



PROVIDING SAFE DRINKING WATER AND PROTECTING WATER QUALITY IN CALIFORNIA

ACWA POLICY PRINCIPLES

Local water managers are on the front lines for providing high quality drinking water to Californians. ACWA's mission is to assist its members with this critical job by promoting the development, management and reasonable beneficial use of good quality water in a financially-sustainable and environmentally-balanced manner.

Beyond compliance with all relevant state and federal laws, ACWA's member agencies are committed to taking additional steps to ensure that public health and the environment are protected. The federal and state Safe Drinking Water Acts provide the framework for regulating drinking water and its delivery to the public. The federal Clean Water Act and California's Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act provide a framework for regulating water quality in waters of the state. Watershed stewardship is governed not only by the federal and state Endangered Species Acts, but also by considerations of water quality and water supply.

The protection of water quality is a critical aspect of water management in California. As public agencies tasked with supplying water for beneficial use, ACWA's members have a strong interest in ensuring the chemical and biological integrity of California's surface

and groundwater resources. In recognition of this fact, ACWA's Board of Directors has adopted policy principles that identify a healthy aquatic ecosystem and a reliable water supply as coequal goals for sustainable water management in California.

The ACWA Board also has supported a comprehensive approach to water management as outlined in ACWA's Statewide Water Action Plan. The SWAP's core principles were later adopted by the state in its California Water Action Plan. The goal of both plans is to provide safe, clean, affordable and accessible water for all Californians. The action plans acknowledge that disadvantaged communities, in particular, often struggle with providing safe, clean and affordable water because of a range of technical, managerial and financial challenges.

Public water agencies have unique responsibilities as stewards of public health and the environment and provide water for municipal and industrial uses, and/or for agricultural supplies. ACWA's member agencies go beyond existing standards to provide a level of safety and protection to the public they serve while collaborating with the regulatory agencies to ensure standards are developed appropriately.



“ACWA supports watershed stewardship activities that ensure a balance of beneficial uses, including preservation of and, when possible, enhancement of ecosystems.”

These Water Quality Policy Principles articulate the vision of ACWA member agencies relative to three core objectives.

- Providing Safe and Reliable Drinking Water for All Californians
- Promoting Watershed Stewardship and Protection of Source Water Quality
- Protecting Water Quality to Maximize Beneficial Uses and Protect Public Health

Water Quality Principles

1. ACWA member agencies are committed to protecting the public health by supporting reasonable legislation and regulations that have a sound scientific basis, by providing public education on water issues and by supporting watershed stewardship and associated source water protection.
2. ACWA supports a balanced, science-based approach for developing legislation and regulations, for water quality planning, for permitting and for enforcement efforts. This balanced approach includes the public water agencies' responsibility for and commitment to public health and the environment.
3. ACWA supports water agency involvement and the use of stakeholder processes in the development of new regulations, along with proactive outreach efforts on the part of regulators—such as rulemaking processes that allow for water agency input at all stages in the development of regulations—to ensure that regulations most effectively protect public health, water quality, the environment and the economic health of the state. Additionally, regulators should pursue creative collaborative approaches that can most efficiently protect water quality by engaging water agencies as potential partners in their efforts.
4. ACWA supports watershed stewardship activities that ensure a balance of beneficial uses, including preservation of and, when possible, enhancement of ecosystems.
5. ACWA is committed to working with the resource agencies to identify ways to streamline permitting related to watershed improvements to achieve higher benefits sooner for water supply and the ecosystem.
6. ACWA supports programmatic permitting to help enhance watershed efforts while protecting waters of California and the United States, both for projects and for follow-up maintenance activities.
7. ACWA supports the development of a robust set of state and local policies that incorporate water quality protections into land use decisions and management practices, as well as allowing for the management and capture of high-quality water such as flood and storm water. Source water quality for municipal uses should continue to be protected.

8. ACWA supports efforts that use the best available scientific data to inform the development of legislation and regulations. ACWA is committed to the protection of public health and supports reasonable legislation and regulations that provide meaningful opportunities for fiscally-responsible risk reduction based on a complete assessment of relative risk and costs to achieve such risk reduction. Decisions at all levels should be driven by the need to protect public health, addressing known health risks using the best scientific, technical and financial information that is available.
9. ACWA supports drinking water legislation and regulations at the state level that are adopted with a compliance period to mirror the federal process. There should be automatic adoption of new federal drinking water legislation or regulation until the state process can be completed and it is determined whether the new federal legislation or regulation is sufficient to achieve California's objectives.
10. ACWA members are committed to protecting public health by reducing contaminants in drinking water, considering factors including technical and economical feasibility.
11. ACWA supports a multi-faceted approach to protecting and improving water quality both in source waters and at the tap.
12. ACWA supports state and federal investments that advance the development of safe, cost-effective drinking water solutions for all Californians. State law recognizes a Human Right to Water and identifies domestic use as the highest use of water. ACWA supports state- and federal-financed programs that advance this objective.
13. Many water agencies have and are developing and implementing recycled water, advanced treatment and desalination projects as an important component of their water supply portfolios. ACWA supports efforts and initiatives that enhance the ability of California water agencies to develop new sources of supply.

ACWA'S Core Principles - Safe Drinking Water For All Californians

- The lack of safe drinking water in certain disadvantaged communities is a public health issue and a social issue that must be addressed. Water is deemed safe when it meets all applicable state and federal drinking water standards.
- There is no "one size fits all" solution for impacted communities. As acknowledged by the Governor's Drinking Water Stakeholder Group in 2012, "the best solution for each community will differ among a variety of options that are not limited to 'shared solutions.' For example, there will be areas where individualized and non-scalable solutions will be necessary."
- Effective solutions are more likely to be developed through collaborative processes that allow impacted communities and other stakeholders to play a role in the identification and implementation of solutions.
- State law recognizes a Human Right to Water by declaring it to be "the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes."
- State activities to implement the Human Right to Water must be administered in a manner that is transparent with reasonable opportunities for public input, and accounts for all public water systems' obligations and responsibilities to their customers and ratepayers.



ACWA Disadvantaged Communities Drinking Water Initiative Action Plan

Over 98% of Californians served by public water systems receive drinking water that meets all federal and state drinking water standards. However, many Californians, particularly those served by small water systems in disadvantaged communities, do not have access to safe drinking water. ACWA believes this is a public health issue and a social issue that must be addressed.

To improve drinking water in disadvantaged communities, the ACWA Board of Directors approved the creation of the ACWA DAC Drinking Water Initiative Task Force to develop an action plan that identifies solutions that are effective and reasonable. A Stakeholder Advisory Committee also was formed to assist the task force.

ACWA DAC Action Plan - Problems and Solutions

The DAC action plan identifies problems, solutions and ACWA actions in the categories of 1) informational

needs, 2) technical needs, 3) managerial needs and 4) financial needs. A diverse stakeholder advisory group, with participants from environmental justice organizations, local government, production agriculture and other sectors, informed development of the plan.

The plan emphasizes that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution and that state-led activities should be transparent and allow for public and stakeholder input.

ACWA actions identified in the plan include engaging with the State Water Resources Control Board to develop comprehensive information about affected communities and their needs.

Other actions include helping to increase awareness of existing resources and supporting creation of a “shared solutions” toolkit that could help communities achieve economies of scale through voluntary consolidation.

