



2026 KEY FEDERAL WATER ISSUES

ABOUT ACWA

ACWA was formed in 1910 when five irrigation districts came together to address common needs. First known as the Irrigation Districts Association, members voted in 1973 to rename the organization the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) to better reflect its changing role in California water.

Today, ACWA is the largest statewide coalition of public water agencies in the country. As a leader on California water issues and a respected voice for its members in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C., ACWA has been a driving force in California water policy for more than a century and continues to help shape the laws and regulations that affect the State's water agencies and their customers.

ACWA's approximately 470 public agency members are responsible for 90 percent of the water delivered to communities, farms and businesses in California. Together, they play an active role in managing the State's water resources and promoting investments in safe drinking water, water use efficiency, water recycling, surface and groundwater storage and other strategies to meet California's water needs.

ACWA's mission is to provide comprehensive leadership, advocacy and resources for California public water agencies to ensure a high quality and reliable water supply in an environmentally sustainable and fiscally responsible manner.

WATER SUPPLY

Every community and every industry, from tech to agriculture, relies on water. Meeting existing demands and future water needs requires comprehensive solutions that include improved water storage, both surface and groundwater, greater inter- and intra-regional conveyance, improved conservation, including water use efficiency, recycled water, desalination, and stormwater capture, and improved technological innovation and deployment. Investment in water infrastructure is an investment in our nation's economy, its health, and its future. Congress and the Administration have an opportunity to address current water needs while making a downpayment on our nation's future prosperity by investing in water supply infrastructure.

Infrastructure Funding

- ACWA supports investments for the **U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)** that enhance water management and sustainability. Specifically, ACWA urges funding for **Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)** programs including \$150 million for storage, \$30 million for desalination, \$100 million for WaterSMART grants like Title XVI for water recycling, \$35 million for CALFED, and \$300 million to address dam safety concerns. Additionally, ACWA requests at least \$34 million to the **United States Geological Survey (USGS)** for federal priority streamgages.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** funding provides much-needed assistance to improve infrastructure that helps provide clean, reliable drinking water. EPA estimates approximately \$1.2 trillion is needed to keep drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure in compliance with federal water quality standards through 2040. ACWA recommends funding the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) at or above the bipartisan funding levels established in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L.117-58). ACWA also supports continued investments in the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) and the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN).
- ACWA member agencies utilize funding from the **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** to help grow the food our nation depends on, improve forest and headwaters health, and more. As such, ACWA supports investments in USDA programs including NRCS conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Small Watershed Program, Emergency Watershed Program, the Watershed Rehabilitation Program, and Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program.
- ACWA supports funding for the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**. ACWA member agencies work with USACE to implement the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) provisions regarding critical infrastructure projects like water supply, flood control, ecosystem restoration, and recreation. ACWA urges Congress to pass a comprehensive WRDA bill this year. ACWA's WRDA priorities include:
 - Reauthorize both the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) and the Corps Water Infrastructure Financing Program (CWIFP) for an additional five years.
 - Expand/restore access to the WIFIA and CWIFP programs to allow funding and financing eligibility to state entities and non-federal cost shares in federally involved projects. This includes state-led water storage projects, transferred works of the Bureau of Reclamation, and congressionally authorized Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) projects.
 - Extend repayments out to up to 50 years for general loans and allow certain loans to have maturity dates of up to 55 years.
 - Ensure prompt consideration and approval of WIFIA loans and address growing concerns about WIFIA loans that have not been cleared by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
 - Establish Water Supply as part of USACE's core mission



- The **Colorado River** is one of our nation's most important rivers providing water for more than 40 million people across seven states and Mexico. As the Colorado River drought continues, ACWA supports further collaboration between impacted states, tribes, and Mexico and continued funding for the various Colorado River salinity control programs. ACWA also supports California water agencies in their plan to reduce Colorado River water usage. California has and will continue to lead the way in reducing reliance on Colorado River supplies.
- ACWA supports the continued allocation of congressionally authorized and appropriated funding for water infrastructure development.
- ACWA supports the permanent authorization of the vital Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). ACWA supports H.R.4733 the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Establishment Act.

Regulatory Improvements

Our nation has one of the most comprehensive water infrastructure systems the world has ever seen. It is truly a wonder of the modern world. Families, ecosystems, and industry across California depend on water provided by ACWA members. Our members' ability to provide this water is directly influenced by the role and scope of federal regulations. Functional regulatory processes that provide warranted environmental protection without creating unnecessary regulatory burdens are critical.

- The **Endangered Species Acts (ESA)** helps conserve threatened and endangered species and habitat. ACWA supports effective ESA implementation that incorporates the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem enrichment through various approaches including comprehensive and integrated solutions, real-time solutions, the best-available science, and adaptive management strategies.
- ACWA supports the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** as a valuable tool to examine the potential impacts of water infrastructure development on the environment. There are opportunities to improve the NEPA process in a manner that reduces unnecessary delays while maintaining environmental protections. ACWA encourages an efficient NEPA process that enhances interagency coordination, expands use of Categorical Exclusions, and provides greater certainty for ACWA member agencies.
- **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits** are necessary for many water infrastructure projects. Although the Clean Water Act limits the length of NPDES permits to five years, modern water infrastructure projects often extend beyond the existing five-year permit term. To that end, ACWA supports extending NPDES permit terms from five to ten years.



WATER QUALITY

Delivering safe drinking water is job number one for local water agencies. Through regular and thorough testing, ACWA members ensure that drinking water supplies are safe and comply with state and federal drinking water regulations. Water agencies also make critical investments in water treatment technologies and water infrastructure projects to ensure an affordable, safe, and reliable supply of water.

- **Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)** contamination presents challenges for many drinking water and wastewater providers throughout our nation. Efforts to combat these contaminants are taking place on both the federal and state level – with California on the frontline. ACWA supports drinking water standards that improve water quality, that are economically and technologically feasible and based on the best-available science. ACWA is concerned that PFAS regulations adopted by EPA in 2024 failed to capture the accurate cost of compliance. ACWA encourages EPA to take more proactive measures to identify sources of PFAS and limit their discharges, as prevention is more cost-effective than attempting to clean up pollution once it has been introduced to the environment.
- ACWA strongly supports the “polluter pays” principle under the **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)**, which holds entities financially responsible for the cleanup of contaminated sites they created rather than compliant water suppliers and ratepayers. Potential liability for public water and wastewater agencies from a CERCLA designation for certain PFAS contaminants and the associated costs are a serious concern for ACWA member agencies that did not cause the contamination.

 - ACWA supports H.R. 1267, *the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act*. This bipartisan legislation provides a narrowly tailored exemption for compliant water and wastewater agencies from liability under CERCLA.
- ACWA members are dedicated to reducing **lead** in drinking water and support the removal of lead service lines. A critical component to these efforts is a reasonable federal regulatory framework. The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) was finalized in October 2024. It requires drinking water systems to identify and replace all lead pipes in 10 years and lowers lead action levels in drinking water from 15 to 10 parts per billion. Many in the water community believe that, while well intentioned, the LCRI did not adequately address issues raised by water providers. Congress and the Administration should extend the compliance window beyond ten years, provide funding at a level that is sufficient to remove lead pipes in the allocated compliance window, and address liability issues associated with the potential replacement of lines on private property.
- Predictability and certainty in determining if a **“water of the United States” (WOTUS)** is subject to Clean Water Act jurisdiction is essential for ACWA member agencies to understand how to meet and comply with water quality objectives. Conflicting case law and regulations have complicated the WOTUS landscape. ACWA continues to advocate for a functional WOTUS framework that balances the broad interest of ACWA member agencies to maintain and develop water infrastructure and enhance water quality.



AGRICULTURE

A reliable supply of domestic food is a cornerstone of America's economy and critical to our national security. Agricultural producers in California are a vital part of our nation's farm sector producing over 400 commodities, more than a third of the country's vegetables, and three quarters of the country's fruits and nuts. A strong agricultural sector benefits every American - not just farmers and ranchers - by keeping food resources abundant and affordable.

- ACWA urges Congress to **pass a full five-year reauthorization of the Farm Bill**. The Farm Bill is critical in shaping agricultural policies that help our nation's farmers and ranchers and ACWA members address food and water resource challenges. ACWA member agency priorities in the Farm Bill include support for rural water access, conservation programs, forestry management, crop and disaster insurance, research, and disaster relief. ACWA supports NRCS conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Small Watershed Program, Emergency Watershed Program, the Watershed Rehabilitation Program, and Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program.
- ACWA supports farm bill initiatives that improve **headwaters and forest health** including proactive forest management techniques, wildfire prevention programs, and a reasonable regulatory environment. ACWA applauds federal efforts that encourage biomass management and removal, long-term monitoring of post-fire recovery, landscape-scale adaptive research programs, decommissioning or improved maintenance of roads, and watershed restoration. ACWA supports legislation that will improve the health of our nation's forests including:
 - S. 350, the *Wildfire Emergency Act*
 - H.R. 471/S.1462, the *Fix Our Forests Act*. ACWA encourages congress to move this legislation forward and reconcile differences between the House and Senate versions of this bill in a manner that benefit water providers.
 - H.R. 179, the *Proven Forest Management Act*
 - H.R. 1459/S.670, the *Protect the West Act*
 - H.R. 2709, the *Save our Sequoias Act*
 - H.R. 3889/S.2015, the *National Prescribed Fire Act*
 - ACWA also encourages Congress to make forest health improvements a priority in the 2026 Farm Bill.



EXTREME WEATHER, DROUGHT, CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND RESILIENCY

California water providers, and water managers throughout the U.S., continue to face increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, prolonged droughts, intensified wildfires, and increased flooding.

- ACWA is working to support a high quality and reliable water supply in the face of variable weather patterns. Preparing for extreme weather events will require significant additional state and federal funding. In addition, ACWA encourages effective drought response and climate resiliency strategies. ACWA supports:
 - Innovative legislation that expands advanced weather forecasting. Including S.322 the *Improving Atmospheric Rivers Forecasts Act*. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator Alex Padilla directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish a standalone atmospheric river forecast improvement program.
 - The bipartisan Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act H.R. 4669
 - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work on Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) and applauds the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other federal agencies for continued improvements in forecasting and modeling.
 - Proactive pre-disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery funding assistance for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs including the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program.
 - ACWA members are dedicated to water use efficiency. ACWA supports EPA's WaterSense program and appreciates Congress' continued funding of the program. Additionally, ACWA encourages Congress to provide tax parity for water and energy efficiency programs.
 - Carbon free hydropower is a backbone of the electric grid. Numerous ACWA members generate or rely on hydropower as part of their operations. ACWA supports streamlining the federal licensing and re-licensing process for hydropower projects.



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ACWA ONLINE RESOURCES

EVENTS CALENDAR

www.acwa.com/events

INNOVATION BY ACWA MEMBERS

www.acwa.com/innovation

MEMBER TOOLS

www.acwa.com/resources/member-tools

- Priority Issues Bulletin
- ACWA Toolkits
- Federal Regulatory Chart

NEWSROOM

www.acwa.com/newsroom

- News Releases
- Member Submitted News
- Voices on Water (Blog)
- Newsletters (*ACWA News*)
- Water News (eNews)

OUTREACH PROGRAM

www.acwa.com/my-acwa/outreach-program

POLICY DOCUMENTS

www.acwa.com/resources/policy-documents

POLICY PRIORITIES & LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

www.acwa.com/about/policy-agenda

Note: Some resources are protected for ACWA member access only.

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