



CALIFORNIA
URBAN WATER
AGENCIES

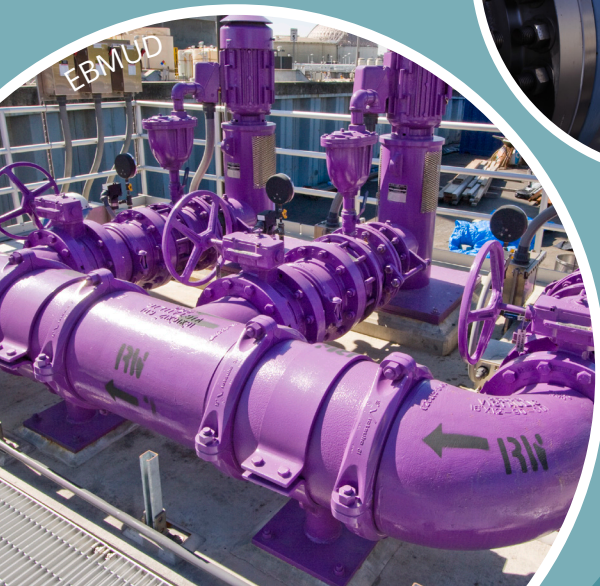
CUWA

ANNUAL REPORT: FISCAL YEAR 2023

ACWD | Alameda Creek

Together, investing in
California's water resilience

California Urban Water Agencies (CUWA) provides a unified voice for urban water solutions that keep our environment and communities thriving. Established in 1990, CUWA is made up of 11 major urban water agencies who collectively deliver drinking water to two thirds of the state's population. CUWA's vision is a California where everyone can rely on safe and accessible water.



Zone 7

Fiscal Year 2023 Accomplishments

As California navigated dramatic weather extremes, from severe drought to urban flooding, the effects of climate change were ever present. CUWA agencies continued to leverage their collective knowledge and expertise toward a shared vision of water reliability and climate resilience.

Building on lessons learned from past and ongoing experiences, CUWA agencies offered collective insights and recommendations throughout this past year, both among each other and with external partners and policymakers, to support a shift from emergency drought response toward long-term investment in reliable water infrastructure. As a non-advocacy organization with a unified urban voice, CUWA has built a trusted reputation, with state leaders calling on CUWA to provide a technical perspective on key policy issues.

CUWA's FY 2023 accomplishments are summarized below in the context of CUWA's four long-term aspirations for California water.



SFPUC Enhanced Recycled Treatment Facility



LADWP Turf Replacement

Reliable Water Supply is Available to all Californians

The past year highlighted California's ever-widening climate extremes through a severe multi-year drought followed by intense flooding from successive atmospheric rivers. CUWA's strategic efforts on long-term reliability planning helped lay a strong foundation of collaboration with state leaders. CUWA achievements included elevated visibility on multiple fronts.

- Met with Governor Newsom and published a [press release](#) to highlight positive conservation trends and the importance of continued collaboration on long-term resilience.
- Authored an [op-ed in CalMatters](#) and joined DWR's Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative for continued momentum on drought preparation and response.
- Published an issue brief on [Advancing California's Water Supply Strategy](#), highlighting progress and recommendations for achieving the state's supply and storage targets.
- Signed a joint coalition letter with WaterReuse CA and others to provide comments on DDW's draft criteria for direct potable reuse in support of water reuse expansion, which is critical for meeting the state's future supply goals.

Following one of the wettest seasons on state record, Governor Newsom released a proposal to prioritize and accelerate clean and reliable infrastructure projects. These critical investments present opportunities for continued state and local agency collaboration. As summarized in a [subsequent press release](#), CUWA is uniquely positioned to bring consensus-driven input representative of the State's diverse communities, timely and relevant data, and resources to support the Governor's call to action.

• Safe Water is Accessible and Affordable to All

Over the past several years, CUWA has been working to improve affordable access to safe water within member agency service areas and across the state, particularly in small, rural communities that often have limited resources and a single source of supply. In 2023, CUWA executed an agreement with the State Water Board [to become a Technical Assistance \(TA\) Provider](#) under the State's Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. The TA Program provides an opportunity to work directly with small water systems at risk or out of compliance with drinking water standards and bring them to compliance through long-term solutions.

In FY 2023, CUWA joined the Project Advisory Committee for the Water Research Foundation's Project #5179, *Feasibility and Applicability of Emerging Utility-led Innovations in Addressing Affordability*, which will document utility-led affordability programs and evaluate associated costs, benefits, and feasibility of different approaches. The study is being led by the Pacific Institute and is expected to be completed in early 2025. This past year, CUWA also engaged with the State Water Board to discuss equity-focused topics such as affordability and workforce development.

In 2023, CUWA officially became a Technical Assistance Provider and will be working directly with small communities through the State's [SAFER](#) program.



Valley Water Advanced Water Purification Center

• Water Agencies Embody DEI Through Culture, Practices, and Accountability

Inspired by CUWA's DEI Toolkit, the CUWA Board took steps to adopt a new DEI policy. Meanwhile, CUWA agencies' DEI efforts are leading to new opportunities for collaboration in workforce development, supply reliability, and increasing consumer trust. There is a critical connection between resilient water systems, infrastructure investments, and the jobs needed to support those projects. CUWA has begun developing an issue brief intended to highlight workforce development needs and create collaborative opportunities to attract historically underrepresented groups to the water industry. CUWA is collecting demographic data for analysis, including data from the CUWA Board, which will be included in the issue brief. By connecting the dots between California's water supply strategy, the workforce development need, and existing DEI gaps in our industry, CUWA can drive industry projects and help water utilities succeed on multiple fronts.

• Consumers Trust the Quality of Tap Water

CUWA agencies shared best practices and experiences to continue providing high-quality drinking water amid unprecedented disruptions. CUWA's Water Quality Committee continued to plan for upcoming drinking water requirements and emerging contaminants. The committee compiled data to share with DDW on potential lead release from service line materials, in anticipation of the US EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions compliance deadline on October 16, 2024.

Climate extremes also lead to greater wildfire risk, which can compromise the quality of drinking water sources during and after wildfires. CUWA held a second workshop to revisit and build on lessons learned since CUWA's 2020 Wildfire Workshop, including discussions on wildfire contaminants and associated water quality impacts; actions for before, during, and after a wildfire; and resources for agency preparedness.

Looking Ahead – Strategic Communication

Coordinated drought messaging and collaboration among CUWA agencies and the state contributed to achieving statewide conservation targets in 2022. Recognizing opportunity for increased visibility and impact, CUWA launched a new Communications Committee to coordinate messaging on critical topics. The committee engaged in consistent and successful coordination with the State's Save Our Water campaign, becoming a sounding board on drought and conservation messaging. Longer term priorities include supply investments, affordability, workforce development, and improving consumer confidence in tap water.

In parallel, CUWA launched a strategic communication initiative to build a consistent messaging framework, develop clarity around outreach and communication strategies, and increase media readiness. The effort resulted in a renewed mission, vision, and values:

Mission: Providing a unified voice for urban water solutions that keep our environment and communities thriving.

Vision: A California where everyone can rely on safe and accessible water.



The following values are guiding principles that inform how CUWA works.

Unified. CUWA collaborates to form strong partnerships that deliver comprehensive and inclusive water, environmental, and organizational solutions.

Trusted. CUWA is the recognized and respected source for objective information on California's urban water systems.

Balanced. CUWA leaders seek consensus-driven solutions that represent a diverse cross-section of California's urban communities.

Committed. CUWA's leaders are dedicated to finding actions to address California's most complex water challenges.

Photos courtesy of ACWD, EBMUD, LADWP, SFPUC, SDCWA, Valley Water, Zone 7

POPULATION SERVED:
27 MILLION

CUWA MEMBER AGENCIES

- Alameda County Water District ([ACWD](#))
- City of [Fresno](#)
- City of San Diego Public Utilities Department ([San Diego](#))
- Contra Costa Water District ([CCWD](#))
- East Bay Municipal Utility District ([EBMUD](#))
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power ([LADWP](#))
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ([MWD](#))
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission ([SFPUC](#))
- San Diego County Water Authority ([SDCWA](#))
- Santa Clara Valley Water District ([Valley Water](#))
- Zone 7 Water Agency ([Zone 7](#))

For more information visit www.cuwa.org

Executive Director: Wendy Broley