



2020 Legislative Priorities

Rancho California Water District

2020 Legislative Priorities

The 2020 Legislative Priorities provides guidance for staff to properly establish and allocate resources for RCWD's Governmental Affairs program in 2020. The overall strategy for the second year of the 2019-2020 legislative session is to ensure and enhance Rancho Water's operations and efficiency through the support or opposition of relevant legislation or policy initiatives. The priorities listed below provide clear direction for Rancho Water's most important legislative objectives in 2020 addressing the primary challenges in water supply reliability, infrastructure and financial stability, and water resource use efficiency.

Rancho Water staff identified a series of issues that we anticipate debate at the state and federal level in the second year of the legislative session.

Rancho Water is committed to deliver reliable, high quality water, wastewater and reclamation services to its customers and communities in a prudent and sustainable manner. The District serves 130,000 residents within a 150 square mile area which includes the City of Temecula, parts of Murrieta and other unincorporated lands within Riverside County. The District is integrating local, regional, state, and federal solutions to help address the water challenges in our region.

Top Federal Priorities for 2020:

- Secure funding/financing for water infrastructure, efficiency and restoration projects (specifically well rehabs) and seek to exempt infrastructure from the definition of "earmark".
- Maintain funding for water science and data collection including water quality, salinity control, source protection and ecosystem research. Expand funding opportunities and eligibility under Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations to support non-USACE facilities.
- Support administrative/legislative actions that protect the State Water Project, Colorado River Aqueduct, and local water supplies from the impacts of climate change and enhance their long-term reliability.
- Lead effort to change language in the WIIN Act that would allow agencies to receive other federal funds when they have received FEMA funds.

Infrastructure and Public Finance

- Support measures to reduce the cost of financing water infrastructure planning and construction, such as tax-credit financing, tax-exempt municipal bonds, an expanded EPA Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (WIFIA), Reclamation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (RIFIA), Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) or similar financing mechanism that funds water supply, infrastructure, including dams.
- Support tax exemptions for water conservation or efficiency incentives for measures including, but not limited to, turf removal and other measures to reduce consumption of water or enhance the absorption and infiltration capacity of the landscape.
- Support additional funding for US Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI, WIIN Act, and WaterSmart.
- Support administrative/legislative actions to secure federal assistance to local water agencies to support monitoring and/or remediation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in drinking water supplies. Support “polluter pay” provisions that allow for full cost-recovery by drinking water and wastewater providers.
- Support continued unrestricted availability of the issuance of revenue bonds for Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund low-interest loans to reduce state funding backlog; and reduce the lien parity, limitations on future bond issuance, mandatory
- Minimize cost of new or expanded regulatory burdens.
- Oppose legislation that would add duplicative and burdensome reporting requirements on public entities receiving federal grants.

Federal Drought Related Legislation

- Support administrative/legislative actions to respond to drought, including funding for immediate water supply infrastructure improvements at storage facilities such as Vail Dam.
- Provide funding and regulatory assistance for regions affected by the drought for both immediate and long-term water projects that aid in the development, storage, treatment and delivery of water.
- Provide funding and regulatory incentives for conservation, water use efficiency measures, recycled water, and groundwater recovery.
- Protect State Water Project (SWP) and local water supplies and ensure SWP and local water supply reliability.
- Support funding and administrative or legislative efforts to increase drought resiliency on the Colorado River and Bay Delta Systems.

- Work within the current federal and state Endangered Species Acts to increase operational flexibility while maintaining protections for listed species.
- Encourage use of the most current scientific data and analysis to provide enhanced flexibility for water project operations, including federal assistance to demonstrate innovative technology.
- Advocate increased federal assistance for local water recycling projects. Advocate for increased federal cost share.
- Support additional funding for groundwater conjunctive use projects
- Support USDA programs providing funding for agricultural water use efficiency projects

Federal Appropriations Priorities

Rancho Water supports funding for the following measures:

- Farm Bill/U.S. Department of Agriculture programs to support agricultural water use efficiency and source water protection projects in the Delta or in the Colorado River Basin.
- Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program.
- Colorado River drought resiliency projects.
- Bay-Delta planning and implementation funding for near-term projects, including near-term and emergency response projects.
- Biological controls, mitigation management, or control of invasive species.
- Water conservation and water use efficiency programs such as the EPA WaterSense program, and other water resource projects.
- Desalination and salinity management research.
- Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI and WaterSMART programs, and EPA WIFIA program.
- Support federal assistance to local water agencies for funding research, development and demonstration of innovation technology in the water sector. Pursue funding through appropriations for agency programs, competitive or discretionary grants, or other non-earmark funding mechanisms for RCWD's priority projects
 - Vail Dam
 - Well rehabilitations
 - Recycled water program
 - Security updates

Water Quality

- Support administrative/legislative actions that are protective of source water quality, utilize current science, incorporate benefit/cost analysis, and provide adequate resources for treatment and mitigation measures.
- Support continued funding for Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program.
- Support an amendment to the WaterSense Authorization that disallows certification for devices that degrade water quality.

Environmental Planning and Environmental Compliance

- Support administrative/legislative actions to improve clarity and workability of federal environmental statutes and regulations, and eliminate duplicative state or federal processes.
- Support administrative/legislative actions for environmental compliance (e.g., air, water, hazardous materials and waste) that provide for regulatory compliance flexibility, promote consistency and reduce regulatory duplication.
- Ensure that USEPA, and other federal agencies developing national water policy framework, take into account the contrasting hydrologic and climatologic conditions of the Western sector of the U.S.
- Oppose legislation, rulemaking or guidance that increases federal jurisdiction of waters, and expands the definition of Waters of the U.S.
- Ensure PFAS chemicals are not designated as hazardous substances under Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERLA).
- Oppose Superfund liability upon public water agencies in the instance of groundwater contamination from PFAS and other contaminants of emerging concern.
- Support USEPA Science Advisory Board reform to allow for greater participation from industry stakeholders as well as state and local government officials.
- Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for control and mitigation of invasive species, including, but not limited to, quagga mussels and striped bass.

Colorado River Initiatives

- Advocate continued federal funding and coordination between states for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program under the Departments of Agriculture and Interior.

Bay-Delta and State Water Project Improvements

- Advocate in support of administrative/legislative action to advance Delta conveyance and ecosystem improvements in support of California's coequal goals of water supply reliability and Delta ecosystem restoration.
- Work within the current federal and state Endangered Species Acts to increase operational flexibility while maintaining regulatory statutory protections for listed species.
- Support administrative/legislative action and funding to advance emergency response, near-term Delta improvements and expenditures to support fish monitoring activities in the Delta consistent with the coequal goals, California EcoRestore, and the California Water Action Plan.
- Support administrative/legislative action and funding to add surface and ground water storage statewide.

Top State Priorities for 2020:

- Support the development of a comprehensive statewide general obligation bond that will provide resources for water and water related climate resiliency related projects to further the sustainability goals of the state while protecting and preserving local control and the ability to prioritize local water supply development. (Specifically have dam funding included in the bond).
- Advance policies that promote, rather than penalize, new local water infrastructure projects, such as recycling, and provide funding for needed research to advance new technology.
- Support funding for well rehabilitations and new wells.
- Support administrative/legislative actions for environmental compliance (e.g., air, water, hazardous materials and waste) that provide for regulatory compliance flexibility, promote consistency and reduce regulatory duplication.

Infrastructure and Public Finance

- Support the creation of funding opportunities that facilitate the implementation of the California WaterReuse Action Plan in order to expand recycled water and potable reuse projects, conduct research, and complete needed regulation in order to advance new and increased uses of recycled water.
- Monitor the implementation of SB 200 (Monning, 2019) to ensure that the limited resources in the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund are utilized in a manner that will facilitate sustainable and cost effective water solutions for communities that have struggled to receive safe drinking water.

- Support the availability of funding for water and wastewater providers to address Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and other contaminants of emerging concern.
- Support measures to reduce the cost of financing water infrastructure planning and construction that funds water supply infrastructure, particularly for repair of dams with a condition rating of unsatisfactory, poor, or fair by the California Division of Safety of Dams.
- Support tax exemptions for water conservation or efficiency incentives for measures including, but not limited to, turf removal, and other measures to reduce consumption of water or enhance the absorption and infiltration capacity of the landscape.
- Oppose public goods charge or other charges levied solely on water agencies for funding broader public benefits. Support proposals with equitable and multi-stakeholder cost sharing for provision of safe drinking water and water rate affordability.
- Support legislation/administrative action that deters metal theft and protects critical public water infrastructure.
- Support legislation/administrative action that would provide funding or reimbursement for water utility infrastructure expenditures to improve redundancy and reliability.
- Support state funding for research and development of technology innovation programs in the water sector.

Drought-Related Legislation

- Support administrative/legislative actions to respond to drought, including funding for both immediate and long-term water supply improvements, while maintaining environmental protections, flexibility and local control.
- Support legislative efforts which recognize variations among communities, regions, and counties with respect to the capability of withstanding the impacts of drought.
- Support legislation that would facilitate the exchange of information about water supply availability and projected demand for a broader range of projects.
- Oppose efforts that would limit local control on conservation and demand management reduction projects and strategies.

Regional Water Resource Management

- Support administrative/legislative action to promote the development of recycled water (including potable reuse), groundwater, stormwater, and desalination projects as water resources, without comprising the operational, financial and water quality, regulatory and customer interests of Metropolitan and other water and wastewater agencies.
- Ensure statutory or regulatory mandates for improving water use efficiency are fact-based and not a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Work to ensure that completion and implementation of the Water Resiliency Portfolio and related implementation does not impact the operations of the District including execution of capital improvement plans or water supply development as deemed necessary by the District to achieve local water supply diversity.

Water Quality

- Support administrative/legislative actions that are protective of source water quality, utilize current science and incorporate benefit/cost analyses to reduce salt and nutrient loading to surface and groundwater sources.
- Support legislative and administrative efforts to evaluate and address constituents of emerging concern through public, transparent and scientifically valid means that incorporates input from the water industry.
- Support legislation that establishes a reasonable compliance period for maximum contaminant level (MCL) attainment, similar to federal compliance standards, which allows for water providers to make improvements and complete infrastructure investments necessary to address an MCL without penalty by regulators.
- Support administrative/legislative action to ensure that all affected public water systems are consulted on proposed consolidations or extension of service area and that the consolidation or extension of service complies with all applicable state laws.
- Support funding for the removal of salts and other constituents in local water supplies.
- Oppose legislative efforts that would restrict a local agency's ability to manage the use of salt-discharging water softeners within their service area.

Environmental Planning and Environmental Compliance

- Support administrative/legislative actions to improve clarity and workability of CEQA, and eliminate duplicative state processes.
- Support administrative/legislative actions for environmental compliance (e.g., air, water, hazardous materials and waste) that provide for regulatory compliance flexibility, promote consistency and reduce regulatory duplication.
- Support administrative/legislative actions and funding for control and mitigation of invasive species, including, but not limited to, quagga mussels and striped bass.
- Support legislation and administrative actions recognizing advancements that water purveyors have made towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing sustainability objectives, and encourage any new policy objectives to remain voluntary, maintain local control, and avoid arbitrary baselines or targets.

Wildfire Management/Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS)

- Support funding options that provide resources to cities, counties and special districts to prepare for, address, and mitigate the impacts related to wildfires in California.
- Support efforts to expand notification protocols for water/wastewater providers, medically vulnerable residents, and others of de-energization events.
- Support legislation that would provide water and wastewater providers with greater flexibility to test and run backup generators without penalty by state and local air quality regulators.
- Support legislation to address water provider liability for damages under the principles of inverse condemnation related to wildfire events.