

Fall 2022 Countywide Plenary for Water: Summary

The Fall 2022 Countywide Plenary for Water (Plenary) was held on November 16th, 2022, from 9 am to 1 pm at the Corker Building in the El Dorado County Fair and Event Center. The Plenary was convened by El Dorado Water Agency (EDWA) per the policies and guidance for implementation of the Water Resources development and Management Plan (WRDMP), a policy-level countywide water plan developed through collaboration and adopted by EDWA Board in 2019. The theme for the Fall 2022 Plenary was on “Building Community Resilience”.

Approximately 45 participants represented water suppliers, federal, state, and local agencies for resource management, agricultural and other business interests, and citizens in El Dorado County. A workbook containing the agenda and materials for discussion was prepared and distributed for convenience of the attendees and for future reference.

Lori Parlin, Chair of EDWA Board and County of El Dorado Supervisor, District IV, provided opening remarks for the event. Lori drew attention to the importance of the Plenary as a form to facilitate necessary dialogue for resource management for countywide benefits, embracing resilience through collective implementation, and continuing the momentum of work accomplished in recent years. Lori encouraged participants to work collaboratively on top priorities such as wildfire, drought, and economic development, including providing input at the Plenary event.

E. Joaquin Esquivel, State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Chair, gave a keynote address to Plenary participants. Joaquin discussed the significance of water management at a local level due to the diversity of California, provided background on the State Water Board’s role in California’s water management, and challenges for the State Water Board including handling California’s extended drought, implementing curtailments for the first time in California’s history, and providing support to local communities for wildfire recovery and aging water infrastructure maintenance. Based on recent travels and interactions with local leaders, Joaquin expressed optimism that California can overcome these water management challenges.

Following opening remarks and the keynote address, a panel discussion on *Building Community Resilience – It Takes a Village* was facilitated by Lisa Beutler, Senior Principal Facilitator with Stantec. Panelists provided their perspectives on how El Dorado County can build community resilience through collaboration of water resource and watershed management.

- **Ken Payne**, General Manager of EDWA, discussed the 2019 WRDMP as the strategic planning and new beginning for the agency. Noting significant impacts from climate change as well as changes in regulation, the 2024 update of the WRDMP is scheduled to start in late 2023. Additionally, EDWA has convened several subgroups established under the Plenary to address



Lori Parlin, Chair of EDWA Board, and County Supervisor, District IV, addressed the Plenary participants.



E. Joaquin Esquivel, State Water Resources Control Board Chair, provided the keynote address for the Plenary.

the ongoing and pending changes: Upper American River Watershed Group, County Drought and Water Shortage Task Force, County Small Water Systems Condition Assessment Advisory Group for implementing SB 552, and the basinwide group for the American River Basin Study in collaboration with US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation. Ken emphasized that all Plenary participants were invited for a reason and as a village need to work together to build community resilience.

- **Mark Egbert**, District Manager of the El Dorado and Georgetown Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), brought in his experience with long-term resource conservation efforts and his efforts in partnering with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and other state agencies to implement a Wildfire Resilience Task Force – Private Landowner Work Group. This task force for the Caldor Fire recovery is a pilot project of the Emergency Forest Restoration Teams established by pursuant to Governor’s California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. Additionally, the RCDs participate in the Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience Advisory Committee.
- Furthering the Spring 2022 Plenary discussion, **Aaron Wilcher**, Director of the Greater Sacramento, Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research, California Community Colleges, reported virtually on the April 2021 update of the economic contribution from working landscape in Greater Sacramento Region. Information from the 2019 statewide report was shared in the Spring 2022 Plenary. These reports are published by University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources in partnership with California Community Colleges Centers of Excellence and California Economic Summit. This regional update was the precursor of further collaboration with EDWA for county-specific information extraction and dissemination. It is anticipated these efforts will help project future labor force needs and complementary supporting actions by California Community Colleges.
- **Andrea Mackenzie**, General Manager of the Santa Clara Open Valley Open Space Authority (Authority), provided her perspective virtually on how working landscape and associated ecosystem services provide needed justifications for residents to approve the Open Space, Wildlife Habitat, Clean Water, and Increased Public Access Funding Measure (Measure Q of 2014, renewed by Measure T of 2020). These measures provide long-term sustainable funding for implementing natural-based solutions. This funding, which generates approximately \$8 million each year, has been integral to the Authority’s work. For the Agency-led watershed planning effort, options for sustainable funding to help implementing identified management actions are of great interest for all parties. Santa Clara’s example provided a window of possible means for sustainable funding and resulting outcomes for our considerations that would be further considered and customized for our needs and conditions.



John Thiel and Shelly Thomsen from South Tahoe Public Utility District were among the attendees.

After the panel discussion and a short break, teaser presentations were given for the Plenary participants to split into two breakout sessions: A) Post-Caldor Fire Recovery for Community Resilience and B) Working Landscape for Community Resilience. **Sean Barclay**, General Manager of Tahoe City Public Utility District, and **John Thiel**, General Manager of the South Tahoe Public Utility District, gave the teaser presentation “*Caldor Fire Impacts on the Tahoe Basin – A Perspective from a Tourism Destination Area*” for Breakout Session A. **Duncan MacEwan**, President of ERA Economics; **Charlene Carveth**, Agricultural Commissioner of El Dorado County; and **Ken Payne** gave the teaser presentation “*Agricultural Development Opportunities – A Case study for Envisioning the Resiliency Planning for Water and Watersheds*” for Breakout Session B.

Mark Egbert and **Yung-Hsin Sun**, Vice President with Stantec, led the discussion on the Post Caldor Fire Recovery for Community Resilience Breakout Group. The group discussed advice and best practices that El Dorado County could share with other communities that may suffer devastating wildfires in the future. The group reported out that they would encourage these communities to find creative solutions and to not shy away from asking more of others.

Ken Payne and **Rebecca Guo**, Principal Engineer with Stantec, led the discussion for the Working Landscape for Community Resilience Breakout Group. Participants discussed what investment and policies need to be in place to realize identified agricultural development opportunities and the benefits of a working landscape. There was consensus among the group to pursue ecosystem evaluation and natural capital valuation to communicate the value of the watershed.

Ken Payne concluded the Spring 2022 Countywide Plenary for Water by thanking everyone for their participation and expressing his excitement for continued work and collaboration with the Countywide Plenary for Water.



Charlene Carveth, El Dorado County Agricultural Commissioner, emphasized the importance of rural-agricultural economy to our way of life.



Mark Egbert, El Dorado and Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation Districts, encouraged project participation with long-term commitments in fire resilience maintenance as part of the recovery efforts.



Rebecca Guo facilitated the Working Landscape Breakout Group.



Yung-Hsin Sun facilitated the Post Caldor Fire Recovery Breakout Group