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, September 15, 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 **"September 15, 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 AUGUST 18, 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

   B. OPERATIONS

   1. General Update

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

   A. SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT
   1. Eastern Management Area (EMA) Update

10. **RESOLUTION NO. 862 – RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1 EXPRESSING GRATIUDE AND APPRECIATION TO JEFFREY A. DINKIN FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE DISTRICT**

11. **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**

12. **CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FILING OF VARIOUS ITEMS**

13. **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.

14. **NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for **October 20, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.**

15. **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 issued on Application 22423 to 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]

    C. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: TITLE - GENERAL MANAGER
    [Section 54957 of the Government Code]

    D. CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR: Jeff Dinkin – Stradling, Yocca, Carlson & Rauth; Unrepresented Employee – General Manager [Section 54957.6 of the Government Code]

16. **RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION:**
[Sections 54957.1 and 54957.7 of the Government Code]

    A. Report (if any) on Closed Session Agenda Items 15.A – 15.B

    B. Consider Approval of General Manager Cost of Living Adjustment Increase and Compensation Adjustment

17. 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.

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SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1
AUGUST 18, 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, August 18, 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	Jessica Diaz
	Dan Drugan	Kylie Kelleher	

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:
President Clay called the meeting to order at 3:01 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 JULY 21, 2026
The Regular Meeting Minutes from July 21, 2026 were presented for consideration.

President Clay asked if there were any changes or additions to the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 21, 2026. There were no changes or additions requested.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Urton, seconded by Trustee Burchardi, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the July 21, 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 July. Various topics were discussed among the Board and staff.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Moniot, seconded by Trustee Joos, 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 July. She explained that the District's fiscal year 2026/2027 began on July 1, 2026 and that the financials reflect the first month of activity for the new fiscal year. She highlighted various line-items related to revenue and expense transactions that occurred during the month and referred to the Fiscal-Year-to-Date Statement of Revenues and Expenses that provides a budget to actual snapshot for the first month of the 2026/2027 Fiscal Year. Ms. Cota stated that revenue exceeded expenses by $801,119.72 for the month of July 2026.

   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 27389 through 27444 in the amount of $805,877.30.

   It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Urton, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve the Warrant List for July 22, 2026 through August 18, 2026.

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

   Mr. Garcia reported that for the past several months the Board has been reviewing and considering a Draft District Ordinance Establishing Regulations and Fines Relating to Water Theft and Unauthorized Use of District Facilities, which is based in part on new State law (SB 394) and related provisions of the California Government Code and Civil Code. He provided the Board with a brief overview regarding the purpose and key provisions of the Draft Ordinance, which would establish new District regulations and administrative fines and procedures relating to water theft and unauthorized use of District facilities. Mr. Garcia explained that, if adopted by the Board, the Ordinance would take effect immediately.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Moniot, seconded by Trustee Urton, to adopt Ordinance 2026-01, and the Ordinance was approved by the following 5-0-0 roll call vote:

AYES, Trustees:	Mike Burchardi Brad Joos Nick Urton Mark Moniot Jeff Clay
NOES, Trustees:	None
ABSTAIN, Trustees**:**	None
ABSENT, Trustees:	None

3. Notice of Completion – Madera Fence Replacement Phase 2
Mr. Drugan provided an overview of the Notice of Completion for the District's Madera Fence Replacement Phase 2 project as contained in the Board packet, and indicated that staff is recommending approval and filing of the Notice.

It was **MOVED** by Trustee Burchardi, seconded by President Clay, and carried by a unanimous 5-0-0 voice vote, to approve and file the Notice of Completion for the Madera Fence Replacement Phase 2 project.

B. OPERATIONS

1. General Update

Mr. Drugan reported that the quality of State Water Project supplies received from CCWA has been excellent this summer. He also reported that staff responded to a small leak near the intersection of Deer Hill Road and Dove Meadow Lane, and that staff recently replaced a large battery supporting the solar-powered mixer at the Zone 2 Reservoir. Mr. Drugan further highlighted that the District expects to advertise the Zone 2 Reservoir Electrical Service project for bids in the coming weeks and that staff continues to coordinate with its consulting engineers on data review and evaluation for potential groundwater replacement capacity and a water quality treatment facility in response to new regulatory standards.

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 a copy of the Notice and Agenda for the July 23, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EMA GSA). Mr. Garcia discussed various SGMA-related topics, including the recent July 30, 2026 public workshop regarding the EMA GSA's Groundwater Well Registration program. He noted that the workshop was well attended and that two additional workshops are being held, one virtual on August 18, 2026 and another in person on August 20, 2026.

B. ID NO.1 PAYMENT UNDER PROTEST REGARDING SYRWCD GROUNDWATER PRODUCTION CHARGES

Mr. Garcia referred to a copy of ID No.1's letter to the Conservation District dated July 31, 2026 as contained in the Board packet, wherein ID No.1 summarizes several grounds upon which it continues to protest its payment of groundwater production charges to the Conservation District.

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 and Trustee Burchardi noted that they attended the Los Olivos Community Services District Board Meeting on August 12, 2026 and provided a brief overview of the meeting.

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 September 15, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

14. **CLOSED SESSION**

The Board adjourned to closed session at 4:38 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 4:58 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 Burchardi, seconded by Trustee Moniot, and carried by a 3-0-0 voice vote, with Trustee Urton and President Clay absent, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 4:58 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
September 15, 2026

Consent Agenda Report

CA-1. Water Supply and Production Report. The District's total water production in **August 2026 (451 AF)** was 17 AF lower than total production in **July 2026** (468 AF), 27 AF lower than the most recent 3-year running average (2023-2025) for the month of **August** (478 AF), and 74 AF lower than the most recent 10-year running average (2016-2025) for the month of **August** (525 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 **August 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 **450 AF** of SWP supplies for the month, all of which was allocated to Exchange with the South Coast. According to USBR, **0 AF** of SWP supplies were delivered to Lake Cachuma for South Coast entities. Direct diversions to the County Park and USBR were **2.56 AF**.

The USBR Daily Operations Report for Cachuma Reservoir in **August** (ending August 31, 2026) recorded the end of month reservoir elevation at **745.31'** and end of month storage of **170,389 AF**. USBR recorded total precipitation at the reservoir of **0.02 inches** for the month. Reported reservoir evaporation in **August** was **1,964.4 AF**. Based on the updated maximum storage capacity of 192,978 AF (previously 193,305 AF), as of **September 8, 2026** Cachuma reservoir was reported at **87.4%** of capacity, with then-current storage of **168,609 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 1,422 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 requested a 100% Project allocation for WY 2026-2027. Reclamation granted that request by letter dated July 1, 2026, which will result in an additional allocation of 2,651 AF to the District effective October 1st.**

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 final 2026 SWP Table A allocation to 45 percent. As of September 8, 2026 DWR recorded Lake Oroville storage levels at 55 percent of total capacity and 92 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; and strategic planning. The regular CCWA Board of Directors meeting previously scheduled for September 24, 2026 has been cancelled, and the next regular meeting is currently scheduled for October 22, 2026.

— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Historical Archive and Reports Database

Lake Cachuma Daily Operations

Run Date: 09/05/2026

August 2026

		STORAGE ACRE-FEET		COMPUTED*	CCWA	PRECIP ON	RELEASE - AF.				EVAPORATION		PRECIP
DAY	ELEV	IN LAKE	CHANGE	INFLOW AF.	INFLOW AF.	RES. SURF. AF.	TUNNEL	HILTON CREEK	OUTLET	SPILLWAY	AF.	INCH	INCHES
	747.05	175,395											
1	746.97	175,162	-233	-30.6	0.0	0.0	69.2	13.9	39.0	0.0	80.3	0.410	0.00
2	746.95	175,104	-58	132.8	0.0	0.0	67.5	13.9	39.0	0.0	70.4	0.360	0.00
3	746.88	174,901	-203	-25.4	0.0	0.0	52.4	13.9	39.0	0.0	72.3	0.370	0.00
4	746.83	174,755	-146	28.7	0.0	0.0	48.5	13.9	38.0	0.0	74.3	0.380	0.00
5	746.78	174,610	-145	27.5	0.0	0.0	55.2	13.9	39.0	0.0	64.4	0.330	0.00
6	746.74	174,494	-116	53.3	0.0	0.0	53.9	13.9	39.0	0.0	62.5	0.320	0.00
7	746.70	174,377	-117	58.9	0.0	0.0	61.6	13.9	38.0	0.0	62.4	0.320	0.00
8	746.65	174,232	-145	39.4	0.0	0.0	65.2	13.9	39.0	0.0	66.3	0.340	0.00
9	746.59	174,059	-173	15.1	0.0	0.0	65.0	13.9	39.0	0.0	70.2	0.360	0.00
10	746.57	174,001	-58	131.0	0.0	0.0	66.0	13.9	39.0	0.0	70.1	0.360	0.00
11	751.51	188,703	14,702	14,893.0	0.0	0.0	65.8	13.9	39.0	0.0	72.3	0.350	0.00
12	746.45	173,656	-15,047	-14,868.8	0.0	0.0	65.0	13.9	39.0	0.0	60.3	0.310	0.00
13	746.40	173,512	-144	34.6	0.0	0.0	59.6	13.9	39.0	0.0	66.1	0.340	0.00
14	746.34	173,340	-172	-2.5	0.0	0.0	60.3	13.8	39.0	0.0	56.4	0.290	0.00
15	746.28	173,168	-172	-35.4	0.0	0.0	58.6	13.8	39.0	0.0	25.2	0.130	0.00
16	746.22	172,995	-173	-5.9	0.0	0.0	59.0	13.8	38.0	0.0	56.3	0.290	0.00
17	746.17	172,851	-144	27.6	0.0	0.0	64.5	13.8	39.0	0.0	54.3	0.280	0.00
18	746.12	172,708	-143	39.6	0.0	0.0	59.0	13.8	40.0	0.0	69.8	0.360	0.00
19	746.06	172,535	-173	3.9	0.0	0.0	62.1	13.8	39.0	0.0	62.0	0.320	0.00
20	746.01	172,391	-144	35.1	0.0	0.0	62.4	13.8	39.0	0.0	63.9	0.330	0.00
21	745.95	172,219	-172	14.8	0.0	0.0	66.3	13.8	39.0	0.0	67.7	0.350	0.00
22	745.90	172,075	-144	51.1	0.0	0.0	74.6	13.8	39.0	0.0	67.7	0.350	0.00
23	745.84	171,903	-172	17.5	0.0	0.0	71.1	13.7	39.0	0.0	65.7	0.340	0.00
24	745.77	171,702	-201	-11.3	0.0	0.0	73.2	13.8	39.0	0.0	63.7	0.330	0.00
25	745.73	171,587	-115	90.9	0.0	0.0	81.7	13.8	39.0	0.0	71.4	0.370	0.00
26	745.67	171,414	-173	39.9	0.0	0.0	86.9	13.7	39.0	0.0	73.3	0.380	0.00
27	745.59	171,185	-229	-0.1	0.0	0.0	98.2	13.7	38.0	0.0	79.0	0.410	0.00
28	745.54	171,043	-142	17.9	0.0	4.8	88.9	13.7	39.0	0.0	23.1	0.120	0.02
29	745.47	170,844	-199	20.2	0.0	0.0	106.9	13.7	39.0	0.0	59.6	0.310	0.00
30	745.38	170,588	-256	-38.9	0.0	0.0	95.2	13.7	39.0	0.0	69.2	0.360	0.00
31	745.31	170,389	-199	1.6	0.0	0.0	103.8	13.6	39.0	0.0	44.2	0.230	0.00
TOTALS			**-5,006**	**755.5**	**0.0**	**4.8**	**2,167.6**	**428.3**	**1,206.0**	**0.0**	**1,964.4**	**10.100**	**0.02**
AVERAGE		**173,436**											

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: 9/8/2026 **Water Year: 2027** **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	0.00	0%	0%	
Cachuma Dam (USBR)	*332*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Carpinteria (Fire Stn)	*208*	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	42%	0%	
Cuyama (Fire Stn)	*436*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Figueroa Mtn. (USFS Stn)	*421*	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	23%	0%	12.5
Gibraltar Dam (City Facility)	*230*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	12.5
Goleta (Fire Stn-Los Carneros)	*440*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Lompoc (City Hall)	*439*	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	19%	0%	12.5
Los Alamos (Fire Stn)	*204*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
San Marcos Pass (USFS Stn)	*212*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Santa Barbara (County Bldg)	*234*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Santa Maria (City Pub.Works)	*380*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Santa Ynez (Fire Stn /Airport)	*218*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	
Sisquoc (Fire Stn)	*256*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%	0%	

Countywide percentage of "Normal-to-Date" rainfall : 6%

Countywide percentage of "Normal Water-Year" rainfall : 0%

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)

Click on Site for Real-Time Readings	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)
Gibraltar Reservoir	1,400.00	1,382.90	4,490	1,267	28.2%	-16	-13
Cachuma Reservoir	753.**	744.84	192,978	168,609	87.4%	-1,228	15,442
Jameson Reservoir	2,224.00	2,220.34	4,587	4,177	91.1%	-35	-43
Twitchell Reservoir	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 September 2, 2026

FROM: Lacey Adam, Senior Accountant

SUBJECT: Monthly Water Deliveries

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

Project Participant	Delivery Amount (acre-feet)
Chorro	144
Lopez	154
Shandon	0
Guadalupe	30
Santa Maria	869
Golden State Water Co.	0
Vandenberg	345
Buellton	32
Solvang	91
Santa Ynez ID#1	450
Bradbury	0
TOTAL	**2,115**

In order to reconcile these deliveries with the DWR revenue meter, which read 2,146 acre-feet, the following delivery amounts should be used for billing purposes:

Project Participant	Delivery Amount (acre-feet)
Chorro	**146**
Lopez	**156**
Shandon	**0**
Guadalupe	**30**
Santa Maria	**828***
Golden State Water Co	**54***
Vandenberg	**350**
Buellton	**33**
Solvang	**92**
Santa Ynez ID#1	**457**
Bradbury	**0**
TOTAL	**2,146**

***Golden State Water Company delivered 54 acre-feet into its system through the Santa Maria turnout. This delivery is recorded by providing a credit of 54 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 457 acre-feet of exchange water.

The exchange water is allocated as follows

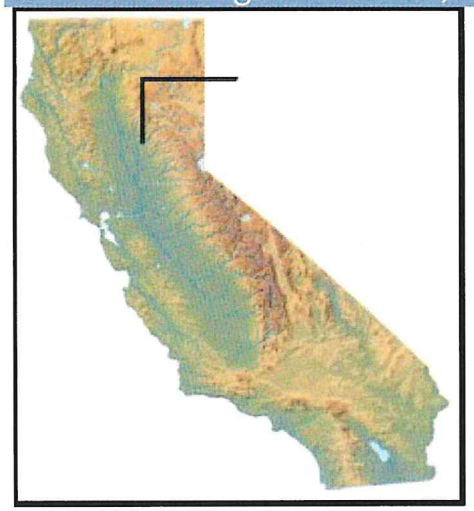
Project Participant	Exchange Amount (acre-feet)
Goleta	164
Santa Barbara	110
Montecito	110
Carpinteria	73
TOTAL	**457**

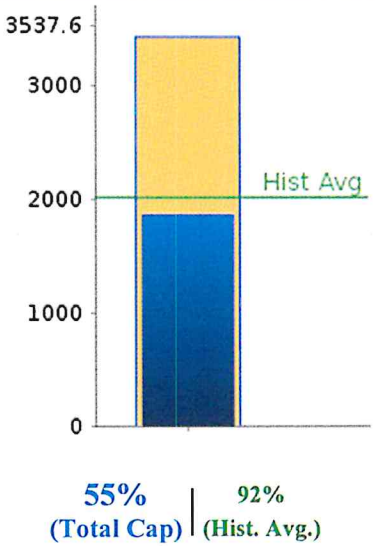
Bradbury Deliveries into Lake Cachuma are allocated as follows:

Project Participant	Delivery Amount (acre-feet)
Carpinteria	0
Goleta	0
La Cumbre	0
Montecito	0
Morehart	0
Santa Barbara	0
Raytheon	0
TOTAL	**0**

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

Oroville - Storage Conditions, September 08, 2026





Data as of Midnight: September 08, 2026

- Storage: 1,869,274 AF
- Reservoir Elevation: 778.09 FT
- **55% of Total Capacity**
- **92% of Historical Avg. For This Date**
- Total Capacity: 3,424,753 AF
- Avg. Stor. for September 08: 2,023,797 AF

Lake Oroville

Major Reservoirs Current Conditions Graphs
Printable Version of Current Data

Paeter Garcia

From: Lisa F. Watkins <lfw@ccwa.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2026 2:58 PM
Cc: David R. Beard; Peter K. Thompson
Subject: 2026 Coastal Branch Annual Maintenance Shutdown and Free Chlorine Burn Notice
Attachments: 2026 Coastal Branch Shutdown Notice(55722.1).pdf

Via bcc: CCWA Water Operations Distribution List

2026 Coastal Branch Annual Maintenance Shutdown Schedule

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has finalized its schedule for the annual maintenance shutdown for the Coastal Branch of the State Water Project, and to accommodate DWR's schedule, CCWA will operate Pipeline Turnouts as follows:

- **All Pipeline Turnouts will be shut down between 7:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. on Friday October 30, 2026.**

Once shutdown maintenance work is complete, CCWA will activate Pipeline Turnouts and resume water deliveries. CCWA anticipates resuming water deliveries during the week of **November 16, 2026,** according to the following schedule:

- Water deliveries for the Golden State Water Company, City of Santa Maria, City of Guadalupe, Lopez, Chorro Valley and Shandon Turnouts will be targeted to resume between **8:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 18, 2026.**

- Water deliveries for Vandenberg Space Force Base, City of Buellton, City of Solvang and Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District - Improvement District No. 1 Turnouts will be targeted to resume on **Thursday, November 19, 2026.**

2026 Free Chlorine Burn

CCWA is planning to conduct a free chlorine burn of the Pipeline prior to the annual maintenance shutdown. The free chlorine burn is achieved by converting the residual disinfectant to free chlorine from chloramines. The objective of the activity is to reduce system nitrification problems by using chlorine to inactivate nitrifying bacteria and other microorganisms in the bulk fluid or biofilm of the pipeline and oxidize free ammonia in the system, leading to a long-term improvement in drinking water quality.

CCWA will initiate the free chlorine burn during the week of October 19, 2026. Free chlorine will be used as the residual disinfectant for approximately 30 days. At the conclusion of the annual maintenance shutdown, CCWA will purge the Pipeline by resuming Lake Cachuma delivery operations prior to activating Turnouts, and resume using chloramines as the residual disinfectant in delivered water.

CCWA will provide notification of any changes to the above schedule as soon as practical. Please call David Beard (805) 688-2292 ext. 228 or via cell at (805) 680-2116 with any questions or concerns related to the annual maintenance shutdown schedule or free chlorine burn.

CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

August 25, 2026

TO: CCWA Project Participants

FROM: David Beard, Deputy Director

SUBJECT: 2026 Coastal Branch Annual Maintenance Shutdown and Free Chlorine Burn Notice

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2026 Coastal Branch Annual Maintenance Shutdown Schedule

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has finalized its schedule for the annual maintenance shutdown for the Coastal Branch of the State Water Project, and to accommodate DWR's schedule, CCWA will operate Pipeline Turnouts as follows:

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CCWA will provide notification of any changes to the above schedule as soon as practical. Please call me at my office (805) 688-2292 ext. 228 or on my cell phone (805) 680-2116 with any questions or concerns related to the annual maintenance shutdown schedule or free chlorine burn.

CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AGENDA

Chairman – Eric Friedman
Vice Chairman – Jeff Clay

Thursday, August 27, 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: 239 474 467 001 204 Passcode: cX2Mv3hB
or by dialing +1 323-484-5095,and entering access Code/Meeting ID: 667 185 235#

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. Consent Calendar

A. Minutes of the July 23, 2026 Regular Meeting ★
B. Bills ★
C. Controller's Report ★

D. Operations Report ★
E. Report on Budget Transfers for Fiscal Year 2025/26 Projects ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Consent Calendar

VI. Executive Directors Report

A. Water Supply Situation Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

B. Water Transfers Update ★
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

C. Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement with the Department of Water Resources, State of California ★
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution No. 26-10 approving an Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement with the Department of Water Resources, State of California and Authorizing the Executive Director to Execute the Amendment

D. Carryover of Project Funds from Fiscal Year 25/26 to Fiscal Year 26/27 - $3,351,943.04 ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve Carryover of Project Funds from Fiscal Year 25/26 to Fiscal Year 26/27 - $3,351,943.04

E. Replacement of Energy Dissipating Valve Hydraulic Piping Project ★
Staff Recommendation: Adopt Resolution No. 26-11 approving the Replacement of Energy Dissipating Valve Hydraulic Piping Project and Authorizing the Executive Director to Issue the Notice of Award to Newton Construction and Management, Inc. in the Amount of $394,700 to Construct the Same

F. Report on Polonio Pass Water Treatment Plan Filter Media and Underdrain Nozzle Replacement Project
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

G. Task Order No. 2 to the Professional Consulting Services Master Agreement with Carollo Engineers for the Filter Media and Underdrain Nozzle Replacement Project ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve and Adopt Resolution No. 26-12 Approving Task Order No. 2 To The Professional Consulting Services Master Agreement With Carollo Engineers For The Filter Media And Underdrain Nozzle Replacement Project."

H. Personnel Committee Report (see Personnel Committee packet)
1. 2027 Compensation and Benefit Survey Comparator Agencies★
Staff Recommendation: Approve recommended list of comparative agencies to be used in the 2027 compensation and benefit survey.
2. Managing Engineer Position ★
Staff Recommendation: Update the CCWA organizational structure by eliminating the Operations Manager position and adding the Engineering Manager position.

I. State Water Contractors Report
Staff Recommendation: Informational item only.

VII. Reports from Board Members for Information Only

VIII. Items for Next Regular Meeting Agenda

IX. Date of Next Regular Meeting: September 24, 2026

X. Adjournment

CENTRAL COAST WATER AUTHORITY
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE [1]

AGENDA

Thursday, August 27, 2026
8:00 AM,
at 255 Industrial Way, Buellton, California

Members of the public may participate by video call or telephone via
Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 274 916 283 786 600 Passcode: sa9ZT7Yr
or by dialing +1 323-484-5095 Phone conference ID: 983 422 682#

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★ indicates written report

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE AND A VOTE MAY BE TAKEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDING ACTION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

II. Public Comment – (Any member of the public may address the Committee relating to any matter within the Committee's jurisdiction. Individual speakers may be limited to five minutes; all speakers may be limited to a total of fifteen minutes.)

III. Consent Calendar
A. April 8, 2026 Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes ★
Staff Recommendation: Approve Consent Calendar.

IV. 2027 Compensation and Benefit Survey Comparator Agencies★
Staff Recommendation: Recommend a list of comparative agencies to be used in the 2027 compensation and benefit survey to the CCWA Board of Directors.

V. Engineering Manager Position ★
Staff Recommendation: Recommend the Board of Directors update the CCWA organizational structure by eliminating the Operations Manager position and adding the Engineering Manager position.

VI. **Reports from Committee Members for Information Only**

VII. **Date of Next Meeting: Unscheduled**

VIII. **Adjournment**

Central Coast Water Authority

(https://www.ccwa.com/)

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

OPERATING COMMITTEE (/OPERATING-COMMITTEE)

OCT
8
2026

October 8, 2026

Operating Committee Meeting

255 INDUSTRIAL WAY, BUELLTON CA 93427

TELEPHONE (805) 688-2292

2025 Urban Water Management Plan

Dismiss

(/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)

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

BOARD MEETINGS (/BOARD-MEETINGS)

SEP
24
2026

September 24, 2026

Board Meeting Canceled

255 INDUSTRIAL WAY, BUELLTON CA 93427

TELEPHONE (805) 688-2292

2025 Urban Water Management Plan

Dismiss

(/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)

Central Coast Water Authority

(https://www.ccwa.com/)

Contact Us (/contact-us)

Search... Search

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

BOARD MEETINGS (/BOARD-MEETINGS)

OCT
22
2026

October 22, 2026

Board Meeting

255 INDUSTRIAL WAY, BUELLTON CA 93427

TELEPHONE (805) 688-2292

EMPLOYEE PORTAL (HTTPS://CCWAPORTAL.SPECIALDISTRICT.ORG/#/)

PRIVACY POLICY (/PRIVACY-POLICY)

DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY (TRANSPARENCY.HTML)

Join our mailing list

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MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)
FOR THE **EASTERN MANAGEMENT AREA**
IN THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN

MEETING WILL BE HELD **VIRTUALLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**
AT 2:00 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 03, 2026

Remote public participation is available via Telephone or TEAMS
To access the meeting via telephone, please dial: +1 469-998-7311, 418942414# or via the Web at: Join the meeting now

"Join a Meeting" - **Meeting ID: 263 990 233 166 67 Meeting Passcode: Pq7Kj6Bj**

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Volunteer Selection for Upcoming Board Meeting Report-Out
3. Public Comment (Any member of the public may address the CAG relating to any non-agenda matter within the CAG's jurisdiction. The time for public comment allotted for each individual shall not exceed three minutes.)
4. CAG Membership Review
5. Well Registration and Metering Program
    a. Well Registration Update
    b. De minimis extractor proposed updated definition and policies
    c. Correspondence with EMA meter suppliers
6. Public Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan Periodic Evaluation
7. EMA GSA Initiatives Update
    a. FY 2026/27 Groundwater Extraction Fee Administration
8. Proposition 68 Grant Initiatives Update
    a. Component 5 - Well Point Installation Project Drilling Bid
9. Grant/Financing Opportunities
    a. IRWM Quarterly Grant Opportunities Newsletter
10. Future CAG Meeting Date/Time
    a. Thursday, October 15, 2026 3:00 PM
11. CAG Reports and Requests for Future Agenda Items
12. Future EMA GSA Board Meeting
    a. Thursday, September 24, 2026 4:00 PM

13. Adjournment

[This agenda was posted prior to the meeting at ema-SantaYnezWater.org. 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.]

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

EMA GSA JPA BOARD MEETINGS (/EMA-GSA-JPA-BOARD-MEETINGS)

SEP
11
2026

September 11, 2026 - 9 AM

EMA GSA JPA Board Joint GSAs Special Meeting, 9:00 AM - CANCELED

The Joint GSAs Special Meeting scheduled for Friday, September 11 at 9:00 AM is CANCELED.

P.O. BOX 7098, LOS OSOS CA 93412

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

CALENDAR (/CALENDAR-FC21E9E)

Calendar

‹ SEPTEMBER 2026 ›

30 (?month=2026-08)	31	1	2	3 EMA GSA CAG Public Meeting, 2:00 PM (/2026-09-03-ema-gsa-cag-public-meeting-2-00-pm)	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11 EMA GSA JPA Board Joint GSAs Special Meeting, 9:00 AM - CANCELED (/2026-09-11-ema-gsa-jpa-board-joint-gsas-special-meeting-9-00-am-canceled)	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19

(?month=2026-10)

20	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24** EMA GSA JPA Board Regular Meeting, 4:00 PM (/2026-09-24-ema-gsa-jpa-board-regular-meeting-4-00-pm)	**25**	**26**
27	**28**	**29**	**30**	1	2	3

P.O. BOX 7098, LOS OSOS CA 93412

PRIVACY POLICY (/PRIVACY-POLICY)

DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY (TRANSPARENCY.HTML)

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT (ACCESSIBILITY.HTML)

POWERED BY STREAMLINE (HTTP://WWW.GETSTREAMLINE.COM/) | SIGN IN (HTTPS://WWW.EMA-SANTAYNEZWATER.ORG/USERS/SIGN_IN?DESTINATION=%2FCALENDAR-FC21E9E)

Join our mailing list

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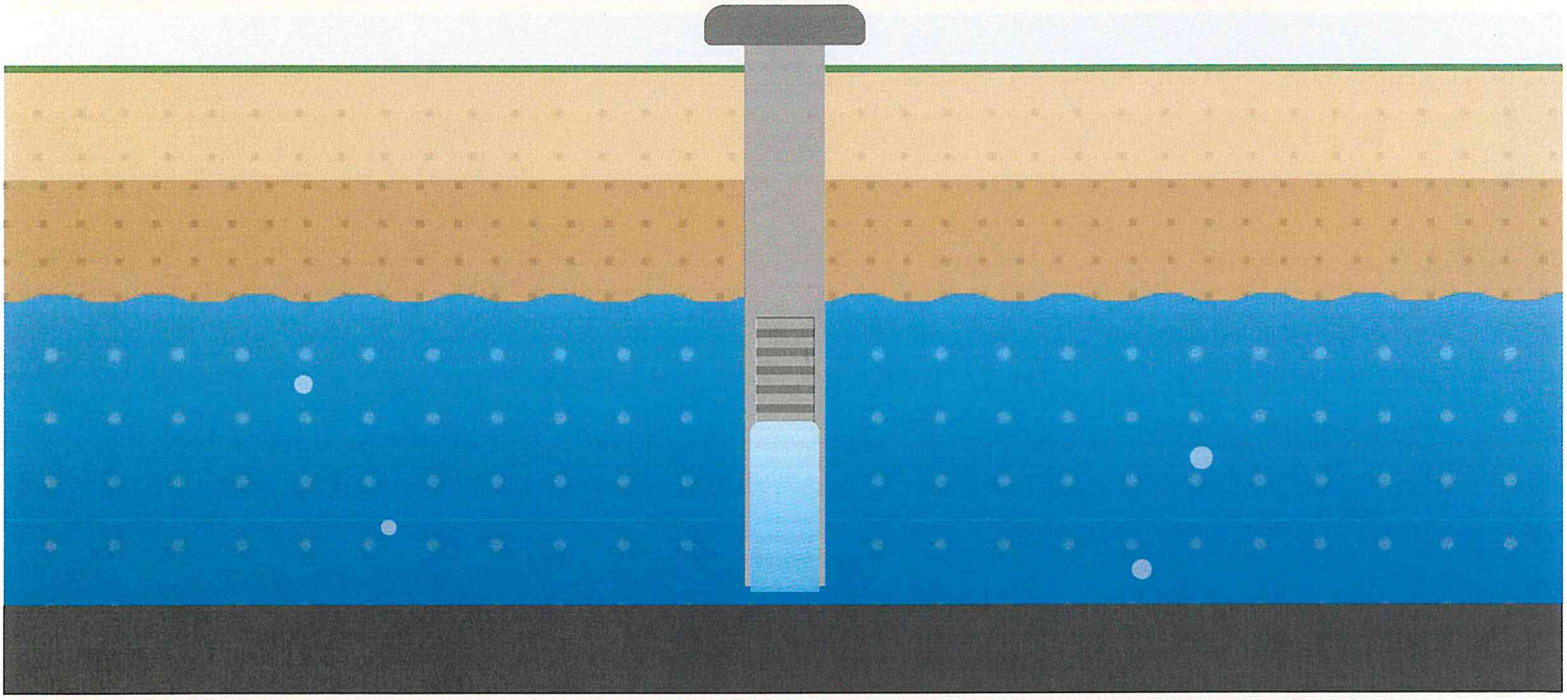
EMA

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

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

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.

Paeter Garcia

From: Eastern Management Area GSA <emagsa@specialdistrict.org>
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2026 4:27 PM
To: Paeter Garcia
Subject: EMA GSA Well Registration Public Workshop 4:00-7:00 PM - July 30, 2026

EMA

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

EMA GSA Well Registration Public Workshop 4:00-7:00 PM - July 30, 2026

RSVP and Comment Form HERE

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.)

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

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

EMA GSA WELL REGISTRATION PUBLIC WORKSHOP (/EMA-GSA-WELL-REGISTRATION-PUBLIC-WORKSHOP)

WELL REGISTRATION, METERING, AND REPORTING (/WELL-REGISTRATION-METERING-AND-REPORTING)

AUG
18
2026

August 18, 2026 - 6 PM

EMA GSA Well Registration Public Workshop Virtual 6:00-7:00 PM

▷ Join Remote Meeting
To be held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Access the meeting using the linked details above.

RSVP and Comment Form HERE (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZfo0C3tE4DKN4KQ8hOvF1Xhl5pm-5n1yX9te6PUEYxtHOiw/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=111834052922277252009)

P.O. BOX 7098, LOS OSOS CA 93412

EMA

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

THIS ITEM APPEARS ON

EMA GSA WELL REGISTRATION PUBLIC WORKSHOP (/EMA-GSA-WELL-REGISTRATION-PUBLIC-WORKSHOP)

WELL REGISTRATION, METERING, AND REPORTING (/WELL-REGISTRATION-METERING-AND-REPORTING)

AUG
20
2026

August 20, 2026 - 6 PM

EMA GSA Well Registration Public Workshop 6:00-8:00 PM

RSVP and Comment Form HERE (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZfo0C3tE4DKN4KQ8hOvF1Xhl5pm-5n1yX9te6PUEYxtHOiw/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=111834052922277252009)

P.O. BOX 7098, LOS OSOS CA 93412

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RESOLUTION NO. 862

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT, IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO.1 EXPRESSING GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION TO JEFFREY A. DINKIN FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE DISTRICT

WHEREAS, Mr. Jeffrey A. Dinkin, for approximately 34 years, has faithfully served as Legal Counsel to the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 ("District") on matters involving and pertaining to state and federal labor and employment laws, regulations, standards, and policies, wherein Mr. Dinkin has provided expert legal advice and steadfast counsel to the District's Board of Trustees, management, and staff; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long-standing tenure as Legal Counsel to the District, Mr. Dinkin has played an instrumental role in defending and protecting the District's legal rights and interests, often during times of uncertainty and challenge, always ensuring that the District remained on firm legal and operational footing; and

WHEREAS, through his deep knowledge and understanding of labor and employment law and public agency governance, Mr. Dinkin's role as trusted advisor to the District has been essential in navigating ever-changing and complex legal, regulatory, contractual, and policy matters, helping the District to uphold its mission of providing reliable water service to all communities within its boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dinkin, while a zealous and formidable advocate, has consistently and unwaveringly conducted himself with the highest degree of professionalism, judgment, integrity, compassion, and courtesy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dinkin's insightful counsel, sound decision-making, steady demeanor, humility, humor, and commitment to public service have greatly benefited the District, its ratepayers and constituents, and the public at large; and

WHEREAS, knowing that Mr. Dinkin would have achieved great success in any occupation he pursued, the District is eternally grateful that he dedicated his career to being an exceptional attorney and counselor at law, and that he chose to represent the District for decades on end; and

WHEREAS, over the many years of a wonderful relationship between the District and Mr. Dinkin, he has been so much more than a lawyer to this agency, where additionally and for so many members of the Board of Trustees, management, staff, consultants, and co-counsel, Mr. Dinkin has been a friend, mentor, confidant, leader, and champion; and

WHEREAS, upon Mr. Dinkin's retirement, the Board of Trustees wishes to formally recognize and honor his decades of skilled and dedicated service, his many accomplishments, and his enduring contributions to the success and stability of the District.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1 hereby sincerely expresses its extraordinary gratitude, appreciation, commendation, and respect to Mr. Jeffrey A. Dinkin for his exemplary service, legal acumen, dedication, and professionalism.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees extends its best and heartfelt wishes to Mr. Dinkin for continued success, happiness, and fulfillment in his well-earned retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall be entered into the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the District and retained among the District's official records.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, WE THE UNDERSIGNED, being the duly qualified President and Secretary, respectively, of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No.1, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly adopted and passed by the Board of Trustees of said District at a Regular meeting held on September 15, 2026 by the following roll call vote:

AYES, and in favor thereof, Trustees:

_____
Jeff Clay, President
Division 2

_____
Michael Burchardi, Vice-President
Division 4

_____
Brad Joos
At-Large

_____
Nick Urton
Division 3

_____
Mark Moniot
Division 1

ATTEST:

_____
Racel Cota, Secretary to the Board of Trustees

Santa Ynez Community Services District
1070 Faraday Street, Santa Ynez, California 93460
Phone: (805) 688-3008 • Fax: (805) 688-3006

Business Corridor Streetlighting Survey

Help Us Brighten Our Business Corridor

The Santa Ynez Community Services District ("District") is responsible for sewer service and streetlights within the boundaries of the District's service area. The District is in the process of exploring adding historic rural light post type streetlights in the business corridor of Santa Ynez, roughly defined as the area shown in the illustration below.

The Santa Ynez Community Services District Board of Directors are seeking your input to help inform and better understand the business community needs and concerns around streetlights and are seeking your input. The District's goal is to add streetlights in the business corridor that create a safer environment while preserving the night sky. Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and place the completed survey in the mail or drop it off at our office located at 1070 Faraday Street by September 15, 2026.

Mission Statement

The District's mission is to respond to the needs of its citizens and represent them, as a group, at State and Federal levels in solving local problems affecting the common good.

The Santa Ynez Community Services District is exploring the addition of streetlights in the business corridor. Please take a few moments to complete and return this survey.

Business Corridor Streetlighting Survey

1. Which of these community benefits is most important to you? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Improved visibility and safety for evening pedestrians and customers.
- ☐ Ensuring our district meets Santa Barbara County lighting standards.
- ☐ Using "Dark Sky" compliant fixtures to minimize impacts to the night sky.
- ☐ Increasing the overall nighttime "curb appeal" of our business corridor.

2. Would you be willing to participate in a future community meeting to help select lighting styles and discuss proposed locations?

- ☐ Yes! Please notify me at: _____(email)
- ☐ I can't attend, but please keep me updated via email _____
- ☐ No, but I support the project.
- ☐ No, thank you.

3. Would you be open to a nominal fee to help bring a historical rural streetlighting design to our business corridor?

- ☐ Yes, I'm interested in investing in our streetscape.
- ☐ I'd like more information on the nominal fee and how it would be determined.
- ☐ No, thank you.

4. Additional Input: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

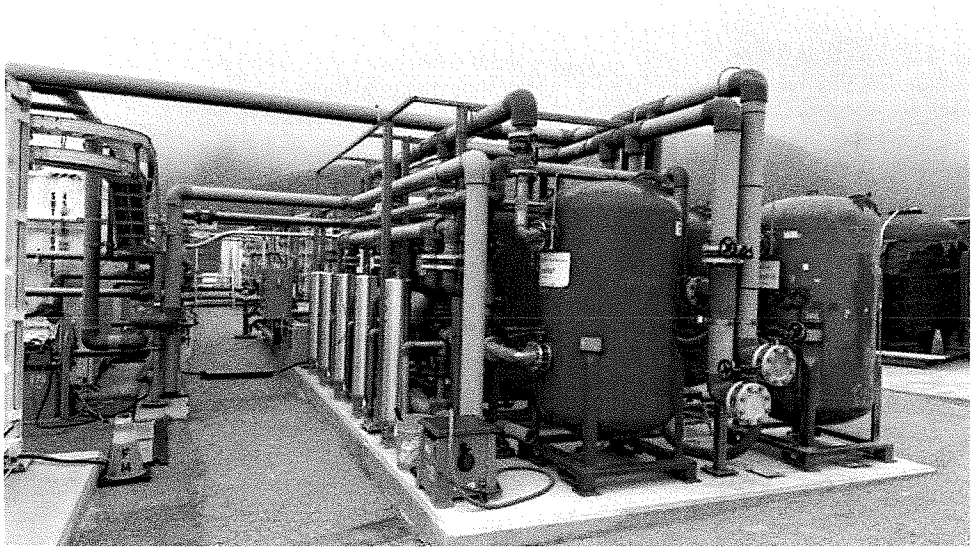
Property Address: _____

ENVIRONMENT

Should SLO County turn salt water into drinking water? And if so, where?

By **Stephanie Zappelli**

Updated September 1, 2026 3:50 PM Gift Article



Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant has its own desalination facility. Joe Tarica *jtarica@thetribunenews.com*

Listen to this article

As weather patterns shift and the length of droughts increase due to climate change, the county is pursuing projects to improve the resilience of its water supply.

Turning salt water into drinking water could be one of those options.

The county's current water portfolio includes groundwater, reservoirs, recycled water and state water, all of which rely on rain.

Desalination, however, produces drinking water regardless of the weather, according to San Luis Obispo County Public Works Deputy Director Courtney Howard.

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors received a presentation on Tuesday about the county's $1.2 million feasibility study that evaluated where a desalination facility could be located, how much it would cost and what communities could use the water.

The county won't pursue a desalination project this year, but the feasibility study could aid such an effort in the future.

Any water resilience project would require extensive regional collaboration — especially desalination, which is an expensive option, Supervisor Jimmy Paulding said.

"We probably need desal in the future, and we should continue to work toward that end," he said.

Where could a desalination plant be located?

Desalination uses reverse osmosis to transform ocean water into drinking water. The plant would use a submerged pipe to suck seawater in for processing, and an outfall to discharge brine, or salty water, into the ocean, county engineer Angela Ford said.

It's ideal for desalination facilities to use outfalls affiliated with wastewater treatment plants. This way, the brine can be diluted in the wastewater effluent before it's released into the ocean.

A plant could be built in Cambria with the potential to serve 330 to 580 acre-feet of water annually to Cambria and San Simeon, Ford said. This would require the construction of a new outfall.

Construction of this facility would cost almost $179 million, she said.

In Cayucos, a plant could serve 930 to 1,055 acre-feet of water annually to Cambria, San Simeon, Los Osos and potentially other inland communities, she said. This plant would use the existing Estero Marine Terminal outfall. Construction could cost about $261 million.

In Morro Bay, an approximately $545 million plant could serve 5,855 to 7,135 acre-feet of water annually to Cambria, San Simeon, Los Osos, Templeton, Lopez Lake water users, San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly, she said.

This plant would use the city's existing wastewater treatment plant outfall.

Morro Bay is not currently listed as a potential user because the city is interested in pursuing a recycled water project before considering desalination, Howard previously told The Tribune.

In the South County, an approximately $483 million desalination plant could be built near the South SLO Wastewater Treatment plant, using its outfall, Ford said. This plant could serve 5,070 to 6,825 acre-feet of water annually to Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Oceano, Avila Beach, San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, Los Osos and groundwater sustainability agencies.

Finally, a desalination plant could be located at the former Nipomo Mesa Refinery, using its existing outfall. This plant could deliver 1,805 to 1,905 acre-feet of water annually to Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Avila Beach, Pismo Beach, Oceano and potentially users in Santa Barbara County, she said. Construction would cost about $254 million.

No partner agencies have indicated interest in a project yet, Howard said.

If an agency volunteers to build a desalination facility, it will embark on a decades-long process of further feasibility studies, permitting, funding and construction, she said.

The county and its city partners are also pursing other water projects.

For example, Pismo Beach and Morro Bay are working on recycled water projects. Meanwhile, Lake Nacimiento water users are considering selling unused water to interested buyers, while the county is working on plans to distribute state water and improve the stability of the groundwater supply, Howard said.

Supervisor Bruce Gibson said the county should focus on more affordable ways to improve water resilience before pursuing desalination further.

"The cost of producing desalinated water is eye-watering," Gibson said. "Unless drinking it conveys many extra decades to my life, it's probably not worth it."

But still, he thinks the county should keep an eye on the technology, he said.

In order to have a stable water supply, the county and its neighbors will need to collaborate regionally, Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg said. She asked the county to continue studying desalination in case it's needed in the future.

Supervisor Heather Moreno agreed. In 20 years, the county might need the water, she said

"We can't wait until we need it," Moreno said. "We do need to keep pursuing this."

During public comment, Water Resources Advisory Committee Chair Thomas Burhenn urged the county to keep an eye on desalination opportunities while pursuing other water projects. While it's expensive now, the price and efficiency of the technology could improve over time, he said.

"Desal will not be the sole panacea for water supply issues in the future, but it will likely play a part," he said.

This story was originally published September 1, 2026 at 2:46 PM.

Related Stories from San Luis Obispo Tribune

CRIME

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August 31, 2026 1:16 PM

LOCAL

Key SLO County road reopens early after 3 months of bridge repairs

August 28, 2026 3:37 PM

Stephanie Zappelli *The Tribune* 805-781-7816

Stephanie Zappelli is the environment and immigration reporter for The Tribune. Born and raised in San Diego, they graduated from Cal Poly with a journalism degree. When not writing, they enjoy playing guitar, reading and exploring the outdoors.

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State's water plan is under attack

Trump administration objects to Newsomstrategy to regulate pumping from Delta.

BY IAN JAMES

The huge inland body of water that is the heart of California's water system is under major stress.

That's why state officials say they worked for years to come up with a plan to help halt the ecological decline of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

Now that plan is under attack from the Trump administration and the largest irrigation authority in the Central Valley.

In a letter, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation says California's plan for the Delta will shortchange farmers by restricting how much water the federal government pumps from the state's largest rivers. The letter says the plan threatens the "entire fabric of California's agricultural economy."

The bureau manages one of California's two main water systems, including massive pumps that pull water from the Delta and send it flowing to farms and communities as far south as Bakersfield. The agency said that if California regulators don't change the plan, the federal government won't contribute funds to projects that restore habitat for fish and other wildlife, something endorsed by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The Central Valley's Westlands Water District also announced it would pull out of providing funds for habitat restoration if the state sticks to its current plan, because it abandons key parts of agreements negotiated with the state in 2022.

"The state substantially has changed the terms and walked away" from that earlier deal, Westlands General Manager Allison Febbo said.

The state's bay-Delta plan has been in the making throughout Newsom's two terms as governor. It "reflects years of collaboration with water users, federal and state agencies" and others, and includes "substantial revisions made in response to comments from the Bureau of Reclamation," said Jackie Carpenter, a spokesperson for the state water board.

Now the growing conflict over the plan, which is set to be adopted next month by the State Water Resources Control Board, suggests a legal battle is likely.

The Delta provides water for nearly 30 million people and 4 million acres of farmland. As the state has relied heavily on its water, native fish such as Chinook salmon, steelhead trout and longfin smelt have declined.

Once adopted, the state plan will set rules that determine how much water can be pumped out of the Delta and how much should stay in rivers and the estuary for fish and the environment.

Released last month, it would give water agencies two ways of complying with Delta water quality rules. They could either limit pumping to maintain minimum levels of water in rivers and the estuary, as has traditionally been done, or take part in "voluntary agreements" in which water agencies commit to ensuring certain river flows and paying for fish habitat restoration.

This voluntary approach, which state officials call the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes program, has been controversial. Many California water agencies support it. Environmental advocates contend it would starve the Delta and threaten fish already in severe decline.

Newsom and his administration have touted the deals as a break with years of conflict that will benefit the Delta's ecology.

If a water agency fails to meet commitments under the collaborative approach, state officials have said, they still have the option of putting that agency back under the traditional regulations — one of the points the Trump administration called "unworkable."

While fighting California on environmental policy, President Trump has sought to pump more water from the state's rivers. Last year, the Trump administration announced it would soon start pumping more into the aqueducts of the Central Valley Project. At the same time, the administration has moved to weaken federal protections for endangered fish and other species.

In its letter, the Bureau of Reclamation cited concerns about restrictions on pumping under the state's plan. Deputy Commissioner Aubrey Bettencourt wrote that the state cannot impose such conditions on how the federal government operates reservoirs, such as Shasta Dam and Folsom Dam. She said the current plan is an example of the board's regulatory overreach.

Bettencourt urged the board to scrap the current proposal and go back to the plan outlined in 2022.

It's unclear what the Trump administration intends here, said Jeffrey Mount, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California.

"I don't know if their strategy is that, 'We're out, we're going to wreck the plan,' " Mount said. "The strategy could be to blow it up. The strategy could be to force it into litigation. The strategy could be to get them to change it so that it's more favorable for them."

Whatever the intention, the strong opposition from both the federal government and the largest water agency in the Central Valley puts all the Newsom administration's water deals at risk, Mount said.

The governor's office referred questions to the California Department of Water Resources, which said the state will continue working with water agencies to advance the collaborative program, calling it "a critical step forward to protect future water supplies while improving environmental conditions across our largest river systems."

The state water board is accepting comments on the plan until Sept. 18 and will consider whether to adopt it at a hearing Oct. 28 and 29.

Newsom's plan for negotiated agreements with water agencies would be disastrous for fish and the environment in the Delta, said Gary Bobker, program director of the environmental group Friends of the River.

"The Trump approach is worse because it would move us backward, resulting in conditions even more harmful than the current status quo," he said, "and neutering the state's ability to protect and manage its own water resources."

The Trump administration apparently wants to ensure the plan that's adopted does not interfere while the federal government weakens environmental protections and maximizes the water it takes from the Delta, said Barry Nelson, an advisor with the Golden State Salmon Assn., a nonprofit group.

The opposition from the Trump administration and Westlands Water District, he said, present the Newsom administration and the state water board with a thorny test.

"Will they stand up or roll over?" he said. "If they agree to bow to the bureau's demands, they would need to rewrite the plan dramatically, which would take months. And the world would know that Trump forced Newsom to gut his own signature water plan."

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CGB-100
1.1.02

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
Attn: Bay-Delta & Hearing Branch
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, California 95812-0100

Subject: August 2026 Draft Water Quality Control Plan—Reclamation's Principal Concerns

Dear Chair Esquivel:

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) writes to express its serious concern with the State Water Resources Control Board's August 2026 Draft Water Quality Control Plan (Draft Plan) for the Bay-Delta. The Draft Plan, as written, threatens reliability of water supplies that support not only the Central Valley Project (CVP), but the entire fabric of California's agricultural economy, rural communities, urban centers, and natural vitality. Millions of people and businesses depend on the certainty and reliability of these water supplies. Federal, State, and local water projects represent generations of investment and partnership, they feed the nation and the world, supply our cities and communities, and generate the power that keeps the economy running. Deliveries from those projects are not abstract entitlements. They are the purpose of the CVP and State Water Project (SWP).

This letter states Reclamation's principal policy objections. Detailed technical comments are attached.

The standard for any Bay-Delta pathway is straightforward: water for people, gold-standard science, adaptive management, and measurable results—not process, delay, or undefined flow targets presented as progress.

The Draft Plan does not honor the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding and Term Sheet (2022 MOU). The 2022 MOU represented a collaborative, integrated approach—combining enforceable flow and habitat commitments, program certainty, and adaptive management. The Draft Plan keeps the HRL label and changes the terms of the agreement. It unilaterally redefines the baseline for additive flows and outflows increasing obligations for HRL parties beyond what was set forth in the 2022 MOU. It requires additional CVP and SWP export reductions of 125 TAF in dry and below-normal years and 175 TAF in above-normal years, and sets a regulatory default of 55 percent unimpaired flow. Neither pathway contains a durable mechanism that protects CVP contract performance – water for families, farms, communities. The backstop is more water, not the portfolio the parties negotiated in 2022.

The Draft Plan directly regulates federal reservoirs through carryover storage targets enumerated therein, and subject to Executive Director approval of temperature management strategies. The Draft also treats later lawful federal operations as a deficit to be repaid in more HRL water. State law cannot impose gatekeeping approval that conditions operations of federal reservoirs or Reclamation's temperature-management obligations under the Endangered Species Act and federal project purposes. Reclamation will continue to operate Shasta and the CVP under the governing Biological Opinion, Records of Decision, project purposes, and Executive Order 14181.

Finally, the Draft Plan centralizes decision-making authority in the Board's Executive Director, sidelining the collaborative, multi-party governance structure that was a cornerstone of 2022 MOU. Whether in the collaborative framework of the MOU or the proposed governance structure in the current Draft Plan, we want to be clear: a federal Record of Decision or biological opinion does not require State Board staff permission to be implemented.

These elements put the Board on a collision course to proscribe CVP operations that are inconsistent with and frustrate the purposes of federal directives for the project.

Reclamation and partners throughout the State recognized an opportunity to work with the State Board in this Draft Plan update that would provide certainty for water users while still ensuring protection of native fish and wildlife through integrated flow and habitat measures. The current draft plan reflects more of what has come to be expected from the State Board – executive and regulatory overreach, questionable legal authority, and continued downward pressure on water users throughout the state.

Reclamation cannot support or participate in a process that disregards federal law, undermines negotiated certainty, and threatens the viability of the CVP. If the Board proceeds on this path, Reclamation will:

- Cease any further participation or funding under HRLs or similar state pathways that do not protect CVP contract supplies and project purposes;
- Immediately begin review of outdated water right permit conditions that do not align with current conditions or science;
- Advance updated long-term operations decisions and, where warranted, reinitiate Endangered Species Act consultation to secure greater operational flexibility consistent with law;
- Maximize deliveries under existing authorities and recent Records of Decision that have already shown the capacity to increase average annual supplies when operations are aligned with project purposes;
- Accelerate infrastructure that restores and expands conveyance capacity of federal, state, and local conveyance facilitates to take advantage of water supply when it is available;
- Modernize and optimize critical infrastructure that increases real wet water storage; and

- Insist on science and modeling that accurately distinguish Project effects from the dominant drivers of environmental conditions throughout the CVP and that measure real species' benefits rather than assuming them from flow volumes alone.

Our objective is clear: Improve water supply outcomes for all of California while incorporating robust, measurable species protection through the best available tools and science. We will do this by keeping federal project infrastructure and contractual supplies intact, consistent with the federal purposes of the CVP and the national interest in food security, rural economic stability, and resilient water and power systems.

The Board's current approach is not sustainable. We urge the Board to restore the foundational elements of the 2022 MOU, provide the certainty and clarity necessary for effective water management, and abandon the unworkable Unimpaired Flow (UIF) pathway. Reclamation stands ready to support pathways for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses that protect and enhance water supply reliability for the CVP and California, but cannot support a plan that disregards federal law, negotiated certainty, and sound judgment.

Sincerely,

Date: 2026.09.04 15:17:57 -04'00'

Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt
Principal Deputy Commissioner
Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation

cc: Secretary, Department of the Interior
Assistant Secretary – Water and Science
Director, California Department of Water Resources
CVP contractor leadership as appropriate

Interior Department Finalizes Plans for 2027-2028 Colorado River Operations

Share

Secretary Burgum signs 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines and Record of Decision

08/21/2026
Last edited 08/21/2026

Contact Information Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

WASHINGTON — The Department of the Interior issued the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines and the Record of Decision for the Post-2026 Colorado River Operations Final EIS, establishing a 10-year Decision Framework with a broad operational range that will be used to develop future operational guidelines for Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Together these decisions provide for reliable operations of the Colorado River system, delivery of vital water supplies, and protect critical federal infrastructure while preserving the flexibility necessary to respond to Basin states' voluntary actions, consensus recommendations and the continued prolonged drought. The combined contents of Lake Powell and Lake Mead have not been this low since before Lake Powell began filling following the closure of the gates at Glen Canyon Dam in 1963, with both Lake Powell and Lake Mead hitting record lows the last few weeks.

"We are grateful for the Seven Basin States, the thirty Basin Tribes, Mexico, and many other basin stakeholders who have provided the feedback and voluntary arrangements necessary for the development of the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines." **said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.** "Forty million people, millions of acres of farmland and ranchland, industries that

power the American West, and some of our nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas depend on the Colorado River."

The 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines respond to hydrologic conditions and provide flexible tools to protect critical infrastructure at Glen Canyon Dam and Hoover Dam. They were developed after extensive engagement with the seven Basin States and incorporate concepts from proposals from both the Upper and Lower Basins and Basin tribes.

These 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines:

- Provide objective criteria to determine releases from Lake Powell based on actual hydrology and maintaining a minimum elevation of 3,510 feet to support continued operational reliability at Glen Canyon Dam.
- Provides for reductions in deliveries of Colorado River water among the Lower Basin States of 1.25 million acre-feet in each year of the next two years. If the Lower Basin States implement their proposed sharing agreement, the reduction per State would be:
    - Arizona: 760,000 acre-feet
    - California: 440,000 acre-feet
    - Nevada: 50,000 acre-feet
- Provide for Lower Basin States to voluntarily conserve and store at least 700,000 acre-feet of water over the two-year period to protect the system, in addition to the 1.25 million acre-feet per year of reductions.
- Provide for the Upper Basin States to enter into an agreement, in consultation with Lower Basin States and Basin tribes, using the Secretary's authorities to operate the Colorado River Storage Project Upper Initial Units (i.e. Aspinall (CO), Flaming Gorge (UT/WY) and Navajo (CO/NM) Reservoirs) to help protect Glen Canyon Dam infrastructure.
- Provide tools and flexibility in the Lower Basin to respond to drought conditions by allowing water users to store water.
- Provides for a Federally managed pool to help meet tribal firming obligations and provide limited offsetting to reduce tribal impacts.
- Provide elevation triggers for coordination and consultations to determine additional actions, if necessary, to minimize operational risks to infrastructure, and manage risks to the urban, agricultural, and natural systems that rely on the Colorado River.

Reclamation also released today the **August 2026 24-Month Study**, determining the 2027 operations based on the new guidelines. Lake Powell will begin the October 1 water year

between elevations 3,540 and 3,510 feet, placing operations in the Lower Elevation Infrastructure Protection Range with an expected water year release between 6.0 and 7.0 million acre-feet. Reclamation will begin the water year with lower releases between 6.0 and 7.0 million acre-feet in order to attempt to maintain an elevation of 3,510 feet or higher and will adjust releases through April to continue to maintain elevation 3,510 feet. The water year 2027 release volume will be determined in April. For Lake Mead, water deliveries to the Lower Basin States will be reduced by 1.25 million-acre feet for calendar year 2027.

The Decision Framework establishes an operational range that provides the flexibility to develop specific operating guidelines within the 10-year period while preserving the opportunity for Colorado River Basin negotiations to continue and, if successful, be incorporated into years three or four or longer for future operational guidelines. Operational elements include enhanced coordinated reservoir operations and expanded opportunities for the storage and delivery of conserved water in system reservoirs and other flexible water management tools. The Decision Framework prioritizes consensus agreements, voluntary actions, and a commitment to coordination and consultation throughout the period of adoption.

The Decision Framework anticipates operating guidelines in two-year periods and can be scaled longer depending on evolving Basin circumstances. This mechanism leaves room for the Basin States, tribes and stakeholders to adjust these parameters with their own voluntary actions and consensus whenever such agreements are reached.

"These decisions provide a water management strategy for Basin stakeholders to respond to the prolonged drought by incorporating flexible tools and voluntary actions while leaving room for consensus agreements," **said Assistant Secretary — Water and Science Andrea Travnicek.** "The Department and Reclamation will continue to work with all Basin stakeholders to identify areas to maximize efforts throughout the Basin to modernize infrastructure, develop conservation programs, and identify innovative approaches to deliver water under changing conditions".

Since the beginning of the Trump administration, President Trump has made delivering water to people a high priority. The administration has demonstrated a commitment to improving and enhancing water supply within the Colorado River Basin through investments in water storage, distribution, treatment, and improving water efficiency. Specifically in the Lower Basin investments **over $3 billion** have been made since January 2025.

In April 2026, the Secretary asked for feedback from the seven Basin States on potential water supply and conservation projects throughout the Colorado River Basin during a time of shortage. The administration continues to review the submittals and will work with the Basin States and Basin Tribes to identify opportunities to use available Working Families Tax Cuts

funds, and other federal cost-share programs related to water storage and expansion and optimization; desalination and advanced water treatment; and water movement, exchanges and infrastructure.

Background

The NEPA process was initiated in June 2023. Over this three-year period the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Reclamation engaged extensively with Basin stakeholders and that input is reflected in the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS and the Preferred Alternative of a Decision Framework that would guide future operational guidelines, released on July 31, 2026. The 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines and ROD released today further incorporate extensive feedback from Basin stakeholders. The Final EIS, ROD and 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines are available on Reclamation's website.

For the past 26 years, the Colorado River Basin has been experiencing an unprecedented multidecadal drought, resulting in historically low runoff and reservoir levels. Conditions worsened during 2026, driven in part by the lowest observed snowpack on record during the winter of 2025-2026.

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.

The Colorado River provides water for more than 40 million people and generates hydropower for 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.

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PRESS RELEASE

Arizona objects to Colorado River plan

State warns it's ready to fightfederally mandated water cuts

FLOWERS push through dry, cracked earth in a part of Lake Powell in Utah that was formerly underwater. (Justin Sullivan Getty Images)

BY IAN JAMES

The Trump administration's plan for dealing with worsening water shortages along the Colorado River is encountering strong opposition from Arizona's leaders, who are warning they could sue to challenge mandatory water cutbacks that they say would harm their state.

A legal fight could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court and further complicate efforts by seven Western states to agree on how to share water from the shrinking river and its reservoirs, which have fallen to record low levels.

Arizona laid out its objections in a sharply worded letter to the federal government last week. It said the Trump administration's 10-year plan doesn't adhere to the Colorado River Compact, the 1922 agreement that originally divided the water among the states.

"Arizona does not accept a framework that gives the federal government the discretion to select from a wide range of alternatives — including catastrophic cuts ... every two years for the next decade," Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Tom Buschatzke said in the letter.

The Trump administration's plan, released July 31, allows for drastic water cuts if they're deemed necessary, potentially requiring the three downstream states of Arizona, Nevada and California to cut up to 3 million acre-feet per year — as much as 40% of the combined allotments.

For the next two years, state officials say, the Trump administration has accepted an offer by the three states to reduce what they take from the river by about half that amount.

But Buschatzke told the administration that Arizona does not agree to the federal approach for longer than two years and would not accept such large cuts. He said the state "reserves its rights" to demand the federal government comply with the 1922 agreement and the "Law of the River" — and also reserves the right to take its case to "an appropriate judicial forum."

He did not say when or precisely under what circumstances the state might sue. But experts expect the brewing dispute to end up in court.

"Arizona's back is against the wall," said Kathryn Sorensen, director of research at Arizona State University's Kyl Center for Water Policy. "What does Arizona have to lose?"

If the state were to sue and ultimately lose, it probably would not be in a worse situation than if it simply accepted large cuts under the federal plan. In this situation, she said, "you've got to fight."

The Colorado River provides water for about 35 million people and 5 million acres of farmland, from the Rocky Mountains to northern Mexico.

The 1922 agreement overpromised what the river could provide. And in the last quarter-century, relentless drought intensified by climate change has sapped the river's flow and left its reservoirs severely depleted.

Both Lake Mead and Lake Powell, the nation's largest reservoirs, are at record low levels and continue to decline.

Arizona officials have pointed out that the amount of water flowing into Lake Mead soon could fall to a trigger point — a legal "trip wire" that would allow the state to demand cuts upriver and sue for a violation of the compact.

The century-old agreement requires the water released from upstream dams for Arizona, Nevada and California to average at least 7.5 million acre-feet over any decade, plus an allotment for Mexico. The water reaching the three downstream states could fall below that point this year.

Buschatzke noted in his letter that the Interior Department's plan, outlined in a document called a final environmental impact statement, "does not even mention the Colorado River Compact."

The Trump administration is soon expected to release another document called a record of decision formalizing its plan.

The federal government was required to set new rules for addressing shortages this year because the old rules are expiring. The three downstream states of California, Arizona and Nevada have deadlocked in negotiations in a tense dispute with the upstream states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico.

The Trump administration's plan is not requiring water cuts for the four upstream states over the next two years.

California is expected to cut its use of Colorado River water by about 12% through 2028, while Arizona will take about 31% less and Nevada, 28% less.

Arizona faces especially large water cutbacks because the Central Arizona Project, the series of canals that run to the Phoenix and Tucson areas, isn't nearly as old as other aqueducts, giving it low-priority water rights and putting it among the first in line for cuts.

Much or all of the water that the state gets via the CAP canals could be cut under the Trump administration plan.

"Arizona is on the razor's edge," said Brian Richter, a water researcher in New Mexico who studies the Colorado River. "Under what's being proposed, they could lose the right to use the Central Arizona Project, and that's going to be catastrophic for that state."

Arizona is likely to prevail in a lawsuit because the 1922 agreement clearly says the three lower states are entitled to receive the agreed-upon minimum amount of water, Richter said.

However, he also said that the compact is woefully out of date and should be scrapped and rewritten to match the reality of the shrinking river.

"We keep trying to patch on a broken system," he said. "It served its purpose for a long time, but it's definitely time to revisit it."

Richter has called for setting a cap on total water use and allocating water based on what the river can provide. About three-fourths of the water that's taken out is used for agriculture, growing alfalfa for cattle as well as lettuce, broccoli and other crops.

Since 2020, the river flow has averaged 32% less than it did in the 20th century, according to federal data.

Scientists say climate change is driving the aridification of the Southwest. Research has shown that roughly half the decline in the river's flow is because of higher temperatures, and for each 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit the region warms, the flow is likely to decrease about 9%. This year, the Rocky Mountains had the least snow on record.

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, have said the federal plan represents a vital step, but they're disappointed it contains no water reductions for the upstream states.

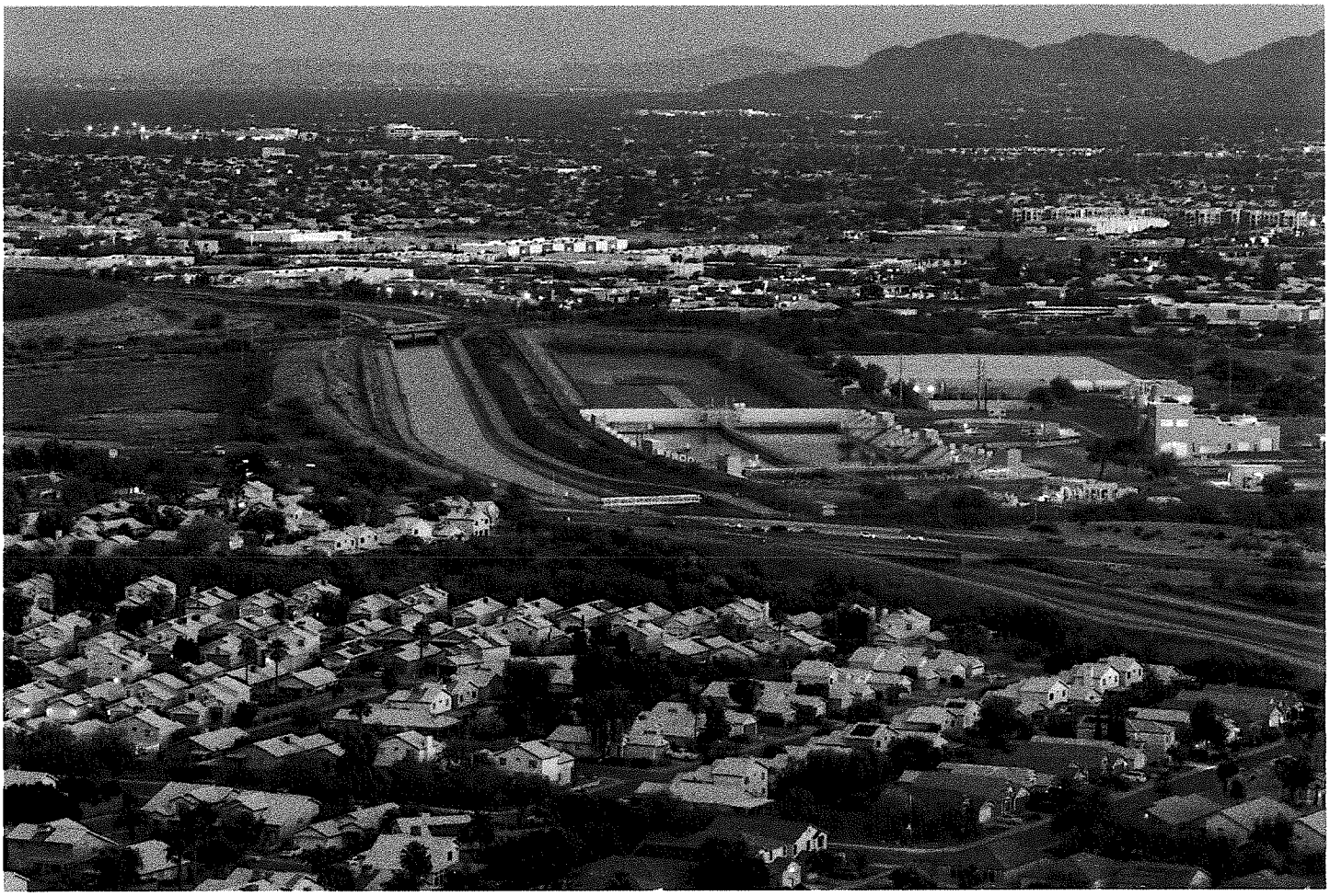
None of California's water officials have indicated the state is considering suing.

Arizona appears to be issuing a "shot across the bow" to warn the Trump administration and other states it's prepared to go to court, said Anne Castle, a senior fellow at the University of Colorado Law School Getches-Wilkinson Center.

However, Castle said, any litigation won't help resolve the fundamental problems: that demand for water continues to exceed the available supply, and that the century-old agreement dividing the river "just isn't fair in the context of today's hydrology."

Nevada sues U.S. over plan for water

More legal action is likely over proposed cuts due to Colorado River shortages.



CANALS that carry water to Phoenix could also be cut off under the Trump administration's plan. (Ronaldo Bolaños Los Angeles Times)

BY IAN JAMES

In the first salvo of what could become a prolonged court battle over Colorado River water, the state of Nevada has sued the Trump administration over its plan to impose major water cutbacks on Las Vegas.

The state filed the lawsuit three days after the Trump administration released the plan requiring Nevada, Arizona and California to cut water use by about 20% for

the next two years. The plan allows for much larger mandatory cuts over the next decade if necessary to prevent the river's drought-depleted reservoirs from reaching critically low levels.

"Southern Nevada could lose more than 70% of its already meager Colorado River allocation," while four other states — Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming — "are not required to contribute a drop," Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo, a Republican, said as he announced the lawsuit Monday.

"This isn't about political posturing," Lombardo said. "This is a matter of survival for a community that represents about two-thirds of our state's citizens and the lion's share of its economy."

Colorado River reservoirs have dropped dramatically over the last 26 years as global warming has worsened severe drought. The largest, Lake Mead and Lake Powell, have never been lower.

Nevada leaders said that under the plan, the state's annual allotment of 300,000 acre-feet could be slashed to as little as 86,500, which they said would devastate Las Vegas and surrounding cities.

"That's simply not a reduction that a major metropolitan area can adjust to," said John Entsminger, Nevada's lead negotiator and general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. "It would have catastrophic effects on our ability to provide a safe, reliable water supply."

The Las Vegas area gets about 90% of its water from the river. It has already reduced its use by about 40% over the last 25 years by eliminating thirsty grass in many areas and outlawing frontyard lawns for new subdivisions.

"We have clearly demonstrated our ability to adapt and do more with less," Entsminger said. "However, conservation has its limits, and there is just no way to meet even the basic needs of this community with the volume of water Interior has proposed."

The Colorado River provides water for about 35 million people in cities from Denver to San Diego, as well as 30 Native tribes and 5 million acres of farmland. About three-fourths of the water taken from it flows to farms via canals, producing alfalfa for cattle as well as lettuce, broccoli and other crops.

This year, the Rocky Mountains had the least snow on record, and the lack of snowmelt is sinking reservoir levels lower.

Over the last three years, negotiators repeatedly held talks to try to reach a seven-state agreement, but the three downstream states, California, Arizona and Nevada, deadlocked with the four upstream states.

As part of its plan, the Trump administration accepted an offer by California, Arizona and Nevada to reduce the water they take by 3.2 million acre-feet between

now and the end of 2028.

California will cut its Colorado River water use by about 12%, while Arizona will take about 31% less and Nevada 28% less.

The Trump administration is not requiring water cuts for Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming.

Andrea Travnicek, the Interior Department's assistant secretary for water and science, said that's because the federal government has different "responsibilities and authorities" in the upstream and downstream states.

In previous agreements, however, all seven states have contributed, Entsminger said, and the federal plan represents a sharp break with that collaborative approach.

"Everybody that uses water from the Colorado River has a stake in using that water more efficiently, so that we can all get by with less," Entsminger said. "A plan that focuses on a minority of states ultimately has no chance of success."

Even as the state goes to court, Entsminger stressed that Nevada is open to negotiating.

In the lawsuit, Nevada argues that the Trump administration's plan violates the National Environmental Policy Act, the Administrative Procedure Act and the "Law of the River," and asks the court to halt its implementation. It also alleges the Interior Department failed to account for the severe damage drastic water cuts would inflict on southern Nevada's $180-billion economy.

Arizona's leaders have raised similar concerns, saying the most draconian cuts under the plan would severely harm their state.

Tom Buschatzke, Arizona's lead negotiator, said last week that the state is "reserving our right to potentially take legal action."

Arizona faces especially large water cutbacks because the Central Arizona Project, the series of canals that run to the Phoenix and Tucson areas, isn't nearly as old as other aqueducts, giving it low-priority water rights and putting it among the first in line for reductions. Much or all of the water Arizona gets via the canal could be cut off under the Trump administration plan.

Brenda Burman, general manager of the Central Arizona Project, called the federal plan "flawed" and said "every state that relies on the river should be part of the solution."

Her agency said in a written statement that after 2028, the federal plan would allow for "disproportionate, unlawful, and intolerable cuts on Arizona."

Nevada's case is likely to end up before the U.S. Supreme Court, and the state makes strong claims, though the outcome is hard to predict, said Rhett Larson, a

water law professor at Arizona State University.

"The litigation over the Colorado River isn't just about who gets how much water, but about what the U.S. Constitution says about who does or should have the power to make that decision," Larson said in an email.

The case will probably take years, he said, and if a court blocks the plan, the states could have to figure out what to do in the meantime.

"Litigation is far from an ideal outcome, and carries a lot of costs, risks, and uncertainties that everyone wants to avoid," Larson said. "But it has its benefits. When parties are not communicating very well ... it's time for litigation."

The last time the Supreme Court got involved in a major Colorado River dispute was its landmark 1963 decision in Arizona vs. California.

California uses more Colorado River water than any other state. None of California's water officials have indicated the state is considering suing.

Family Farm ALLIANCE®
PROTECTING WATER FOR WESTERN IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

Monthly Briefing

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

AUGUST 2026 • Issue #289

Board Member Quote of the Month

"Western agriculture needs more water, more reliable water, and healthier watersheds. The solutions have to work for farmers, communities, and the environment. Innovation gives us the tools. Collaboration is what makes them work — and sometimes that means sitting down with people we disagree with. Grow the pie instead of fighting over the pieces, and we protect our farms and our food supply for the next century."

–Cannon Michael, Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors, Los Banos, California

CONTENTS

The West, Together: Family Farm Alliance Board Retreat in Cheyenne

There are few places better suited to a Family Farm Alliance board retreat than Cheyenne, Wyoming—and few better times to be there than during Cheyenne Frontier Days.

The Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors in Cheyenne, Wyoming, July 21–24, 2026.

From July 21–24, the Alliance Board of Directors gathered in Cheyenne for several days of policy discussions, strategic planning, relationship-building and, importantly, some time together outside the conference room. The timing was especially meaningful as we joined the broader celebration of America 250 and the Day of the American West, designated for July 23, 2026, by the Secretary of the Interior.

Secretarial Order No. 3439 recognizes the American West as a defining part of our nation's history, culture and identity, highlighting the values of independence, self-reliance, entrepreneurial spirit, stewardship of the land, camaraderie and helping others. The Order specifically identified Cheyenne Frontier Days as a fitting place to honor the people, cultures and traditions of the West and called for partnerships among state, Tribal, local and private stakeholders.

Those values felt particularly appropriate for the Alliance.

Our retreat was not simply a board meeting in a different location. We spent several days taking a hard look at where Western agriculture is headed—and what the Family Farm Alliance needs to do to help chart that course. Formal policy meetings and strategic planning sessions gave the Board an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day and focus on the bigger picture: how do we keep Western farmers and ranchers in business through increasingly difficult water conditions, aging infrastructure, economic pressures and some of the most severe drought conditions many of us have experienced in our lifetimes?

We also made time to enjoy the place we were visiting. Between meetings, the Board shared informal dinners and conversations and experienced the traditions of Frontier Days—including the parade and professional rodeo, known as the “Daddy of ’em All.” Those moments matter. Strong organizations are built not only around shared policy objectives, but also around relationships, trust and a genuine appreciation for the people doing the work.

Between sessions, board members and guests shared evenings together — the relationships and trust that strong organizations are built on.

The retreat also gave us the opportunity to connect with leaders working on the issues that matter to our members. We were pleased to spend time with Aubrey Bettencourt, who is expected to be nominated as the next Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation and who recently served the agriculture community as Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The conversation provided another opportunity to reinforce the importance of Western water infrastructure and the agricultural communities that depend upon it.

And as the parade rolled through Cheyenne, we were reminded that the West is not simply a place on a map. It is a working landscape, a culture and a way of life—and one worth investing in and fighting for. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum was also part of the Frontier Days parade and the broader Day of the American West celebration, which included events honoring Western heritage, agriculture, Native cultures and the Nation.

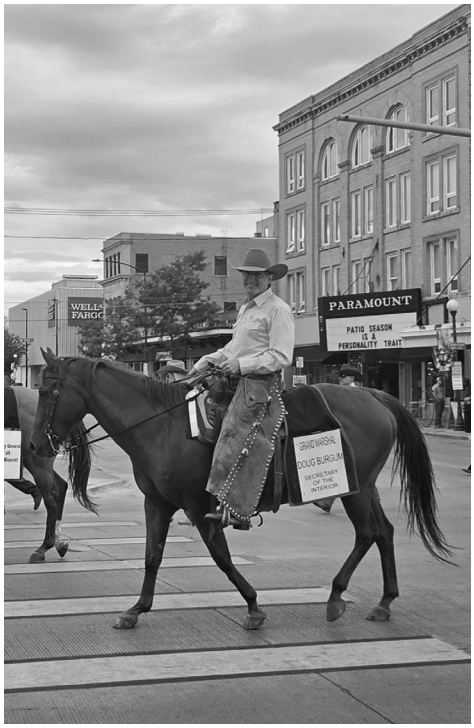
As we look ahead to the remainder of 2026, the Alliance Board leaves Cheyenne with a renewed sense of purpose. The challenges facing Western agriculture are enormous. But so are the opportunities—and we intend to keep thinking big, working together and making sure the voices of the people who feed this country remain at the table.

The West has always been built by people willing to tackle big challenges. The Family Farm Alliance intends to carry that tradition forward.

Colorado River Crisis Deepens as States Face New Era of Water Management

The Colorado River Basin is entering a critical new chapter, with record-low reservoir levels, continued drought and a lack of agreement among the seven Basin states forcing federal officials to take a more active role in determining how the river will be managed after 2026.

The most visible warning sign is Lake Mead, which recently fell to its lowest elevation since the reservoir filled roughly 90 years ago. The decline reflects a combination of prolonged drought, hotter temperatures, historically



Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum served as Grand Marshal of the Cheyenne Frontier Days parade during the Day of the American West.

Scenes from Cheyenne: Frontier Days traditions, board conversations, and the relationships that carry the Alliance's work forward.

poor snowpack and decades in which water use has exceeded system inflows. Lake Powell is also at historically low levels, leaving combined Powell-Mead storage lower than it has been since before Glen Canyon Dam began filling in 1963.

Against that backdrop, the Bureau of Reclamation has released its Final Environmental Impact Statement for post-2026 Colorado River operations, establishing a framework for managing Lake Powell and Lake Mead through 2036. Rather than prescribing one fixed set of rules for the entire decade, the framework establishes operating "sideboards" and allows Interior to develop guidelines in roughly two-year increments, providing flexibility to respond to changing hydrology. The framework allows annual Powell releases between 5.0 and 12.0 million acre-feet, Lower Basin shortages of up to 3.0 million acre-feet and voluntary Upper Basin conservation of up to 200,000 acre-feet.

But the framework does not resolve the central political question: who will take reductions, and how much? The seven Basin states have been unable to reach consensus on the post-2026 allocation framework. The Lower Basin states—California, Arizona and Nevada—have proposed conserving 3.2 million acre-feet through 2028, including 1.25 million acre-feet of binding reductions in each of the next two years. At the same time, there is disagreement over how much responsibility should be shared by Upper Basin states.

Federal officials are also turning to voluntary conservation and financial incentives. Reclamation has used federal funding to compensate cities, farms and tribes for temporarily leaving water in Lake Mead, and additional programs are being developed to encourage conservation across the Basin. Earlier this summer, Southern California's Metropolitan Water District agreed to provide up to $65 million to help leave as much as 200,000 acre-feet of its Colorado River supplies in Lake Mead this year.

For Western agriculture, the unfolding Colorado River negotiations underscore a larger reality: there is no single solution to a shrinking and increasingly unpredictable water supply. Conservation will be part of the answer, but so will infrastructure, storage, groundwater management, technology, augmentation and new approaches to funding and collaboration. As the Basin moves into this next phase, the question is no longer whether the Colorado River system must adapt. It is how we adapt while protecting the farms, communities and economies that depend upon it.

Congressional Update: A Busy Fall Ahead for Western Water and Agriculture

With Congress now in its August recess, lawmakers have stepped away from Washington for the month, but the list of unfinished business waiting for them in September is substantial. The House is scheduled to return August 31, while the Senate is not scheduled to return until September 14. For Western farmers, ranchers and water managers, several of the issues awaiting Congress could have direct implications for water infrastructure, federal funding, regulatory requirements and agricultural programs.

Government Funding Remains the Immediate Priority

The most immediate challenge will be keeping the federal government open beyond September 30, when the current fiscal year ends. The Senate has passed a bipartisan continuing resolution by a 90–6 vote that would fund the government through December 11. The House, however, passed a different CR extending funding only through December 4. The two chambers will need to reconcile those differences before the October 1 deadline.

At the same time, work on the 12 individual FY2027 appropriations bills remains stalled. That means many of the

federal programs important to Western agriculture and water infrastructure—including Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps and USDA programs—remain dependent on what Congress ultimately agrees to this fall.

Senate Republicans have also postponed consideration of a third reconciliation package until September. That package could include additional funding for defense and agriculture, while separate supplemental proposals under discussion could include disaster assistance and potential funding for Colorado River drought response.

For water managers, the bottom line is straightforward: federal funding decisions made this fall will help determine what resources are available for water infrastructure, drought response and agricultural programs in the coming year.

Farm Bill Still Stuck

The Farm Bill remains another major unresolved issue. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman's effort to advance a five-year bill stalled in early August over disagreements about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program cost-sharing requirements.

The Senate proposal nonetheless contains a number of provisions important to agriculture, including year-round nationwide sales of E15, higher farm-loan limits, expanded livestock and specialty-crop disaster assistance, additional drought and wildfire assistance, rural development and research funding, and increased baseline funding for conservation programs.

But the legislative calendar is becoming increasingly difficult. The existing Farm Bill has been operating under extensions since the 2018 law expired in 2023, and many authorities are again scheduled to expire September 30. With the November elections approaching and House and Senate versions still needing to be reconciled, another extension remains a possibility if Congress cannot complete the work this year.

Permitting Reform Could Have Major Water Implications

Bipartisan Senate negotiations on comprehensive permitting reform have continued to make progress, although significant disagreements remain. Lawmakers are attempting to streamline environmental reviews and reduce permitting delays while working through contentious questions involving the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and federal authority over approved projects.

The House has advanced its own permitting legislation, meaning the two chambers will have to find common ground if Congress hopes to pass a comprehensive package.

For irrigation districts and water project sponsors, permitting reform is worth watching closely. Major water infrastructure projects can take years to navigate federal environmental and permitting requirements, and changes to those processes could affect project timelines, costs and certainty.

One related measure gaining attention is the bipartisan CURRENT Act, introduced by Reps. Adam Gray (D-CA) and David Rouzer (R-NC), which would reform the Clean Water Act Section 401 certification process. The legislation would limit conditions imposed under Section 401 to those related to water quality, establish review timelines and streamline judicial review. Central Valley irrigation districts have supported the bill, arguing that expanded use of Section 401 has created delays and additional costs for water and energy projects.

WRDA Keeps Water Infrastructure on the Agenda

There is some good news on the water infrastructure front. Both the House and Senate have advanced bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2026 legislation.

WRDA authorizes Army Corps projects and studies addressing flood risk, drought, water conservation, navigation, ecosystem restoration and other water infrastructure needs. Senate committee language also includes a provision advancing the Perkins County Canal, an important Western water project currently involved in a U.S. Supreme Court controversy.

The House and Senate will still need to reconcile their respective bills, but keeping WRDA moving is important for communities that depend on federal participation in water infrastructure.

Regulatory Changes Continue Under the Administration

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration continues to make significant regulatory changes affecting Western agriculture.

On WOTUS, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has issued an interim final rule clarifying that most wetland determinations made since 1990 can be treated as certified, providing producers greater certainty when making operational decisions and seeking to maintain eligibility for USDA programs. EPA is also preparing a proposal to rescind a Biden-era rule concerning tribal subsistence uses in water-quality standards.

The Endangered Species Act remains another major area of change. The Administration finalized a rule rescinding the regulatory definition of "harm," eliminating habitat modification as a stand-alone basis for prohibited take. Other changes involving threatened species and critical habitat are also moving forward. At the same time, lawsuits and congressional efforts to reverse some of these changes mean the regulatory landscape remains unsettled.

For farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and water project sponsors, the practical takeaway is that ESA requirements, consultation obligations and permitting rules remain an area to watch closely. Changes at the federal level could affect water infrastructure projects, grazing, irrigation operations and projects requiring federal funding or approvals.

Looking Toward September

Several other developments will be worth watching when Congress returns, including Interior nominations, weather forecasting legislation and additional water and drought legislation. Bipartisan legislation has also been introduced to reauthorize and expand the Bureau of Reclamation's federal desalination program, providing another potential tool for addressing persistent Western water scarcity.

For now, Washington is quiet—but the issues are not going away. When lawmakers return in September, they will face a compressed calendar and a long list of unfinished work.

For Western agriculture, the next few months could be consequential. Funding, permitting, water infrastructure, drought response, the Farm Bill and federal regulatory policy are all moving at once. The Family Farm Alliance will continue tracking these developments and advocating for policies that protect reliable water supplies, strengthen Western infrastructure and keep farmers and ranchers in business.

Congress may be on recess, but there is no recess from the work of protecting the West's water future.

Boots on the Ground: Montana's Water Challenges Require a Close-Up View

The Family Farm Alliance's Boots on the Ground initiative is about more than traveling across the West. It is about listening, learning and seeing firsthand the people, places and infrastructure behind the policies we advocate for on Capitol Hill.

Earlier this month, Alliance Executive Director Sam Barncastle traveled to Montana to attend the Montana Water Resources Association (MWRA) Summer Meeting and participate in a series of tours and events organized by MWRA in conjunction with Remsight, a Montana-based, veteran-owned company deploying irrigation monitoring technology across the state. The technology is helping irrigation managers address increasingly difficult water-monitoring challenges in Montana's remote, rugged terrain, particularly as growing urban development places additional pressure on existing systems.

Executive Director Sam Barncastle joined Montana water managers touring irrigation infrastructure in the Bitterroot Valley.

Barncastle spent her time in the Bitterroot Valley, touring local irrigation districts and visiting with irrigation managers from across Montana. Those conversations provided an invaluable look at the challenges facing water managers on the ground—and the ingenuity they are using to address them.

That is precisely why the Alliance Boots on the Ground initiative matters.

It is difficult to effectively tell the story of Western agriculture from behind a desk. The challenges facing an irrigation district in Montana may look very different from those facing a district in California, Colorado or New Mexico, but the common thread is clear: farmers and water managers are working every day to maintain aging systems, stretch limited supplies, incorporate new technology and keep water available for the farms and communities that depend on it.

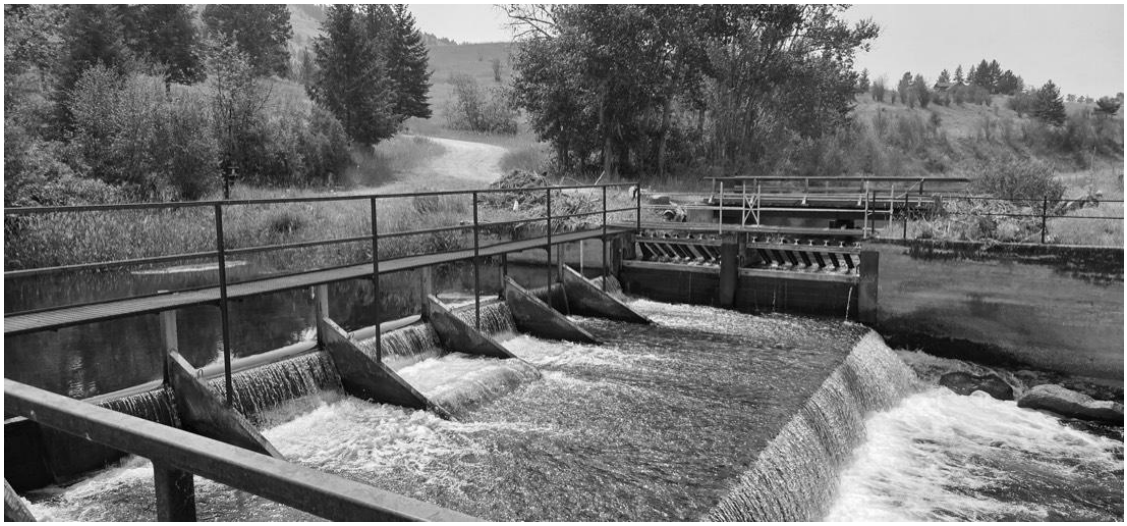
Our job at the Alliance is to make sure those stories are understood—not only by policymakers in Washington,

On the ground in the Bitterroot Valley: reservoirs, penstocks, canals, and the people who keep Montana's water moving.

but throughout the West. We do that by building relationships, collaborating with local leaders and, most importantly, showing up.

The Alliance looks forward to returning to Montana for the association's annual conference this winter, continuing these conversations and welcoming more Montana farmers, water managers and irrigation districts into the Family Farm Alliance. Several new Montana members have already begun joining the Alliance, and we are excited to build on that momentum.

The best advocacy starts with understanding the people we serve. Sometimes, you have to put on your boots and go see it for yourself!



Aging diversion structures like this one move water across Montana's remote, rugged terrain.

Thinking Big. Growing the Pie. Building What Comes Next.

This fall, the Family Farm Alliance will once again bring together the West's leading voices in water and irrigated agriculture for our Annual Conference, October 28–30 at the Silver Legacy in Reno, Nevada.

This year's theme is "Growing the Pie: Innovation for the next 100 Years." It is a theme that reflects both the challenges facing Western agriculture and the opportunity in front of us. Across the West, farmers and ranchers are confronting drought, wildfire, aging infrastructure, rising costs and increasing pressure on already-limited water supplies. After a winter with little snow and a hot, dry spring and summer, this has been one of the toughest seasons many of our members have faced.

But the Alliance has never been about accepting limits as inevitable. This year's conference is about looking beyond the constraints and asking a bigger question: What can we build together?

We will focus on collaboration, innovation and the big thinking needed to address the West's water infrastructure challenges. Panels will explore water and infrastructure solutions at every scale—from major new storage projects to smaller, local storage opportunities; from desalination and groundwater recharge to emerging technologies that can help irrigation districts identify, prioritize and implement improvements across their systems.

Just as importantly, we will tackle the question of how we pay for it. The West needs sustainable, reliable funding mechanisms that can support the infrastructure investments necessary to maintain and improve water systems for generations to come. That will require new partnerships, new approaches and a willingness to think beyond the traditional boundaries of how water projects have been financed and developed.

And we won't just be talking about the problems. We will be showcasing the people, projects and technologies already pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

In the midst of a difficult year, we are ready to turn toward fall with a renewed sense of optimism—and a

determination to build a bigger future for Western agriculture.

There is also something new on the horizon. We are working with the Bureau of Reclamation on a new collaborative event that will be part of this year's conference experience. We are not ready to share all the details just yet, but members will want to be in Reno to see what we have planned. More to come soon.

Mark your calendars for October 28–30. Bring your ideas, your challenges and your vision for the future. Let's think big—and grow the pie together.

Registration Now Open

October 28–30, 2026 • Silver Legacy Resort Casino • Reno, Nevada

Registration for the 2026 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference — *Growing the Pie: Innovation for the Next 100 Years* — is now open. Join farmers, ranchers, irrigation district managers, and national policy leaders from seventeen Western states for two days of the conversations that will set the water agenda for 2027.

SUPER SAVER	EARLY	REGULAR
$600	**$625**	**$675**
by August 31	by September 25	after September 25

Register online: familyfarmalliance.org/2026conf
Book your room: Silver Legacy room block — book.passkey.com/go/SRFFA26 or 1-800-687-8733. Reservation cutoff is **Monday, October 5**.
Full conference details: familyfarmalliance.org/events
Questions? Contact Executive Director Samantha Barncastle at samantha@familyfarmalliance.org or (575) 202-2705.

Wednesday, October 28 features a limited-entry Reclamation Workshop for active irrigation district managers, board members, and farmers within Reclamation districts — check the box when you register and we will follow up with details.

From the Next Generation: Our Interns Take on the Future of Western Water

Our 2026 Family Farm Alliance summer interns wrapped up their 10-week program at the end of July, but their work is just getting started. Over the next several months, we will be sharing more of what they learned, researched and produced during their time with the Alliance.

This month, we are pleased to feature four articles written by our interns on topics that will be central to conversations at this year's Annual Conference in Reno: desalination, on-farm water efficiency technology, system infrastructure improvements and cloud seeding.

Each intern was assigned a topic that represents one piece of the larger conversation about how the West can think differently—and think bigger—about its water future. Their articles provide an accessible introduction to

these concepts, exploring the basic technologies, opportunities and challenges associated with each.

These are not intended to be the final word on any of these issues. Rather, they are a starting point—and a useful way to orient ourselves before we dive deeper into the policy, funding and implementation questions at the conference.

Our conference theme this year, “Thinking Big and Growing the Pie,” is about looking beyond the limitations we face today and considering what is possible when we combine innovation, infrastructure investment and collaboration. The ideas explored in these articles fit squarely within that conversation.

We encourage our members to take a few minutes to read through the articles that follow. They offer a glimpse into the work of the next generation of agricultural and water leaders, while also providing some helpful background for the discussions ahead.

We are proud of the work our interns accomplished during their 10 weeks with the Alliance, and we look forward to sharing much more of it with you in the months ahead.

Consider this your preview. Then join us in Reno, where we’ll take these conversations from the basics to the deep policy dive.

Cloud Seeding: Growing Water Resources from the Sky

Across the American West, water managers face an increasingly difficult challenge of balancing growing water demands with shrinking and less predictable water supplies. Prolonged drought, declining snowpack, and increasing competition for water have forced communities to look beyond traditional water management strategies. While conservation, infrastructure improvements, and groundwater management remain essential, another tool has quietly supported Western water supplies for decades, cloud seeding.

The Family Farm Alliance was founded by farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and allied water organizations with a mission to secure reliable and affordable irrigation water supplies throughout the West. Rather than simply accepting the impacts of drought, the Alliance advocates for practical, science-based solutions that help communities make the most of every available drop of water. Cloud seeding is one of those innovative tools that deserves greater attention.

Cloud seeding is not a new technology. Modern weather modification began in the 1940s, and by the 1960s the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation established the Division of Atmospheric Water Resources Management to study whether cloud seeding could enhance water supplies. One of its most well-known efforts, Project Skywater, operated from the 1960s through the 1980s, investigating how weather modification could supplement water resources while improving scientists' understanding of cloud physics. Although federal funding eventually declined, Project Skywater laid the foundation for many of today's operational cloud-seeding programs.

Cloud seeding works by introducing tiny particles, most commonly silver iodide, into cold moisture-filled clouds. These particles provide surfaces for supercooled water droplets to freeze, forming ice crystals that grow into snowflakes or raindrops. In mountainous regions throughout the West, the primary goal is to increase snowfall, which later melts into rivers, reservoirs, and aquifers that supply farms, communities, and ecosystems.

Importantly, cloud seeding does not create storms or generate moisture where none exists. Instead, it helps existing clouds become slightly more efficient at producing precipitation. Recent research has strengthened confidence that cloud seeding can produce measurable results. The Idaho Experiment (SNOWIE) provided some of the strongest physical evidence, to date that cloud seeding can enhance snowfall under the right atmospheric conditions. Scientists now generally agree that the question is no longer whether cloud seeding works, but rather under what conditions it works best and how much additional precipitation it can consistently produce.

For many Western water managers, those modest gains can make a meaningful difference over time. Jonathan Jennings, meteorologist with the Utah Division of Water Resources and president of the Weather Modification Association, emphasizes that cloud seeding should be viewed as a long-term water management strategy rather than a quick fix. As Jennings explains, cloud-seeding operations “cannot and will not fill a lake or reservoir overnight, but long-term projects can help replenish aquifers over time, increase agricultural production, and increase water supply for these reservoirs over a combination of years.”

Real-world examples demonstrate this long-term value. During Texas' historic 2011 drought, officials in San Angelo credited the community's long-running cloud-seeding program with helping maintain water supplies during one of the driest periods in the region's history. Cloud seeding has also been used in parts of Texas to reduce hail damage, protecting valuable crops from destructive storms while providing additional precipitation when conditions allow.

Despite these successes, cloud seeding is not without challenges or controversy. Measuring exactly how much additional precipitation results from seeding remains difficult because weather systems are naturally variable. Scientists continue working to better quantify the technology's effectiveness under different atmospheric conditions.

Additionally, some members of the public express concerns about unintended consequences or broader weather impacts. Researchers generally conclude that operational cloud-seeding programs produce highly localized effects, utilizing supercooled water already present in existing clouds rather than creating large-scale changes in regional weather patterns. Current evidence does not indicate that cloud seeding significantly alters precipitation across entire states or deprives neighboring regions of rainfall.

Other concerns focus on environmental impacts, tribal interests, and ensuring that cloud-seeding projects are implemented transparently with appropriate stakeholder involvement. These conversations are important as states continue evaluating where cloud seeding fits within broader water management. Like any water resource project, successful implementation depends on collaboration among federal agencies, state governments, tribal nations, local water users, and the scientific community.

Cloud seeding is already supporting water management efforts across much of the West, including projects associated with the Colorado River Basin and other mountain watersheds that feed critical river systems. As water supplies become increasingly stressed, cloud seeding offers one additional tool that can complement conservation, storage, infrastructure improvements, and responsible groundwater management. It is not a replacement for these efforts, but it can help maximize the precipitation nature already provides.

Continued investment in research and technology will play an important role in improving cloud-seeding programs. Organizations such as Rain Enhancement Technologies are helping advance the field by combining

decades of operational experience with modern meteorological tools, aircraft technology, and real-time monitoring systems. These innovations are improving the ability of water managers to deploy cloud seeding under the most favorable atmospheric conditions while collecting data that strengthens scientific understanding of long-term program performance.

The challenges facing Western water management will not be solved by a single technology. However, the future will require innovative, science-based approaches that work together to improve water reliability for agriculture, rural communities, and growing populations. Cloud seeding represents one of those opportunities. While it cannot make it rain on demand or eliminate drought, decades of research and operational experience suggest it can provide meaningful benefits when used appropriately. As the Family Farm Alliance continues advocating for practical water solutions, cloud seeding demonstrates that sometimes growing our water resources begins not on the ground, but in the clouds.

Desalination and Water Reuse: Making More Water Usable

Beneath the Chihuahuan Desert, under the crop circles of eastern New Mexico, and along the drainage canals outside Yuma, Arizona, the same story keeps repeating: an aquifer that once ran fresh is growing saltier with every year of drought and every well drilled a little deeper. The water is often still there. The challenge is making it usable again, and that is where desalination and municipal water reuse belong in the conversation about the West's water future.

The Family Farm Alliance, which represents irrigators across 17 Western states, has never argued that desalination alone can solve agriculture's water challenges. Its position, repeated across years of congressional testimony, is that desalination and reuse should expand reliable water supplies rather than simply divide existing ones.

Desalination removes dissolved salts from water to make it usable for drinking, irrigation, or commercial uses. Much of the West's brackish groundwater contains far less salt than seawater, making it significantly less energy-intensive to treat than seawater desalination. Reverse osmosis remains the industry's primary technology, separating freshwater from dissolved salts and leaving behind a concentrated brine (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 2022). Municipal water reuse follows a similar principle. Instead of discharging treated wastewater, advanced treatment allows it to be reused for irrigation, groundwater recharge, and industrial purposes, reducing demand on an already stressed river or aquifer.

This is a longstanding priority. In testimony before Congress, then-Alliance President Patrick O'Toole emphasized that Western water challenges require sustained investment in projects that improve supply reliability. "Technologies for water reuse and recycling are proven effective in stretching existing supplies for urban, environmental and other uses," O'Toole said, adding that "desalination must continue to be part of potential solutions" (O'Toole, 2021). Title XVI provides federal support for water recycling, reuse, and desalination projects throughout the West (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, n.d.).

If any project demonstrates what continued investment can accomplish, it is El Paso's Kay Bailey Hutchison

Desalination Plant. Opened in 2007 through a partnership between El Paso Water and Fort Bliss, the facility treats brackish groundwater from the Hueco Bolson Aquifer and produces up to 27.5 million gallons of drinking water each day (El Paso Water, n.d.). It became the largest inland desalination facility in the United States, giving El Paso a dependable supply independent of annual river flows and precipitation, and officials are now exploring expansion.

The Bureau of Reclamation's Yuma Desalting Plant tells a different part of the story. Built to treat saline agricultural drainage from Arizona's Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District, it has the capacity to process around 73 million gallons of water per day (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, n.d.). Yet despite the technology working as designed, the plant has operated below capacity for much of its history. The limitation has not been whether desalination works, but whether funding for operating it has stayed consistent. Yuma is a reminder that developing new water supplies requires more than construction; long-term success depends on continued investment.

Not everyone agrees that the technology deserves this scale of investment. Critics note that reverse osmosis is more energy-intensive than conservation or surface storage, and that disposing of the concentrated brine byproduct carries its own environmental and cost burdens; some water-policy experts argue that a dollar spent on agricultural conservation or canal lining buys more usable supply than one spent on desalination. The Alliance's position is not that these criticisms are wrong, but that desalination and reuse should be pursued alongside conservation, not instead of it.

Ongoing research is making the technology more practical. At the Bureau of Reclamation's Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility in Alamogordo, New Mexico, researchers are testing approaches to reduce treatment costs, improve efficiency, and expand the potential uses of brackish groundwater (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2023).

For the Family Farm Alliance, the value of desalination and municipal reuse lies in their ability to create additional usable supplies, converting sources that were previously difficult or impossible to use. That approach reflects the Alliance's belief that Western water challenges require expanding opportunities rather than simply reallocating shortages, and that every acre-foot developed this way adds flexibility to a system already facing increasing demands.

Federal programs such as Title XVI, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, and WIFIA have created a foundation for supporting these projects. The question is no longer whether the technology works. El Paso and Yuma have already demonstrated both their potential and their challenges. The question is whether investment will continue at the scale necessary to make it more widely available.

The future of Western water will not be built around one solution. It will require a combination of strategies that improve reliability, strengthen communities, and support the agricultural producers who depend on secure supplies. El Paso shows what continued investment can accomplish. Yuma demonstrates what happens when that commitment is inconsistent. For Western agriculture, the goal is not to divide a shrinking supply more efficiently but to continue funding ways to grow the water pie.

Desalination and municipal water reuse deserve a place in that future.

On-Farm Technology: Doing More with Every Drop

Across the western United States, water has become one of agriculture's most valuable and limited resources. Years of drought, growing communities, and changing weather patterns have placed increasing pressure on rivers, reservoirs, and groundwater supplies. For the farmers and ranchers who rely on dependable water supplies, conserving water while maintaining or increasing production value has become increasingly important. On-farm reduction programs provide practical, voluntary solutions that help producers improve irrigation efficiency, reduce water use, and support the long-term sustainability of agriculture. Continued funding for these programs is an investment not only in water conservation but also in the future of rural communities and the nation's food supply.

Family Farm Alliance has long supported voluntary conservation programs that help agricultural producers improve water management while maintaining productive farms and ranches. By advocating for practical, locally driven solutions, the Alliance promotes policies that strengthen both agriculture and long-term water sustainability. Agriculture has historically demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing conditions, and today's producers continue to look for ways to do more with less, especially when it comes to water. On-farm reduction efforts encourage practices such as drip irrigation, automated irrigation controls, soil moisture sensors, canal lining, and more precise irrigation scheduling. These technologies allow producers to apply water where it is needed most while reducing unnecessary waste.

The benefits of these conservation efforts extend far beyond individual farms. Water conserved through improved irrigation practices strengthens watersheds, supports river systems, and improves the long-term reliability of water supplies for agriculture, communities, and wildlife. As water shortages become more common throughout the West, every acre-foot of water conserved becomes increasingly valuable.

Groundwater conservation is equally important. Aquifers like the Ogallala Aquifer, which stretches beneath eight states, provides water for millions of irrigated acres and supports a significant portion of the nation's agricultural production. Unfortunately, many areas of the aquifer are being depleted faster than they can naturally recharge. On-farm reduction technologies that improve irrigation efficiency and reduce unnecessary water use are important tools for slowing this decline and preserving groundwater resources. Irrigated agriculture also plays a significant role in restoring these aquifers through groundwater recharge.

Federal conservation programs play a major role in making these improvements possible. Many irrigation upgrades require significant upfront investments that are difficult for producers to afford on their own. Programs supported through the Farm Bill and partnerships with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) help reduce these financial barriers by providing technical assistance and funding for conservation projects.

One example is the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program. Through WaterSMART grants, irrigation districts and agricultural producers receive funding to modernize aging infrastructure, improve irrigation efficiency, and conserve water across the West. Other voluntary conservation programs also help producers improve water management. Through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) provide financial and technical assistance for conservation practices that improve irrigation efficiency while protecting working agricultural lands. In addition, voluntary rotational fallowing programs allow producers to temporarily reduce

irrigation on selected fields in exchange for financial incentives, conserving water while helping maintain the long-term viability of agricultural operations. Together, these programs reduce water losses, strengthen water supplies, and provide producers with practical tools to improve conservation while keeping farms and ranches productive.

Technology has also become an important part of water conservation. Programs like OpenET provide satellite-based data that estimates how much water crops are using, giving producers another tool to make informed irrigation decisions based on real-time conditions rather than estimates alone. OpenET is designed to support producers by providing useful information that can improve efficiency, reduce energy costs, and maintain crop yields. By giving farmers access to reliable data while allowing them to make the final management decisions, programs like OpenET encourage voluntary conservation and help ensure that continued federal investment delivers practical benefits for both agriculture and long-term water sustainability.

At the same time, technology alone is not enough. Conservation efforts work best when new technologies are paired with good water management, policies, and producer education. While no single conservation practice can solve the West's water challenges, on-farm reduction technologies remain one of the most practical and cost-effective tools available for improving water efficiency.

Another reason these programs are successful is because they are voluntary. Rather than relying solely on regulations, conservation programs work directly with producers to develop solutions that fit the unique needs of each operation while building trust and long-term partnerships. Farmers know their land better than anyone else, and providing them with the resources to improve efficiency encourages innovation while protecting agricultural productivity. This collaborative approach creates stronger relationships among producers, conservation organizations, and government agencies, leading to more resilient agricultural landscapes. Voluntary participation gives producers the opportunity to work together toward shared conservation goals while maintaining productive agricultural operations for future generations.

Continued investment in these programs also strengthens local economies. Agriculture remains the backbone of many western communities, and reliable water supplies help farms stay productive, supporting the businesses and jobs that depend on agriculture. When producers can invest in efficient irrigation systems and conservation practices, they continue purchasing equipment, hiring local contractors, and supporting agricultural suppliers, processors, and other rural businesses. Continued federal investment allows conservation technologies to reach more producers while encouraging innovation in water management, improving water reliability, and reducing pressure on already limited water supplies.

Water conservation can also help protect rural communities from increasing pressure to transfer agricultural water to growing cities. As western populations continue to grow, so does the demand for limited water supplies. Voluntary conservation programs should be designed to help producers use water more efficiently while protecting existing agricultural water rights, ensuring that conserved water does not become a reason to permanently transfer water away from farming communities. By improving irrigation efficiency and supporting responsible water management, these programs help keep water working for agriculture, protect local food production, and strengthen the long-term resilience of rural communities.

Water conservation is ultimately an investment in the future. Continued funding for on-farm reduction

technologies and voluntary conservation programs gives producers the tools they need to adapt to drought, strengthen water supplies, and protect the future of agriculture. By investing in conservation today, policymakers are investing in sustainable food production, stronger rural economies, and reliable water resources for generations to come.

Water Infrastructure for the Future

Water infrastructure has played a vital role in flood protection, drinking and wastewater delivery, energy production, water storage, and food production for well over 2000 years. This includes the massive systems of dams, reservoirs, and canals constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation that store and move water to the 17 western states.

Reclamation is the largest water supplier in the United States, responsible for nearly 500 dams, 10,000 miles of canals and supports over 450,000 jobs in rural communities across the west. Reclamation is also the second largest hydroelectric producer in the nation with 53 active hydroelectric plants.

Despite the scope of success of these projects, their continued operations rely on infrastructure that was built prior to 1960, dating back as far as 1902, and is quickly approaching the end of its intended life. Without the routine upkeep and maintenance needed, this infrastructure is rapidly deteriorating, putting millions of people at risk of losing access to water and straining the electric grid across the west.

Maintaining our current infrastructure is of the utmost importance to prevent structural inefficiencies that result in the loss of valuable resources. However, paying for this upkeep presents major financial challenges. Operation and maintenance costs pose a significant obstacle to irrigation districts and producers alike. Many districts operate on long-term payment plans and are responsible for a portion of all O&M for Reclamation's "reserved works". The district then must pass that cost along to their members, whether they receive water or not. This is one contributor to the ever-rising cost of food production.

Ownership and operational responsibilities also influence how maintenance costs are distributed. In addition to "reserve works", there are also "transferred works" that were constructed by Reclamation, but ownership and operations have since been transferred to non-federal entities upon completion of certain criteria. Transferred works place higher operations and maintenance burden on water managers but are often omitted from federal payment assistance programs.

On top of structural decline of the system, external pressures continue to increase demand for diminishing water supplies. Changing weather patterns and growing cities across the west strain water delivery systems, and current resources are already inadequate to meet municipal demand. Few plans currently exist to develop and retain the supply necessary to increase needs across all sectors.

Meeting these challenges will require a comprehensive approach. First, aging infrastructure must be reinforced and upgraded using modern technologies to ensure their longevity. Second, new large-scale projects that focus on watershed level results should be prioritized.

System conveyance upgrade projects include canal lining or piping to prevent loss through seepage and

evaporation. New technologies are also making it easier for water managers to monitor and react to changing hydrologic conditions with real-time flow monitoring and better forecasting capabilities. These continue to support agriculture by ensuring proper water deliveries.

Investment in infrastructure now will extend the life of the current systems and improve their reliability long-term. This will result in fewer delivery losses and lower maintenance costs for emergency repairs. A penny of preventive maintenance is worth a dollar of emergency response.

While improving existing systems is essential, expanding storage and other water development projects are necessary to meet anticipated needs. This is a simple reality that cannot be ignored. Funding needs to support shovel-ready projects to produce the most efficient and immediate results. These projects support local economic development and ensure water resources remain available for use each year. The retention of existing water and the development of critically needed new supply is of the utmost importance throughout the West.

Increasing storage is a vital tool to increase operational flexibility across the board. By capturing and storing wet-year runoff, we increase drought tolerance and promote groundwater recharge. This ensures resilience among all conditions.

In addition to the development of water storage facilities, groundwater banking, and resource enhancement projects such as desalination and treatment plants for reuse should be encouraged. It is vital that looking forward, we utilize solutions that promote a strong domestic food supply and support growing urban demands.

The federal government needs to support new projects to enhance water supplies while encouraging state and local interests to take the lead in the planning and implementation of those projects. Local and state interests have shown remarkable capacity to manage and design creative water development projects when given the opportunity.

Existing funding programs provide a strong foundation for partnerships and demonstrate their success. WaterSMART grants and small watershed flood protection funding under PL-566 provide vital opportunities for modernization projects that help mitigate the financial burden on irrigation districts and water users. Other programs such as long-term repayment plans for districts and loan guarantees also offset maintenance costs.

Conservation is often seen as the solution to water supply issues. While conservation is surely a tool that can assist in overcoming water supply problems, it cannot be viewed as the single answer to water shortages. The construction of additional water supply infrastructure may allow more efficient management and enable greater cooperation between traditional and non-traditional water users. This will involve collaboration between land users, state and federal partners, and other interests.

The path forward is clear. Western water has been barreling towards crisis for decades, however through practical solutions including system-wide infrastructure upgrades and water development projects we can mitigate the risks. We cannot continue conversations that focus primarily on continued conservation and cutbacks through the downsizing of Western agriculture rather than working to find methods to enhance the water supply that we have now using the variety of tools available. The future of water and agriculture in the west relies on the decisions made and actions taken today.

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CORRESPONDENCE LIST
SEPTEMBER 2026

1. August 14, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Regular Board Meeting on August 19, 2026.

2. August 17, 2026 – District sent Backflow Testing Requirement Letters to fourteen customers.

3. August 19, 2026 – District send a Backflow Testing Requirement Letter to one customer.

4. August 19, 2026 – District sent Can and Will Serve Letters to three customers.

5. August 20, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board Regular Board Meeting on August 24, 2026.

6. August 20, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Personnel Committee Meeting on August 27, 2026.

7. August 20, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Central Coast Water Authority Regular Board Meeting on August 27, 2026.

8. August 24, 2026 – District received a Public Records Act Request from Sunlight Access.

9. August 25, 2026 – District received a Reminder Notice from the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency that all Groundwater Well Registrations are due on August 31, 2026.

10. August 26, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Los Olivos Community Services District Project Management Subcommittee Meeting on August 29, 2026.

11. August 28, 2026 – District received the Notice an Agenda for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Citizen Advisory Group Meeting on September 3, 2026.

12. September 2, 2026 – District sent a response letter to Sunlight Access regarding a Public Records Act Request.

13. September 4, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Wastewater Committee Meeting on September 9, 2026.

14. September 4, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Santa Ynez Community Services District Finance Committee Meeting on September 10, 2026.

15. September 6, 2026 – District received the Notice and Agenda for the Los Olivos Community Services District Regular Board Meeting on September 9, 2026.

16. September 8, 2026 – District received the Cancellation Notice for the Eastern Management Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency Special Meeting on September 11, 2026.