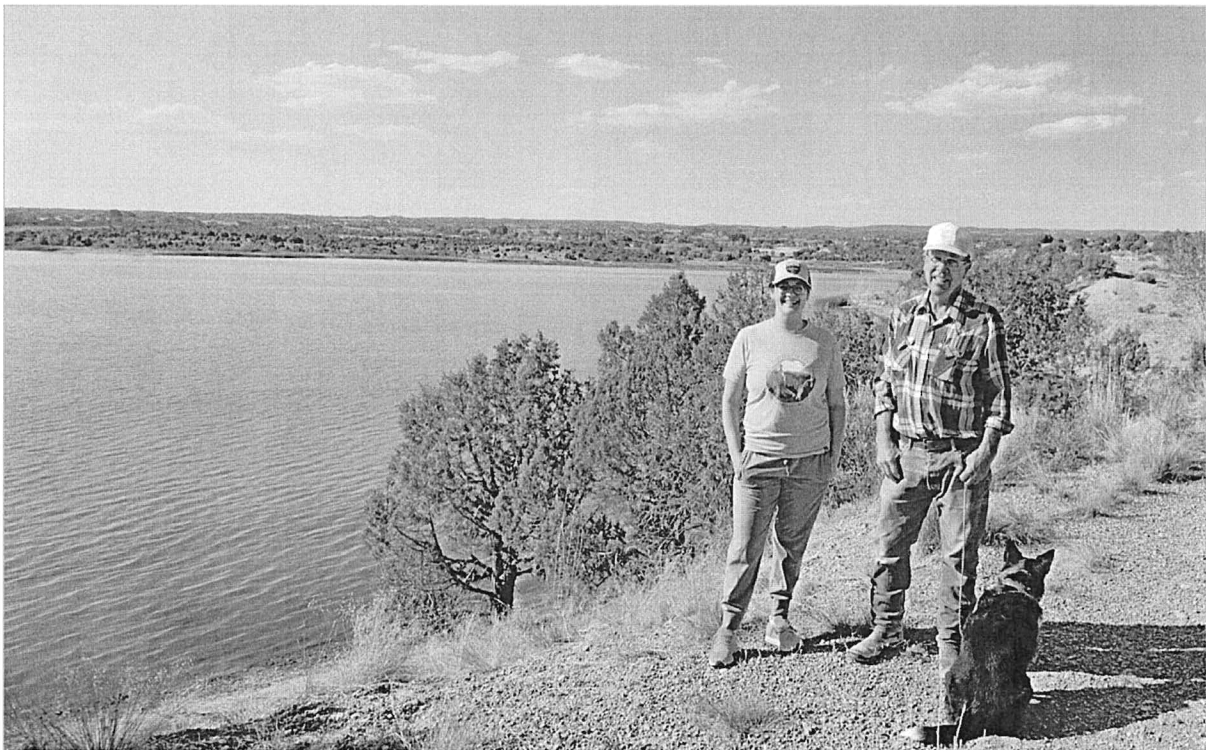
As always, we will continue keeping members informed as these bills move forward and advocating for practical policies that invest in water storage, modernize infrastructure,

improve permitting, strengthen drought resilience, and support the farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and rural communities that feed our nation.

Boots on the Ground: A West Slope Perspective

As part of the Family Farm Alliance's commitment to staying connected to its members on the ground, Executive Director Samantha Barncastle spent several days traveling Colorado's West Slope at the end of June, visiting irrigation districts, water projects, producers, and agricultural leaders to better understand the challenges facing the region and bring those stories back to Washington, D.C.

Her travels took her from Cortez north to Montrose before returning south through the San Luis Valley and into New Mexico. Along the way, she visited several Alliance member districts and facilities, including the Dolores Project and the Aspinall Unit, where one message was repeated time and again: 2026 is proving to be one of the most difficult water years in recent memory.



Executive Director Samantha Barncastle and Board Chairman Don Schwindt at a Dolores Reservoir.

One of the highlights of the trip was a visit to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Farm. Barncastle described the operation as one of the most impressive examples of agricultural resilience she has seen. The Tribe has built an operation that is remarkably self-sustaining, fabricating

equipment and parts, producing crops, processing products, and shipping food around the world. Their award-winning corn—particularly their celebrated blue corn—is a point of pride, but even more impressive was the long-term vision that has allowed the operation to remain successful despite increasingly difficult water conditions.

Barncastle was joined that day by her seven-year-old son, who listened intently as Tribal leaders shared stories about the importance of agriculture, water, and stewardship. The conversations served as a reminder that while every community has its own history and traditions, the values that sustain agriculture—hard work, family, conservation, and respect for the land and water—remain remarkably similar across the West.



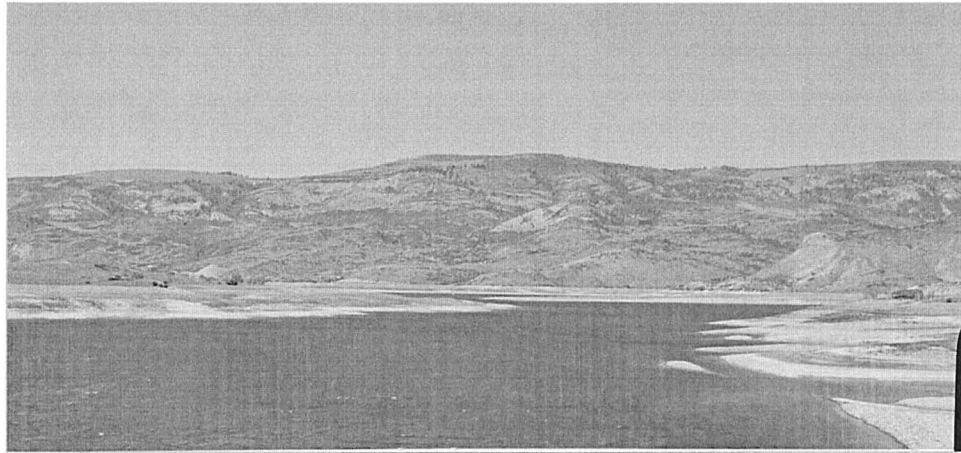
Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Farm officials with Schwindt and Barncastle.



Advisory Committee member Eric Whyte of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe with Barncastle and Schwindt.

Those hopeful moments stood in sharp contrast to the conditions across much of the West Slope.

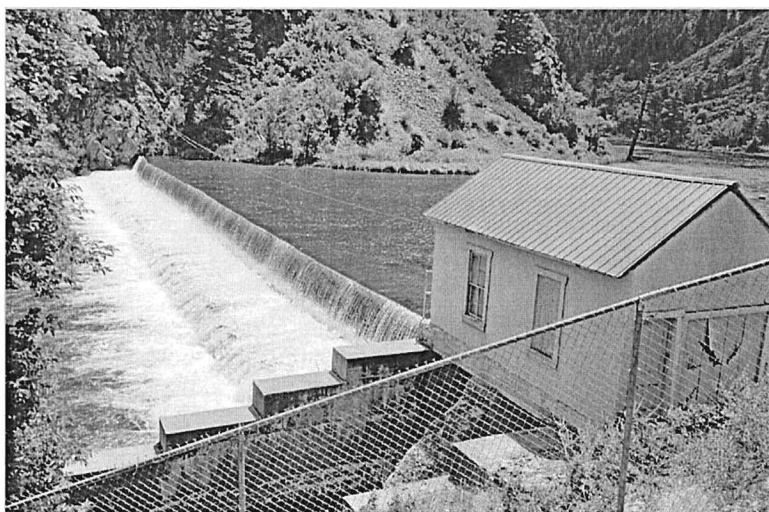
Late June brought extreme heat and exceptionally dry conditions to western Colorado. Many water users were operating on allocations of roughly fifty percent or less, with supplies disappearing rapidly as the irrigation season progressed. Blue Mesa Reservoir had receded to alarmingly low levels, exposing stark high-water marks along its shoreline. Although tunnel diversions serving the Uncompahgre Valley were expected to continue for at least a few more months, uncertainty dominated conversations throughout the region.



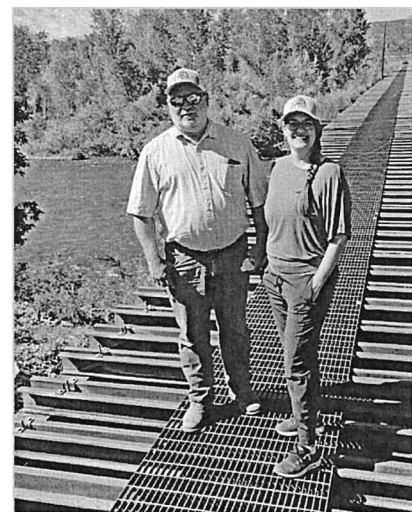
A very low arm of Blue Mesa Reservoir, its exposed shoreline marking where water once stood.

Driving through the valleys, the impacts were impossible to miss. Thick smoke from major wildfires burning across Colorado and neighboring Utah often obscured the landscape. During the trip, the region mourned the tragic loss of three wildland firefighters who gave their lives battling those fires. Beneath the haze were fields left intentionally fallow—not because farmers lacked the desire to produce, but because they simply lacked enough water. Producers were concentrating limited supplies on their best ground, hoping to salvage a crop while accepting that other fields would remain dry this year.

From the Dolores Project to the Uncompahgre Valley and across the West Slope, the landscape told a sobering story. Receding reservoirs, exposed shorelines, idle farmland, and even signs of economic distress reflected the growing strain drought places on rural communities whose livelihoods depend on reliable water.



Diversion to the Gunnison Tunnel in the Aspinall Project, which feeds the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association.



UVWUA Manager Steve Pope with Barncastle.

Yet throughout every conversation, there was also optimism. Water managers, producers, Tribal Farm leaders, and irrigation districts spoke not only about today's challenges, but about tomorrow's solutions—new storage opportunities, infrastructure modernization, improved water management, and updated agreements that can help keep farms in production even during difficult years.

These visits are at the heart of the Family Farm Alliance's Boots on the Ground initiative. The Alliance believes effective advocacy begins by listening. By spending time in farming communities, touring projects, meeting with local leaders, and seeing conditions firsthand, the Alliance is better equipped to tell the stories of western irrigated agriculture to Congress, federal agencies, and decision-makers in Washington.

Just as importantly, the Alliance encourages every member to tell those stories as well. Too few Americans understand what it takes to produce the food on their tables or the challenges facing the families who grow it. When reservoirs shrink, fields are fallowed, and communities struggle through drought and wildfire, those impacts extend far beyond the farm gate. The more we share those stories, the stronger our voice becomes—and the better positioned we are to advocate for the policies and investments needed to sustain western agriculture for generations to come.

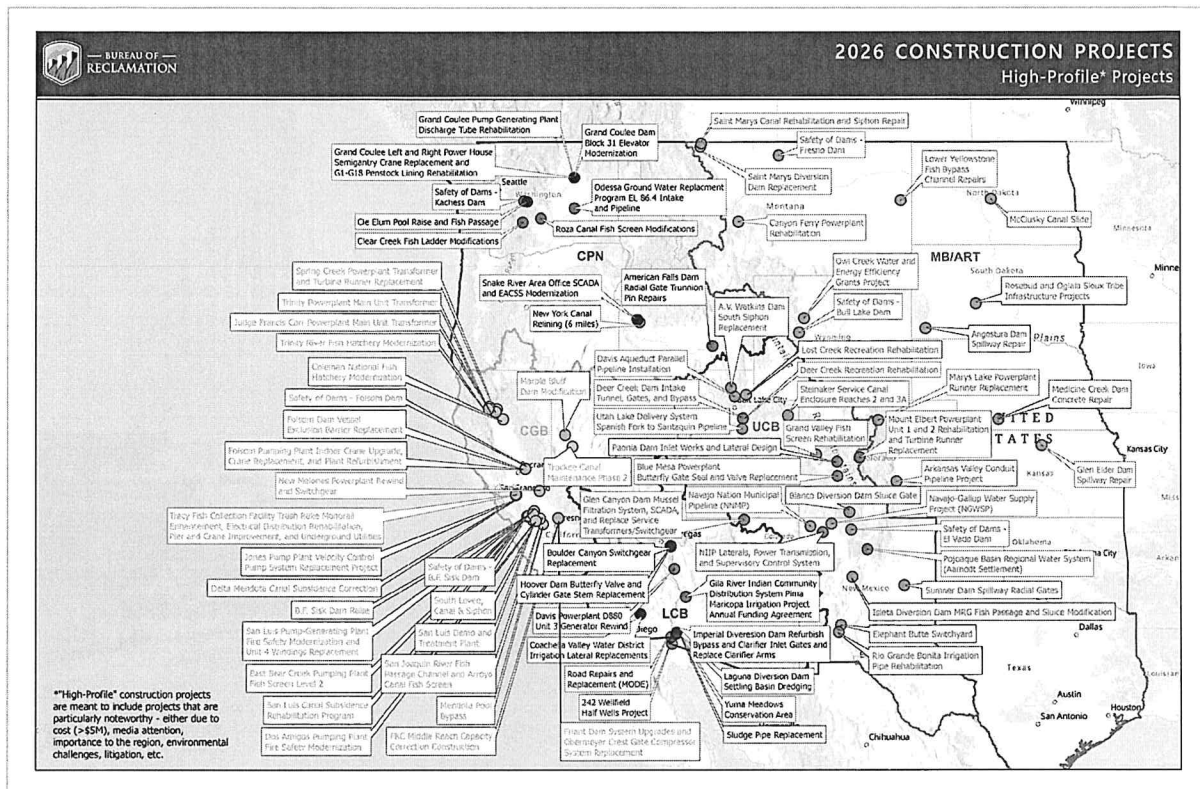
Reclamation Realignment Begins Moving from Vision to Implementation

One of the Family Farm Alliance's highest priorities this year has been working with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of the Interior to improve how water infrastructure projects move from concept to construction. After years of growing permitting delays, duplicative reviews, and declining agency capacity, we are beginning to see meaningful progress.

Last month, the Bureau of Reclamation issued new guidance implementing updated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures following President Trump's Executive Order Unleashing American Energy. The guidance is intended to reduce project costs, improve coordination between Reclamation and project sponsors, and complete environmental reviews more efficiently while remaining fully compliant with federal law.

Many of the concepts reflected in the guidance mirror recommendations the Family Farm Alliance has advanced over the past year. Our message has been straightforward: project sponsors and local water managers often possess decades of institutional knowledge and technical expertise that can help move projects forward more efficiently. By making better use of existing NEPA tools, eliminating unnecessary duplication, and improving coordination

between Reclamation and local partners, water infrastructure can be delivered more quickly without sacrificing sound environmental review.



Reclamation's 2026 high-profile construction projects across the West.

That effort continues through implementation of Secretarial Order 3446, which is focused on modernizing how Reclamation carries out its mission. Working alongside the National Water Resources Association, the Family Farm Alliance has been collaborating directly with Reclamation leadership to identify practical opportunities for shifting appropriate responsibilities to local project sponsors, reducing administrative bottlenecks, and improving decision-making at the field level.

As part of that effort, we recently developed an implementation resource to help irrigation districts, water users associations, and other project sponsors begin conversations with their local Reclamation offices about where responsibilities can be shared and where unnecessary delays can be eliminated. The goal is not simply to change policy in Washington, D.C., but to produce measurable improvements in how projects are managed throughout the West.

Reclamation has also hosted a series of stakeholder webinars over the past month to explain the new NEPA guidance, provide updates on implementation of Secretarial Order 3446, and gather feedback from water users and project sponsors. We have encouraged our members to

participate because successful realignment will ultimately depend on collaboration between Reclamation and the local entities that deliver water every day.

This initiative reflects one of the Family Farm Alliance's core priorities: building a Bureau of Reclamation that is responsive, efficient, and equipped to meet today's water challenges. As federal staffing has declined and institutional knowledge has been lost over the past decade, finding new ways to leverage the expertise of local water managers has become increasingly important. We appreciate Reclamation's willingness to engage directly with stakeholders throughout this process and look forward to continuing our partnership as these reforms move from policy into practice.

Realignment is not a single action—it is an ongoing effort to ensure that water infrastructure projects are delivered more efficiently, public resources are used more effectively, and western communities receive the reliable water infrastructure they need to support agriculture, rural economies, and future generations.

ESA Reform Continues to Reshape Species Protection and Water Management

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been at the center of several significant developments over the past month, with the Trump Administration finalizing a major regulatory reform while courts continue to issue decisions that will shape how the law affects western water management for years to come.

On July 10, the Departments of the Interior and Commerce announced a final rule rescinding the long-standing regulatory definition of “harm” under the ESA. Since 1975, federal regulations interpreted “harm” to include significant habitat modification that indirectly injured protected species by impairing breeding, feeding, or sheltering. That interpretation greatly expanded the reach of the ESA beyond actions that directly injure or kill listed wildlife and became the legal foundation for many habitat-based restrictions affecting agriculture, water infrastructure, energy development, and other land uses.

The Administration concluded that the regulatory definition exceeded the authority granted by Congress and was inconsistent with the Supreme Court's 2024 decision in *Loper Bright v. Raimondo*, which ended the practice of courts automatically deferring to agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes. Rather than relying on agency discretion, courts must now determine the single best reading of the law itself. Federal agencies determined that the ESA's statutory definition of “take” provides sufficient guidance without an expanded regulatory definition of “harm.”

Importantly, the rule does not eliminate the ESA's protections for listed species. Activities that directly injure or kill endangered or threatened wildlife remain prohibited, and existing permits and incidental take authorizations remain in effect. Instead, the rule is intended to restore the statute to what the Administration describes as its original congressional intent while providing greater regulatory certainty for landowners, farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and local governments.

Not surprisingly, the rule has generated significant debate. Supporters argue that it restores the proper balance between species protection and private property rights while reducing unnecessary permitting delays and regulatory burdens. Opponents contend that removing the regulatory definition weakens one of the ESA's most effective conservation tools by limiting the federal government's ability to address habitat destruction before species are directly harmed.

Regardless of where one falls in that debate, the rule represents one of the most consequential ESA policy changes in decades. Because habitat protection has long been one of the primary mechanisms through which the ESA has influenced water management across the West, its practical implications will likely be tested through future litigation and subsequent court decisions.

For the Family Farm Alliance, these developments reinforce a principle we have consistently advocated: species conservation and agricultural production are not mutually exclusive. Effective ESA implementation should be grounded in sound science, respect existing water rights and contracts, provide regulatory certainty, and recognize that western farmers, ranchers, and irrigation districts have long been among our nation's most committed land and water stewards.

ESA Litigation Continues to Shape Western Water Policy

While federal agencies work to redefine ESA implementation, the courts continue to issue decisions with significant implications for western water users.

In *Yurok Tribe v. Bureau of Reclamation*, the Ninth Circuit held in a 2-1 decision that the Endangered Species Act applies to Reclamation's operation of the Klamath Irrigation Project and that the agency retains sufficient discretion under existing water delivery contracts to reduce water deliveries when necessary to protect listed species. The decision has potentially broad implications for federal water projects throughout the West by reinforcing Reclamation's ESA obligations in day-to-day project operations. The Alliance is closely

monitoring the case and the possibility of review by the U.S. Supreme Court, and we will evaluate opportunities to participate should the litigation continue.

At the same time, one of our member districts achieved an important success through a different approach. California's United Water Conservation District (UWCD) petitioned NOAA Fisheries earlier this year to revise critical habitat designated for Southern California steelhead by removing a nine-mile reach of the Santa Clara River and lower Piru Creek. The district demonstrated that the existing designation imposed substantial burdens while lacking adequate scientific support.

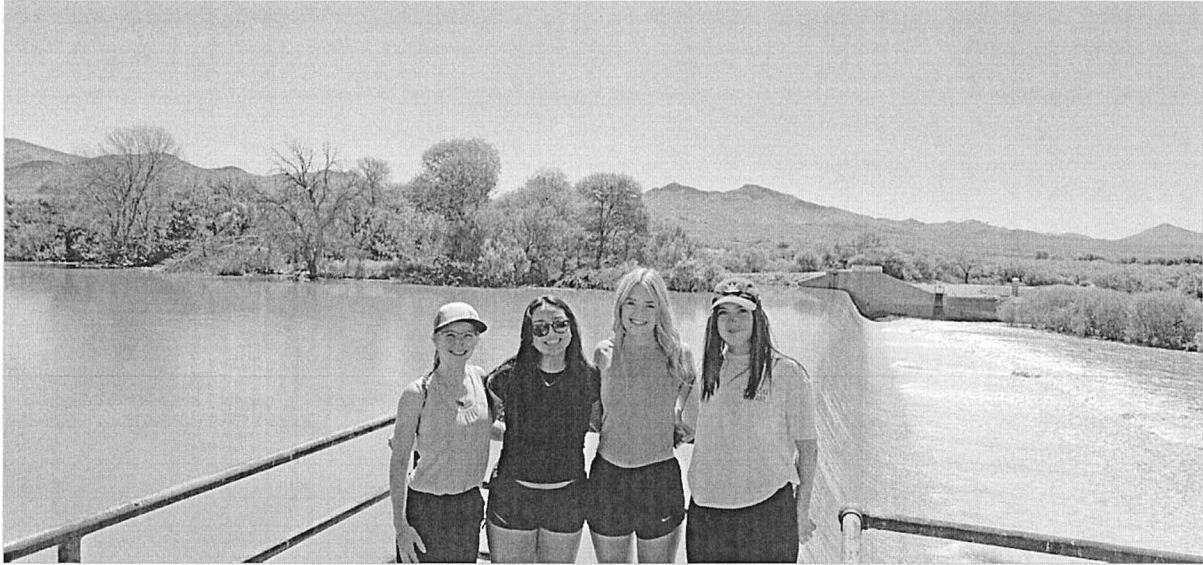
On June 29, NOAA Fisheries agreed that the petition has merit, announcing that the requested revision is warranted and proposing to remove the nine-mile reach from the designated critical habitat. The proposal is now open for public comment through August 28, 2026.

These two developments illustrate the evolving landscape of ESA implementation. While courts continue to define the scope of federal authority under the Act, agencies are also demonstrating a willingness to revisit long-standing habitat designations when presented with strong scientific evidence. The Family Farm Alliance will continue advocating for ESA implementation that is scientifically sound, legally defensible, and recognizes the importance of reliable water supplies for western agriculture while protecting the species the Act was designed to conserve.

Interns Research and Discuss the Greatest Challenges Facing the West with the Assistance of Industry Insiders

One of the greatest responsibilities we have as an organization is ensuring that the next generation understands not only the challenges facing western irrigated agriculture, but also the people and institutions working every day to meet them. Protecting our water future requires more than advocating for sound policy—it requires investing in the young professionals who will carry that work forward.

This month, we're pleased to feature four articles written by Family Farm Alliance interns as part of a unique mentoring project. Each intern interviewed an experienced leader in our industry and asked a simple but important question: *What is the most pressing issue facing my district today?* Through those conversations, our interns learned firsthand about the complex issues confronting water managers while also developing the professional writing and communication skills that are essential to effective advocacy.



Family Farm Alliance interns in the field this summer.

The mentors—representing irrigation districts in Washington, California, and Kansas, along with a retired Colorado water users association executive director who provides a broader perspective on how our industry functions—generously shared both their time and their expertise. The result is a collection of articles that highlights not only the diversity of challenges across the West, but also the common commitment to ensuring reliable water supplies for family farmers and ranchers.

The experience proved valuable for everyone involved. Our interns gained insight into the real-world challenges of water management and the importance of telling those stories well. Our mentors expressed how rewarding it was to share their knowledge with the next generation of professionals. That exchange of ideas and experience is exactly the kind of investment our industry needs.



Interns tour a member processing facility during their summer program.

We hope you enjoy the articles that follow. They offer thoughtful perspectives on today's water challenges while reminding us that the future of western irrigated agriculture depends not only on the infrastructure we build and the policies we shape, but also on the people we encourage to lead the way forward.

Mentor Article: Doug Kemper

By Jadyn Ostie

"What is the most challenging issue facing your district?" It's a question every water manager dreads because the water world is full of conflicting interests, and there is rarely a simple answer.

For Doug Kemper, current Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee member and former Executive Director of the Colorado Water Congress, the toughest challenges rarely resolve into a simple win or loss. He describes the common trap as a "zero-sum game"—if I get more of something, you get less. Instead, he's spent years pursuing something closer to what economists call Pareto efficiency: an outcome that improves one party's position without making another worse off.

Doug's interest in water started with a problem that had no easy solution. As a freshman at Vanderbilt, he learned about the then-50-year-old Colorado River Compact (now more than a century old), an agreement among seven states that had allocated more water than the river actually produced. After thinking, *what an interesting problem*, he was hooked.

That curiosity led him to earn a degree in environmental science with a minor in chemistry before later completing bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering with an emphasis on water resources.

That interest led him west. In 1980, Doug drove 24 hours from Nashville to Denver with eight interviews scheduled. The first seven ended without an offer. According to Doug, the interviewer said, "Hey, I apologize. I misread your resume; you really don't have the skills we're looking for. But I see you have a beard and I've got a friend who owns another small firm—they've all got beards. You might fit in there." As a result, Doug was hired.

"One never knows what unusual connections can alter the path of a career," Doug reflected.

The story is a small one, but Doug points to it as the first indicator of what shaped his career, since much of the work that followed depended less on expertise than on building trust among people with conflicting interests.

Over nearly 20 years at Aurora Water, Doug managed roughly 120 water rights across three basins: the Colorado, the Arkansas, and the South Platte. “I’ve done plenty of work with water rights, water system modeling, as well as water policy, as one might expect, but what I really loved about being in the water field was working with experts in numerous technical fields that make up the water community—from range management to law to financial planning. I did not expect that. Many engineers crave certainty, but water resources management is more about uncertainty. We don’t have all the answers, and sometimes, we have to learn to love the questions.”

Doug worked at the Colorado Water Congress for 19 years, where, by his account, 80-85% of the bills the organization supported were signed into law, while the small number it opposed rarely passed. He also managed the organization’s finances and expanded its two annual conferences into the largest water-focused events in the state.

Asked how he built consensus among river basins, cities, and water users with competing interests, Doug’s answer was simple: “It starts with listening to understand the underlying needs of the communities you are working with.” He credits *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury, and his training at the Harvard Program on Negotiation, which changed how he approached conflict and negotiation. Rather than treating disputes as zero-sum, the approach is to find where interests overlap, or what Doug calls “enlarging the pie,” and to work a problem from the perspective of being on the same side of the table rather than opposing sides of it.

Doug also referenced a concept Hans Bleiker developed, distinguishing consent from consensus. Consensus, he noted, is rare in water policy. Consent, by contrast, requires only that an opposing party views an approach as reasonable enough to stop actively objecting to it. Bleiker built that idea into what he called the “Life Preserver.” It comprises four steps that Doug still references: a problem exists that must be addressed; it is one’s responsibility to work on it; the approach taken is fair and reasonable; and the people involved genuinely care.

Doug noted that in high-conflict situations, it is usually the last point people doubt. That gap between perception and reality, Doug believes, is one of the most misunderstood parts of his work. “There is a public perception that the water community doesn’t get along,” he said. “That could not be further from the truth.” He attributed part of that to visibility: in his experience, farmers and utility managers tend not to seek media attention, while parties with specific objections more often do. Terms like “system crashing,” he added, appear frequently in coverage of water issues and can leave an inaccurate impression of the underlying reality.

These are Doug’s observations, made from decades of experience across three river basins and dozens of negotiations. They are not a statement on behalf of any current irrigation district, nor a claim about how today’s water managers would characterize their own

challenges. That question is what the rest of this issue takes up directly. In the articles that follow, irrigation district managers from across the state were asked the same question: What is the most difficult issue your district faces, and how do you work through it?

Asked how he would like to be remembered, Doug did not offer a summary of his own accomplishments. “I guess I’m hoping my name doesn’t come up,” Doug said. “We tend to give people too much credit. None of this is ever just one person.” It is consistent with what Doug described throughout, in which the most consequential work in water rarely belongs to one person and rarely gets solved once. It’s managed by people willing to keep listening and build a solid foundation for the future. The next generation may well see today’s problems in a different light.

Mentor Article: Cary Keaten

By Caelee Jimerson

“If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.”

For Cary Keaten, General Manager of Solano Irrigation District, that phrase has become one of the most important lessons he has learned in water management. In today’s world of water policy and competing interests, he believes agricultural communities can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines.

After more than 10 years leading one of California’s most diverse water districts, Keaten says the greatest challenge facing Solano Irrigation District is not drought, aging infrastructure, or even declining water supplies. Instead, he said the greatest challenge is adapting to evolving state regulations while ensuring that the needs of local communities and agricultural producers remain part of the conversation.

Keaten did not begin his career in water policy. Raised in Wyoming, he earned a degree in civil engineering from the University of Wyoming before moving to California and beginning his career in transportation engineering. He later transitioned into city government, eventually serving as a city manager before accepting the position of General Manager for Solano Irrigation District.

“I didn’t know very much about California water policy,” Keaten admitted. “It really took me about three or four or maybe even five years to really get up to speed on California water policy because it’s so nuanced.”

Fourteen years later, he has become one of the district’s strongest advocates and a leading voice for agricultural water users.

Located between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Sacramento Valley, Solano Irrigation District serves nearly 70,000 acres and provides water to both urban and agricultural customers. The district supplies drinking water to approximately 30,000 people and serves around 1,500 agricultural customers. Its producers grow a diverse range of crops, including almonds, tomatoes, wine grapes, sunflowers, and alfalfa.

The district's primary water source is Lake Berryessa, formed by Monticello Dam in 1958. Unlike many California reservoirs that depend on mountain snowpack, the Solano Irrigation District's water supply is almost entirely rainfall-fed. Despite that challenge, the district has historically maintained an impressive level of reliability and has consistently provided water to its customers.

For many years, Solano Irrigation District has worked to balance agriculture and environmental conservation. Nearly 25 years ago, the district's partner agency, the Solano County Water Agency, entered into the Putah Creek Accord, an agreement that keeps water flowing through Putah Creek year-round with the intent of improving habitat conditions.

The agreement has made a difference. The creek, which once dried up during portions of most years, now supports a healthy salmon population and flows year-round.

"We do have a fairly robust salmon run on the creek," Keaten said. "Last year there were around 2,150 spawning salmon coming up the creek."

For Keaten, this demonstrates that local water agencies can effectively balance environmental protection while continuing to provide reliable water supplies for communities and agriculture.

"We already know how to manage the recovery of a species," he explained. "We have information showing that we can recover species and manage a healthy population."

Despite these accomplishments, the district now faces what Keaten considers its greatest challenge: adapting to the proposed San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta) Plan developed by California's State Water Resources Control Board. The Bay-Delta Plan has two "pathways" or options; the Voluntary Agreement Pathway, which has a term of eight years, and the Regulatory Pathway.

The plan aims to improve water quality and restore declining fish populations in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, goals that Keaten supports. He believes, however, that local water agencies have demonstrated an ability to balance environmental restoration with reliable water supplies and can provide valuable insight as the State continues developing its approach. These practices would be supplemented with the Bay-Delta Plan's Voluntary Agreement Pathway's increased water flows plus additional habitat restoration projects.

For Keaten, the focus is working with policymakers and regulators to find solutions that meet environmental objectives while also protecting the communities and agricultural economies that depend on reliable water supplies.

“We’ve been very successful managing the project for many, many years,” he said. “This management would continue under the Voluntary Agreements. The Regulatory Pathway of the Bay Delta Plan, as currently proposed, however, would dramatically and negatively impact us.”

According to Keaten, the Regulatory Pathway scenario will result in Solano Irrigation District receiving zero water allocation one out of every five years and significantly reduced allocations in 40% of all other water year types.

“We’ve always had a hundred percent allocation,” Keaten said. “This would be a dramatic change.”

The consequences would extend far beyond the district itself.

Many of Solano County’s largest crops, including almonds and wine grapes, are permanent plantings that require water every year to survive.

“If you don’t have water, the trees or vines die,” Keaten explained. “You have to have water. Otherwise, the economy just disappears.”

The current Water Board’s draft Bay-Delta Plan proposes to adopt the Plan this fall with the Voluntary Agreement Pathway as the implementation scenario. However, the scenario has a term of only eight years and, at the Water Board’s Staff’s discretion, they could switch to the Regulatory Pathway if they feel the goals of species recovery are not being met before the end of the term. The Regulatory Pathway, therefore, would be implemented with its full requirement of 55% unimpaired flow plus reservoir carryover requirements. The scenario is very devastating to SID and agriculture.

If implemented in its current form, Keaten believes the Bay-Delta Plan’s Regulatory Pathway will significantly impact agricultural productivity throughout the county and increase reliance on groundwater resources. For that reason, the district continues to work with policymakers and regulatory agencies to advocate for approaches that achieve environmental objectives while reducing impacts on local communities and water users.

“We’ve already proven we know how to restore habitat and bring back species. We, and agencies like us, are the experts within the state because we’ve been doing it for many years. Nonetheless, we need the State to engage in constructive problem solving by designing a Regulatory Pathway that solves the ecological problems but not at the expense of urban and agricultural water users.”

Throughout his career, Keaten has learned that water policy is built on long-term relationships. Water managers, regulators, and policymakers often work together year after year, making collaboration essential.

Although the future remains uncertain, Keaten's message to agricultural communities is clear: remain engaged, build partnerships, and continue advocating for agriculture's place at the table.

"You have to have coalitions and alliances," he said. "You can't do everything yourself."

For Keaten, the challenges facing Solano Irrigation District represent a broader conversation taking place across the West about balancing environmental protection, food production, and water reliability. The future of many agricultural communities depends on maintaining a seat at the table and continuing to work with policymakers to develop solutions that serve both environmental needs and the people who rely on water every day.

And that is why, in the world of water policy, his advice remains simple:

"If you're not at the table, you're on the menu."

Mentor Article: Shane Leonard

By Alyssa Granados

"What do you do when people don't believe there's a water problem?"

For Shane Leonard, a more than 30-year professional of the irrigation industry, that question captures one of the biggest challenges facing western water today. Drought, aging infrastructure, and complex water rights have long been part of an irrigation district's responsibilities. Increasingly, however, so has public communication.

"The days of cheap water are over," Leonard said. "The challenge isn't convincing people we're right. It's helping them understand why."

Leonard has spent nearly four decades working in western water, but his career didn't begin in a boardroom. As a fourth-generation employee of Arizona's Roosevelt Water Conservation District, he often jokes that he was "born into the district." His first jobs involved helping maintenance crews, mowing district property, cleaning canals, and eventually operating heavy equipment. Working his way through nearly every operational position gave him firsthand experience with the systems he would later help manage.

While working full time, Leonard earned a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from Arizona State University, completing his education while taking on increasing responsibility

within the district. By his early twenties, he was reviewing draft legislation, preparing policy summaries for district leadership, and testifying before congressional staff on federal water rights settlements. That combination of field experience and policy work shaped the rest of his career.

Unlike many irrigation districts that primarily serve agriculture, urbanizing irrigation districts deliver water to farms, neighborhoods, schools, parks, businesses, and industries. That diversity has fundamentally changed the role of an irrigation district.

“We’re not delivering water anymore,” Leonard explained. “We’re delivering customer service.”

That transition is occurring across much of the West as agricultural communities continue to urbanize. Districts that once served primarily farmers are now responsible for tens of thousands of residential customers who may have little connection to agriculture or irrigation.

Leonard believes that disconnect has created one of agriculture’s greatest communication challenges. Although agriculture remains the largest user of water in the West, he argues that many consumers never see the relationship between irrigation water and the food they purchase, the communities they live in, or the infrastructure that made western development possible. Discussions about water often begin with agriculture’s share of water use without acknowledging the value that water produces.

Rather than trying to convince the public that agriculture is “right,” Leonard believes irrigation districts should focus on helping people understand how water decisions affect everyone.

“Water affects everybody,” he said.

That philosophy has shaped how irrigation districts communicate with their customers. Instead of engaging only when budgets or assessments change, Leonard views public outreach as an opportunity to explain the realities of managing water in an era of growing demand and increasing scarcity. Those conversations, he says, have generated more meaningful engagement than have been experienced in years past. In his view, communication extends well beyond informing customers—it is about building understanding.

When asked what advice he would offer students interested in water policy or natural resource management, Leonard emphasized skills that are often overlooked in technical fields. Understanding economics, law, and communication are essential, he said, but equally important is understanding people. Throughout his career, Leonard has found that many of

the biggest challenges in water management involve personalities, competing interests, and public expectations rather than engineering alone. He also encourages future professionals to spend time in the field.

“There are people who are very good at talking about policy,” Leonard said, “but they’ve never had to live by it.”

For Leonard, practical experience provides context that cannot be learned in a classroom. Understanding how policies affect the people responsible for implementing them leads to better decision-making and stronger long-term solutions.

Despite the challenges facing western water, Leonard remains optimistic. He points to emerging technologies, stronger public engagement, and a new generation of water professionals entering the industry as reasons for confidence. Irrigation districts are embracing innovation while adapting to rapidly changing communities, and Leonard believes that adaptability will be critical in the years ahead.

The biggest opportunity, however, may simply be telling the story of water more effectively. For decades, Leonard says, agriculture has focused on solving problems rather than explaining them. As western communities continue to grow and competition for water increases, irrigation districts have an opportunity to build greater public understanding—not by asking people to agree on every issue, but by helping them recognize how closely their lives are connected to reliable water supplies.

That work, Leonard believes, is becoming just as important as delivering the water itself.

Mentor Article: Pete Gile

By Siobhan Lally

Since 1955, Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District No. 2 (KBID) has ensured the delivery of water from the Republican River and White Rock Creek to 42,500 acres of cropland in North Central Kansas. Here, nearly 300 farmers grow corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. KBID Superintendent, Jared “Pete” Gile, manages 100 miles of main canals and 150 miles of lateral canals and pipelines.

Pete Gile grew up in the Republican River Valley and spent a summer working as a seasonal employee for the district in high school. He attended Kansas State University where he earned his commercial pilot’s license and his bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology. After touring as a country singer/songwriter for 10 years, Pete returned to the Valley to start a family. He began working for KBID as a ditch rider before being promoted to Assistant Superintendent in 2014. He was subsequently promoted to Superintendent in 2016 upon the

retirement of Kenny Nelson who served 40 years in the position. Pete operates under the supervision of a three-member board of elected local landowners who set policies and make decisions for the district. KBID employs twelve community members, including two office staff, ten ditch riders, and one seasonal position, typically for a high school student.

The system begins at Harlan County Reservoir near Alma, NE where water is released to the Republican River. It then travels 60 miles downstream before being diverted into the Courtland Canal through the Superior-Courtland Diversion dam west of Guide Rock, NE. The water then travels down the Courtland Canal for 15 miles until it reaches the Nebraska-Kansas border where KBID's delivery responsibility begins. After serving roughly 13,300 irrigated acres over the next 15 miles, water dumps into Lovewell Reservoir. Further releases serve the other 29,200 acres within KBID. Lovewell Reservoir is a Bureau of Reclamation project completed in 1957, and Harlan County Dam is an Army Corps of Engineers project completed in 1952.

Financial security is one of the biggest issues KBID faces. They are currently on a long-term repayment plan with Reclamation for the system's dams and canals, which is currently set to be paid in full in 2040. The district also continues to incur costs for maintenance of the aging infrastructure.

In 2018, Harlan County Dam required extensive repairs to its flood control Tainter gates. The multi-year project came with a price tag of over \$40 million, and the Bostwick Division is responsible for 15.35% of Harlan County O&M costs. This required KBID to enter an additional long-term contract with Reclamation and increase the per-acre assessments charged to its users to help cover their share of these costs. With another proposed spillway repair project looming at Harlan County Dam, estimated at nearly \$20 million, KBID is once again faced with implementing a second significant increase in assessment charges for its users, putting further strain on the district and its users. Even in years when water is not delivered, these increased fees contribute to the continually rising cost of production for farmers.

Looking further into the future, KBID is focused on increasing water storage and efficiency in response to long-lasting drought conditions across the west. While the district's water rights are protected under the Republican River Compact and were upheld by the Supreme Court in 2015, diminishing weather patterns still loom large. Fortunately for KBID, pursuant to stipulations from the 2015 court ruling on the matter, the State of Nebraska can supplement their deliveries to Kansas with groundwater pumps to ensure their obligations in certain years.

Pete has moved the district firmly into the 21st century and exceeds KBID's mission to "deliver the precious resource of water to our irrigators and agricultural producers in the

most cost effective, efficient, and conservation minded way possible within the affordable limits of available modern technology.”

Since 2015, KBID has utilized nearly \$5 million for projects in the district between Reclamation’s WaterSMART program and funds awarded to Kansas from the 2015 Republican River Settlement. These projects include converting open canals to buried pipes and automating delivery systems. As of June 2026, over three-quarters of the district’s lateral canals have been converted to buried pipe, ensuring efficient delivery. In addition to pipeline projects, KBID has also installed automated diversion and check structures, as well as lateral headgates to increase overall efficiency. One benefit of the automated diversion structures is detecting increased streamflow from rainfall events and adjusting to retain water for future use.

2026 has been a big year for the district as they recently received a WaterSMART grant for a hybrid canal automation/pipeline project for one of its larger laterals. While the district has received money for similar projects in the past, this year represents the first grant they have received to complete both project types together.

One of the most recent projects KBID has undergone is switching their daily water accounting system from pencil and paper to Rubicon’s Neuroflo online software. This upgrade has resulted in better water monitoring capabilities across the district and allows users to request water deliveries with the click of a button through the “Customer Connect” portal.

Alongside the district’s upgrades and investments, their members maintain a commitment to conservation and add improvements to their own systems. Pete estimates that three-quarters of irrigators in his district have switched from gravity fed piped irrigation to center pivots. This shows a significant investment in water efficiency from water users in addition to their rising payments to the district for improvements to protect the longevity of the system.

Pete strives to create a better valley for his two teenage sons and safeguard the survival of his local community. He highlights, “What we do matters to people.” KBID provides an essential service with measurable goals and visible outcomes. The country relies on the work of the district and many others like it to maintain a strong domestic food supply. The Republican River Valley and the Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District are a shining example of utilizing simple solutions to produce practical outcomes and optimizing spending to ensure the long-term productivity of the district.

Join Us in Washington for the 2026 Farmer Lobbyist Trip

Mark your calendars for **September 14–17** and join the Family Farm Alliance in Washington, D.C., for our annual Farmer Lobbyist Trip—one of our most important advocacy events of the year.

Each fall, farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and water managers from across the West come together with one voice to meet directly with Members of Congress, the Administration, and federal agencies on the issues that matter most to western irrigated agriculture. These face-to-face meetings have become one of the Alliance's most effective advocacy tools and continue to elevate the visibility of our members and the challenges facing rural communities.

This year, we're bringing new energy, new ideas, and an expanded strategy to make our time in Washington even more impactful. But to build the strongest schedule possible, we need to know who's coming.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP as soon as possible by emailing Executive Director Samantha Barncastle at samantha@familyfarmalliance.org. Early responses allow us to begin scheduling congressional and agency meetings and ensure your state's priorities are represented.

We hope you'll join us as we continue advocating for the policies and investments needed to strengthen western irrigated agriculture.

DONOR SUPPORT

What's The Secret to our Success? Grassroots Members Like You

Join our membership of agricultural producers, agribusiness, water purveyors, supporting industries, local governments, and community members. Your membership will strengthen our advocacy and connect you to cutting-edge research, analysis, and insight on the policies impacting agricultural water.

We encourage you to visit the **RESOURCES** page on our website: www.familyfarmalliance.org to view Reports, Insightful Monthly Briefings and Information Water Reviews. We believe our accomplishments and activities speak for themselves. While you're there, join our email list to be kept up-to-date on our efforts on your behalf.



LEARN MORE 

Defending Western Irrigated Agriculture

The Family Farm Alliance is a powerful advocate for family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and allied industries in seventeen Western states. The Alliance is a focused organization. **Everything we do supports one mission — to ensure the availability of reliable and affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers.**

CORRESPONDENCE LIST
AUGUST 2026

1. July 16, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Regular Board Meeting on July 23, 2026.
2. July 20, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency JPA Regular Board Meeting on July 23, 2026.
3. July 23, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board Regular Board Meeting on July 27, 2026.
4. July 24, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Wastewater Committee Meeting on July 29, 2026.
5. July 24, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Finance Committee Meeting on July 30, 2026.
6. July 28, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Well Registration Public Workshop on July 30, 2026.
7. July 31, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Community Interface Meeting on August 5, 2026.
8. August 4, 2026 – District sent a Renewed Can and Will Serve Letter to one customer.
9. August 4, 2026 – District sent an Existing Water Service Can and Will Serve Letter to one customer.