



El Dorado Water Agency Convenes Plenary with Public and Private Partners to Enhance Collaboration on Meeting Regional Water Needs

May 13, 2022, Placerville, CA -- Facing one of the worst droughts in California history, the El Dorado Water Agency (EDWA) convened a second Plenary session to further develop a collaborative effort among state and federal agencies, water agencies, local businesses, landowners, and county residents. The interactive discussion focused on ways to better manage existing water resources, develop new sources of water supply, and protect the region's watershed.

Don Ashton, El Dorado County's Chief Administrative Officer, kicked off the Spring 2022 Countywide Plenary for Water by discussing the recent large-scale challenges the county has faced in the last year, including the Caldor Fire and COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Plenary could not have come at a better time as El Dorado County, like many California communities, is facing an unprecedented drought, climate challenges, unhealthy forests, and the associated threats from wildfires," said George Turnboo, El Dorado Water Agency Board Member and County Board of Supervisor-District 2, where the Caldor Fire occurred. "The Plenary provided an opportunity for public and private entities to develop a common agenda that will address fast-changing climate conditions and changes needed to comply with government regulations. By working cooperatively, the Plenary provides a venue to pursue state and federal funding for wildfire prevention, water infrastructure repair and improvements, watershed management, and drought planning."

The participants agreed to formalize the Plenary with a draft charter designed to represent the interests of El Dorado County residents, and to pursue legislative, regulatory, and funding solutions.

"Through a collaborative group like the Plenary, there are significant advantages in collectively seeking grant opportunities and developing efficiencies to meet regulatory and statutory requirements," said Mike Thornbrough, El Dorado Water Agency Board Member and Board Member for Georgetown Divide Public Utility District.

Discussions at the Plenary addressed drought planning and watershed management, both of which are critical to ensuring the long-term resilience of El Dorado County communities. One

breakout session focused on implementation of Senate Bill 552 which is aimed at improving drought planning of small water suppliers. The group expressed concern over the ability of many small water suppliers and systems to meet the requirements required by the state and discussed consolidation as a possible solution.

The Plenary also addressed planning needed for the Upper American River Watershed to fulfill the vision of El Dorado County as a cohesive area that is ecologically, socially, and economically connected. Ideas included convening a cooperative group that covers the entire West Slope and focuses on multiple watershed topics, similar to the Tahoe Basin under the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Plenary participants shared a strong sense of urgency to act and recognized the need for policy changes, innovation, and collaboration to meet current and future needs of the county. The Plenary will formally meet again in fall 2022. to continue collaboration

About the El Dorado Water Agency

The El Dorado Water Agency celebrates more than 60 years of water resource planning and management, dedicated to ensuring that El Dorado County has adequate and affordable water to maintain economic prosperity, protect the environment, and support the rural-agriculture way of life for today and in the future. El Dorado Water Agency is a public agency created under the 1959 El Dorado County Water Agency Act.

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