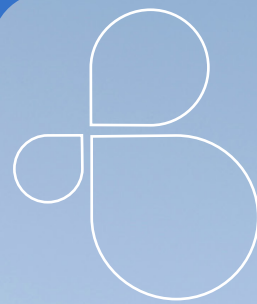




CALIFORNIA URBAN WATER AGENCIES



FISCAL YEAR  
2019

# CUWA

## ANNUAL REPORT

California Urban Water Agencies (CUWA) is a nonprofit corporation of 11 major urban water agencies that collectively deliver drinking water to two-thirds of the state's population. CUWA's mission is to provide a forum for combining the expertise and resources of its member agencies to advance reliable, high-quality water supplies for California's current and future urban water needs in a cost-effective manner for the public, the environment, and the economy.



## Fiscal Year 2019 Highlights

As noted in Governor Newsom's Executive Order for California's Water Resilience Portfolio (N-10-19), the State faces a range of existing water challenges—including unsafe drinking water in many rural communities. As population grows and the effects of climate change intensify, a broad array of collaborative strategies is needed to secure reliable water supplies while protecting the environment. CUWA is actively engaging to address the challenges of today and the future, driving early solutions within a framework that can support lasting outcomes.

### Supporting California Water by Advancing Solutions for Rural Water Accessibility

Building on CUWA's previous analysis of small water systems with persistent health-based violations, CUWA is collaborating with various stakeholders to recommend new technical and operational strategies, supporting state efforts to create sustainable systems for the future. In February, CUWA testified at a Joint Assembly Hearing on Safe and Affordable Drinking Water and followed with an updated issue brief, [Restoring Water Accessibility in California](#), urging immediate action to achieve near-term progress while informing future solutions.

Through a joint Water Research Foundation (WRF) project, Identifying Solutions for California's Underperforming Drinking Water Systems, CUWA is partnering with Pacific Institute to develop a framework for sustainable public water systems that can help drive lasting change in California and ultimately across the country. As part of this project, the project team convened a group of State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) - Division of Drinking Water (DDW) engineers, small community leaders, technology providers, and others to visit three non-compliant systems in the Fresno area, evaluate existing conditions, and explore potential system improvements. The team also convened a Thought Leaders Workshop with representatives from state agencies, NGOs, private companies, utilities, and research institutions to brainstorm creative solutions and approaches—such as mutual aid partnerships, remote monitoring and operational strategies, and ideas to advance regional consolidation.



To complement and support State efforts, CUWA has participated in DDW's Needs Assessment Workshops and continues to engage State Board members and staff through the WRF project. CUWA also submitted comments on the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment's report, *A Framework and Tool for Evaluating California's Progress in Achieving the Human Right to Water*, and the State Board's Needs Analysis Conceptual Plan.

With funds of up to \$130 million annually secured for safe and affordable drinking water, there is a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to pivot efforts to define and execute lasting solutions on a broad scale, working together to provide safe, affordable drinking water for all Californians.

CUWA organized a visit to non-compliant water systems in the Fresno area (top) and convened a workshop with a variety of stakeholders (bottom) to brainstorm innovative solutions and drive early progress.

## Building Resilience through Long-Term Water Use Efficiency and Drought Preparedness

CUWA shares the State's commitment to long-term water use efficiency and is deeply engaged in the stakeholder process for implementing recent legislation. Much of CUWA's feedback on the draft primer of AB 1668 and SB 606 prepared by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and State Board was incorporated, and CUWA agencies are participating on each of the State's eight urban workgroups to advise on implementation of the legislation.

While continuing to support efficient water use, CUWA agencies are monitoring effects of declining flows on the interconnected urban water system. CUWA was featured in a California Water Environment Association Clean Water Magazine article on declining flows and is issuing an addendum to the 2017 white paper, [Adapting to Change: Utility Systems and Declining Flows](#), that further illustrates impacts on water, wastewater, and recycled water systems and informs the state's development of an indoor residential water use standard. As the state considers future standards, it will be important to consider related impacts, such as reduced flows for reuse and challenges for sewer collection and wastewater treatment facilities.

CUWA continues to urge state and local leaders to pursue complementary goals, accounting for water efficiency, quality, reuse, and affordability.



CUWA agencies continue to promote California-friendly landscapes and outdoor water use efficiency, which provides significant water savings with fewer adverse impacts than indoor water reductions.

## Collaborating to Support Integrated, Regional Approaches

Building on an interconnected perspective, CUWA developed a fact sheet - [Guiding Regional Reuse Options – A Distributed Systems Approach](#). A distributed systems approach is a regionally optimized blend of centralized and onsite reuse strategies that integrates competing demands for wastewater, along with other considerations related to policy, community and environment, economics, operations, and treatment performance. Attendees of the 2019 WaterReuse CA Conference were particularly interested in CUWA's work and the concept of modifying green building certification programs, such as LEED, to better support regional solutions.

CUWA has since engaged US Green Building Council (USGBC) staff, the LEED Water Efficiency Technical Advisory Group (WE TAG), and WaterReuse Association staff to consider expanding LEED criteria around water reuse. Currently, onsite reuse earns both water efficiency and sustainable wastewater management credits, while contributing wastewater to a centralized reuse program is not incentivized. The rating system could be expanded to account for the full range of reuse options—including potable reuse—and reward the strategy that makes most sense from a holistic, regional perspective. Several ideas are being considered further, including encouraging stronger coordination among regional stakeholders, rewarding developments for contributing to centralized recycling programs, and providing greater guidance on different water reuse pathways. CUWA continues discussions with WaterReuse Association and USGBC to refine LEED criteria.



CUWA is engaging with USGBC to clarify and expand LEED rating criteria to reward whichever reuse strategy makes the most sense from a holistic, regional perspective.





## Supporting Affordable Water Supplies for Our Communities

CUWA agencies are committed to delivering safe, reliable water supplies. While state and local programs support this mission, the cumulative cost of implementing new programs and addressing emerging challenges is approaching the limits of affordability, particularly for low-income customers. CUWA developed an issue brief - [Keeping Water Affordable: Accounting for the Drivers behind Increasing Rates](#) to highlight these challenges, urging state leaders to more fully account for costs of new programs and consider funding to minimize the burden on ratepayers.

CUWA has also been working with the State Board to inform implementation of a statewide low-income rate assistance (LIRA) program, providing comments on the draft report, *Options for Implementation of a Statewide Low-Income Water Rate Assistance Program*. In particular, CUWA urges the state to continue engaging water suppliers to help resolve implementation challenges, like benefit eligibility, and pursue long-term solutions versus subsidies.

Lastly, CUWA agencies act directly to make water affordable. Although Proposition 218 prevents water suppliers from applying ratepayer funds to LIRA programs, all CUWA agencies with retail customers offer some form of low-income rate assistance funded by non-rate revenue.



CUWA agencies are committed to keeping water services both reliable and cost-effective, recognizing that water bills compete with many other household expenses.

## CUWA MEMBER AGENCIES

### RETAIL

- Alameda County Water District ([ACWD](#))
- City of [Fresno](#)
- East Bay Municipal Utility District ([EBMUD](#))
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power ([LADWP](#))

### RETAIL/WHOLESALE

- Contra Costa Water District ([CCWD](#))
- City of San Diego Public Utilities Department ([San Diego](#))
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission ([SFPUC](#))

### WHOLESALE

- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ([MWD](#))
- Santa Clara Valley Water District ([Valley Water](#))
- San Diego County Water Authority ([SDCWA](#))
- Zone 7 Water Agency ([Zone 7](#))

## CUWA STAFF

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Staff and technical resources: Katie Ruby, Katie Porter, Rucker Alex, Tiffany Tran, Alex Waite, Jocelyn Lu, Wendy Broley, Jenny Gain, Melanie Holmer

POPULATION  
SERVED:  
26 MILLION



For more information, including a list of agency representatives and recent publications, visit [www.cuwa.org](http://www.cuwa.org).