

**American River Watershed Resilience Pilot Study
Watershed Network Meeting**

Date: February 10, 2025
Project name: American River Watershed Resilience Pilot Study
Project no: W8Y34200

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Attendees

Project Team

Name	Organization/Role
Ryan Ojakian	RWA
Jim Peifer	RWA
Raiyna Villasenor	RWA/SGA
Grace Kaufman	Valley Vision
Gretchen James	Valley Vision
Ibrahim Khadam	Khadam Consulting
Devyani Kar	Jacobs
Armin Munevar	Jacobs
Reed Thayer	Jacobs
Tapash Das	Jacobs
CJ Porter	Jacobs
Yassi Sarvian	Jacobs
Ann-Ariel Vecchio	Jacobs
Shannon Litchfield	Jacobs

Watershed Network

Name	Organization/Role
Catie Levenson	Nevada County Environmental Health
Craig M Locke	
Brian Wallace	ICEO – The Sierra Fund
Briana Bacon	Nevada County Resource Conservation District
Greg Jones	Nevada Irrigation District
Amy Irani	Nevada County

Name	Organization/Role
Ismael Canizalez	
Otis Wollan	President – American River Watershed Institute
Rebecca Guo	El Dorado Water Agency
Kristen Strohm	Wolf Creek Community Alliance (Grass Valley)
Kerri Timmer	Placer County Regional Forest Health Coordinator
Jeffery Lauder	Sierra Streams Institute
Paul Helliker	San Juan Water District
Dianna Suarez	
Vince LaPena	TEK Manager – Wilton Rancheria
Michelle St. Clair	Wilton Rancheria
Chris Brown	Sacramento Climate Coalition/Water Forum
Ted Rauh	Environmental Council of Sacramento
Elena DeLacy	Executive Director – American River Conservancy
Jordan Baxter	Hydrologist – El Dorado Irrigation District
Mark Egbert	District Manager – El Dorado & Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation Districts/Partner with EDCWA
Alex Gertiz	Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
Allison Hacker	Association Director – Central Sierra Headwaters Conservation – American River
Laura Rodarte	Placer County Water Agency, Water Forum, RWA, CABY
Aaron Zettler-Mann	Executive Director – South Yuba River Citizens League

Meeting Notes

Watershed Resilience Pilot

Ryan Ojakian

American Rivers Watershed Pilot is one of five programs being funded by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Each of these studies entail very different areas, but each are what we would describe as source watersheds.

This Pilot is a new attempt at approaching how we develop prioritization and projects for watershed resilience.

A description of five major steps for the Watershed Resilience Pilot includes the following:

1. Set the stage.
2. Explore hazards.
3. Assess vulnerabilities and risks.
4. Develop adaptation strategies.
5. Implement and monitor.

Armin Munevar

One of the major themes of the California Water Plan was watershed resilience and climate resilience within 48 watersheds across the state.

This project and process is based on watershed boundaries and will aim to explore climate hazards and assess vulnerabilities and risks. This applies not just to water supply but also to water for ecosystems, hydropower, water quality, groundwater wildfire, and flood management. This project also aims to develop adaptation strategies and implementation and funding strategies. This is a pilot study, so we hope to learn from everyone in attendance today.

Ryan Ojakian

The goal of having this group here is to encourage collaboration throughout this pilot and to get perspectives from a diverse group.

Prop 4 passed recently, and involvement in this process may improve participants' ability to obtain funding. One of the funds is \$100M for efforts similar to this pilot.

Solutions will require funding:

- Prop 4 climate bond
- Aim for working together to gain funding

State Highlighted Project – Dos Rios State Park

- “Opening Dos Rios is a game changer...it also provided a new model of a multi-benefit park that also reduced flood risk for local communities, provides a refuge for local residents during worsening heat waves, and restores the natural environment of the Central Valley to benefit local wildlife.” – California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot.

Introductions

Jim Peifer (RWA Executive Director)

Who is the Regional Water Authority (RWA)?

- Joint powers authority of 22 public water purveyors and 7 associate members
- 23rd year of existence
- Provides planning, programs, and advocacy for member agencies within the region
- \$180M in grant funding for RWA members to build resilient water systems

Mission

- “To serve and represent the interests of regional water providers and stakeholders for the purpose of improving water supply reliability, availability, quality and affordability.”
- Why should you care about this initiative?
 - Water supply challenges in the future due to climate change (decrease in snowpack, increase in temperature, and similar concerns)
 - Clean, safe, and reliable drinking water for residents of the American River Watershed

Old System New Climate

- 20th century infrastructure and mindset
- 21st century solutions needed

Climate Adaptative Water Management

- 98% of Earth's fresh water is in groundwater
- Sacramento Regional Water Bank – RWA project (<https://sacwaterbank.com/>)

Grace Kaufman

Introduction was provided to Valley Vision and Mentimeter tool that will be used for group engagement.

Mentimeter Interactive Tool

- In one word, why is water important to you?
 - Answers included life, sustainability, health, connectivity, etc.

Recap of Work to Date, Boundary, Gap Analysis, Historical Climate Hazards, and Initial Stakeholder Meeting

Ryan Ojakian

Representation of Our Watershed

- Consumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba (CABY) minus Yuba, including both the upper and lower American River Watersheds
- Proposed Pilot Project Area
 - Hydrologic watersheds of the American, Bear, and Consumnes Rivers
 - Eastside tributaries to the Sacramento River
- Meeting over Zoom as lowest barrier to entry for a group and area this large
 - Ryan emphasizes open door policy via phone/email/etc.

Gap Analysis

- Reviewed approximately 60 reports and studies, categorized by sector.
- We are not starting from scratch in this pilot study, but we do have gaps in areas like multi-benefit adaptation options and detailed feasibility assessments.

Jim Peifer

One of our aims is connecting with those who have been left behind in these conversations in the past, including Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and Tribal Nations.

Ibrahim Khadam

American River Basin Study

- Partners included water agencies, DWR, US Bureau of Reclamation, environmental agencies, and more.
- Study area is the American River watershed plus adjacent groundwater basins.
- Study objectives are water supply demands and supplies.
- Future changes in temperature is a key climate driver.
- Potential effects on water supply availability include the following:
 - More rain than snow and earlier snow melt
 - Increase in change of spills from Folsom reservoir
 - Earlier runoff reducing water supply
- Portfolio Planning Approach
 1. Stressors
 2. Vulnerabilities
 3. Adaptation measures and actions
 4. Screening and formulation approach
 5. Adaptation portfolios
- Adaptations focusing on local and Federal collaboration:
 - Upper forest management
 - Upper watershed storage to mitigate reduction in snowpack
 - Expansion of conjunctive use, or the coordinated use of surface water and groundwater
 - Flood-managed Aquifer Recharge
 - Ecosystem stewardship in the lower American River (Modified Flow Management Standard)

Rebecca Guo – EDWA

Upper American River Programmatic Watershed Plan

- Study Area
 - Upper American River watershed
 - Portion of Upper Consumnes watershed within El Dorado County
 - 54% is Federal land including 2 national forests
 - 6 counties
- Plan Goal is to establish a cohesive and shared vision for sustainably managing the upper American River watershed for long-term resilience and community prosperity
- Watershed challenges include natural capital, social capital, and built capital.
- Resource Management Strategies

Ryan Ojakian

Watershed Network – Organizational Structure

- Focus groups – water management, frontline and Tribal communities, resource management, and local government
- Project team – RWA, Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), Jacobs, Valley Vision, and Khadam Consulting

Watershed Resilience Vision Statement

Grace Kaufman

Proposed Vision Statements

- Statement #1
 - Accelerate water resource planning and actions in the watershed that support resilience, enhance environmental quality, maintain economic vitality, and provide benefits to our most vulnerable communities.
- Statement #2
 - Elevating quality of life for all including our most vulnerable communities through accelerating water resource planning and actions in the watershed that support climate resilience, environmental quality, and economic vitality.
- What about Vision Statement #1 resonates with you?
 - Chris Brown – at what point in this process will we be able to suggest feedback to these statements?
 - Grace – We do have the opportunity to provide feedback.
- What about Vision Statement #2 resonates with you?
 - Vince LaPena (Wilton Rancheria) – Balance between human needs to water as well as the environment because the environment does not have a voice to speak for itself. We should elevate communities to include wildlife and plant communities.
 - Brian Wallace – Maybe “voicing” the primacy of the “rivers” need and priorities themselves.
 - Chris Brown – Environmental health and viability is a broader approach than the words environmental quality.

Gretchen James

Do you have any other suggestions or additional comments?

- Amy Irani – In Nevada County, we are working on a county drought resilience plan; this pilot and vision could support this, so I appreciate and am glad to be able to participate.
- Brian Wallace – “To honor and restore the sacred relationship between people and Water, recognizing watersheds as living entities that have sustained us since time immemorial ...envisioning healthy watersheds where traditional stewardship practices work in harmony with contemporary needs, ensuring clean water for generations to come.”
- Rebecca Guo (El Dorado WA) – Create a resilient and sustainable watershed that enhances environmental health, maintains economic vitality, and provides benefits to our most vulnerable communities now and into the future.
- Ted Rauh – As one commentator raised, both statements must have balance articulated. Consider “enhance environmental quality while maintaining balance with economic vitality.”
- Jeff Lauder (SSI) – I think it's hard to do a vision statement this way without knowing how these decisions are being made and how our feedback will be incorporated and who will get the final decision.

- GJ – we are aiming to open this space to encourage people who may not have been involved previously.
- RO – we are still figuring out how we will make these decisions. I'm hearing that we need to better incorporate balance via comments from Vince and others.
 - JL (SSI) – Thanks, and wasn't meaning it as a critique: more of a question and suggestion! Thanks for the feedback opportunity and clarification!
- Brian Wallace – FYI... "Tribes and Tribal Communities" have a distinct "Political/Legal" relationship with the USA/State of California, etc...pre-dates them...not part of "Ethnic/Equity/Frontline Community"same as "local government, State, Fed. Govt" box...
- Vince St. Clair – We as human beings have a responsibility to take care of the watershed and all communities and plants/animals that depend on this water.
 - Jeff Lauder – we may also need to consider the impact of having certain wording in our vision statement in relation to getting funding from the current federal administration.
- Jim Peifer – The work that we have ahead of us will include work with the federal government. DWR is serious about engaging with DAC, tribes, and working to protect the environment.
- Aaron Zettker-Mann – The Yuba watershed provides a lot of water to the Bear Watershed, so we should also consider how "accelerate water resources planning" will affect neighboring watershed.
- Armin – This pilot will not be a decisional document with funding attached but will focus on getting input from the communities in the watershed. We do recognize that there are transfers across watersheds and it is our hope that neighboring watersheds will be able to develop.

Updated Vision Statement #1 – Accelerate water resource planning and actions that enhance resilience for people and ecosystems, sustain economic vitality, and benefit the environment and vulnerable communities by incorporating regional data, traditional knowledge, and community input.

- Ted – I don't see the balance with the environment with the phrase "sustain economic vitality" by itself.
- Chris Brown – Vision statements don't have to be limited to one sentence; we can revise to two sentences.
- Jeff Lauder (SSI) – I feel like "enhance resilience for people and ecosystems" and "benefit the environment and vulnerable communities" may get a little redundant? Maybe merge these somehow to get balance in there?
 - Elena Delacy – How about "balance economic vitality with benefits to the environment..."
 - Brian Wallace – Centering a "Regenerative" relationship" that is rooted in "responsibility"

Grace to create final draft of vision statement based on everyone's input and share with this group via email.

Ryan Ojakian

Next Steps

- Watershed resilience vision
- Further contact communication

- Next meeting is scheduled for Q2, but we have an open-door policy for communication between meetings:
 - Conduct vulnerability and risk assessment.
 - Develop adaptation strategies.
 - Develop implementation strategies.
 - Develop watershed resilience plans.

Questions

- Ted Rauh – could you provide all of us with a list of meeting participants and contact information so that members can share ideas? Will we have the opportunities to share input?
 - RO – Yes, we will coordinate on a participant list
- Jeff – Where should we share documents/resources to?
 - RO – Feel free to share resources with anyone on the project team. Devyani has shared contact information and project team to shared emails.

Project team introduces themselves. Ryan reminds attendees to contact Valley Vision team if there is interest in providing feedback to the team.