

2022 Priority Actions Midyear Review

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Status of high priority actions

The State Board's highest-priority actions to work on or complete in 2022 are listed below.

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1. Protect public health by ensuring reliable access to safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation.

1.1 Work to ensure state-regulated water systems meet drinking water and sanitation standards and Californians reliant on water systems not under state regulation (“state smalls” and private wells) know the quality of their water.

1.1.1 * COVID-19 and water and wastewater arrearage programs. Manage water system arrearage program. Complete payments to water systems and collect reporting information on arrearage fund usage and bill credits to customers. Ensure distribution of funds complies with statutory requirements, is equitably distributed to water systems to offset customer arrearages and is free of fraud. Collect and analyze data on the financial impacts of COVID-19 on wastewater systems. Create application process and guidelines for the wastewater arrearage program. Manage payments and collection or reporting information. [DDW, DWQ, DFA]

- *The Board adopted guidelines for the Arrearages Program in September 2021 and updated guidelines to include wastewater arrearages in January 2022. Staff released the application for wastewater arrearages on February 2, 2022, and began issuing payments in March 2022. All payments were issued by May 2022. Currently, staff are working on reviewing applicants’ final reports and accepting returned payments. Arrearages program work will be completed in the first quarter of 2023.*

1.2 Adopt and enforce standards for contaminants that threaten human health.

1.2.1 * Chrome VI. Adopt a Maximum Contaminant Level for hexavalent chromium, advance regulation package to OAL for adoption early 2022. [DDW]

- *Released an Administrative Draft in March 2022 and held public workshops April 5, 2022, and April 7, 2022. Reviewing comments and preparing Board briefing on comments. Updating costs in preparation for formal regulation package release.*

2. Protect and restore watersheds, marine waters, and ecosystems.

2.1 *Ensure surface water quality and management protects fish, wildlife, recreation, and other beneficial uses.*

2.2.1 * Temperature management for fisheries. Improve management of surface water temperatures to reduce fish mortality and improve watershed and ecosystem health in the Bay-Delta watershed, with a focus on the Sacramento River and Water Rights Order 90-5 compliance and emphasis on development of robust modeling and data to inform decisions, early and transparent planning, collaborative solutions, and where appropriate, consideration of additional, voluntary options that balance multiple beneficial uses. [RIGHTS]

- *On track and complete for this year, but will remain an ongoing issue each drought or dry year . This year Cal/EPA led efforts to develop a collaborative, stakeholder-led voluntary process and develop earlier modeling and information. However, the longevity of that process and how it will be implemented in future years is uncertain. Biological opinion coordination is also considering temperature*

2.3 *Protect—and where feasible, restore—aquatic and marine habitats.*

2.3.1 * Large habitat restoration permit. Adopt a general permit for large habitat restoration projects. [DWQ]

- *A draft permit and CEQA document was released for public review and comment on June 30, 2021 with comments due by August 13, 2021. Staff have reviewed comments and revising the permit and CEQA documents as appropriate. The Board will consider adoption of the permit at their August 16, 2022, board meeting.*

3. Increase statewide water resiliency in the face of climate change and other threats by expanding and integrating California’s water supply portfolio.

3.1 *Prepare for, respond to, and learn from drought.*

3.1.1 * Modeling and curtailment methodologies. Develop technical methodologies for managing supply and demand within the state’s existing authorities to implement California’s priority-based water rights system. Solicit public input, and update these methodologies as needed. Expand the

number of watersheds where staff have developed robust demand datasets and completed precipitation/climate models, so that stakeholders and the Board can better manage supplies during future drought conditions.

[RIGHTS]

- *On track and complete in a few key watersheds; pending budget includes funding and staff resources to expand the number of watersheds with robust demand datasets and models. Will remain an ongoing workload throughout the drought and after drought is over to update methods and tools, and to address other watersheds.*

3.1.2 * Refine water rights drought response. Engage with stakeholders to identify and communicate next steps, actions, and potential outcomes of implementing drought-emergency actions, including curtailment orders and other legal steps. Where applicable, develop and implement emergency regulations through issuance of curtailment orders or implement local voluntary solutions (if available). Develop and implement a water rights enforcement strategy for drought curtailments and related activities, including ensuring timely and comprehensive water use reporting. [RIGHTS]

- *On track (Delta, Russian River, Scott Shasta Rivers, Mill and Deer Creeks) and will continue to be significant ongoing workload for many years going forward. Ongoing implementation of voluntary solutions is significant during drought, uncertain if drought ends.*

3.1.3 * TUCPs. Respond to requests for changes to water quality requirements through review and consideration of temporary urgency change petitions. Respond to challenges to any approved or denied petitions in a timely manner. [RIGHTS]

- *On track and ongoing – adopted Bay-Delta TUCP in 2021 and addressed petition for reconsideration; new Bay-Delta TUCP received and approved in 2022, no petitions for reconsideration (but did get one on temperature). Other TUCPs received (Russian River, Woodland-Davis drinking water supply, Marin Municipal, Santa Cruz) and were processed on time (no petitions on those). Current workload is complete but will be ongoing through the duration of the drought.*

3.1.4 * Emergency flows for public trust resources. Where the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has submitted emergency fishery flow recommendations. Engage in a public outreach process to evaluate the impacts of implementing these measures through an emergency or voluntary process, and as necessary and authorized by law, develop emergency regulations to implement these flows. [RIGHTS]

- *Completed for Mill, Deer, Scott, and Shasta watersheds, which were the only four watersheds where the Board received emergency instream flow recommendations for CDFW. Will be ongoing throughout the duration of the drought emergency, and will require long-term investment of staff and resources once drought is over.*

3.1.5 * Prohibited water uses. Adopt and implement regulations for prohibited uses of water. Encourage water conservation as a drought response and take additional regulatory actions to compel conservation as needed and directed through emergency drought proclamations. [ORPP]

- *The State Water Board adopted an emergency regulation for prohibited uses in January 2022 and in May 2022 adopted an emergency regulation requiring water suppliers to implement Level 2 water shortage demand reduction actions and banning irrigation of non-functional turf. Staff provided extensive technical and policy support to the Governor’s Office on content and execution of executive orders and regulations. Enforcement process preparation and progressive enforcement for water conservation emergency regulations and urban water supplier monthly reporting requirements has begun.*

3.1.6 * Drinking water drought response program. Collect technical information from water systems to ensure they are implementing resiliency measures and that may have drought impacts to track their status. Follow-up for water systems that experience an outage, have a water shortage, or have a water shortage anticipated. Connect water systems to the resources they need to build drought resilience for future years. Implement strategy for water systems that do not meet source capacity requirements in conjunction with the implementation of the requirements of SB 552 (2021). Support water system source capacity planning studies, infrastructure enhancements, and where appropriate, actions such as mandatory consolidations or service connection moratoriums. [DDW]

- *Redesigned reporting portal to make part of SAFER Clearinghouse and improve reporting experience and data quality with public release March 2022. Updated framework for water systems to receive reporting orders and briefing offered to Board before new monitoring orders issued. SB 552 BCP approved and hiring two dedicated position to aid with implementation of 552 requirements. Planning for 552 reporting into Clearinghouse system.*

3.2 Increase resilience of local and regional water supplies.

3.2.1 * Direct potable reuse supply and source control and pretreatment. Develop Direct Potable Reuse Regulations by the December 2023 statutory deadline. Convene an expert panel to review the proposed regulations and

make a finding as to whether, in its expert opinion, the proposed criteria would adequately protect public health. Assembly Bill 574 (2017) requires the State Water Board to adopt uniform water recycling criteria for direct potable reuse through raw water augmentation on or before December 31, 2023. These efforts will support statewide source control and wastewater pretreatment programs for emerging contaminants of concern to protect recycled water uses, including direct potable reuse. [DDW, DWQ] (WRP 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 8.3.)

- *Expert Panel released preliminary findings and recommendations on draft DPR criteria. Staff will be considering the recommendations and preparing new draft regulations in response. Remain on schedule for adoption of regulations by Dec. 2023.*

3.2.2 * Infrastructure funding programs. Establish Board policies or priorities for the \$1.5 billion in State general fund infrastructure programs: i) drinking water (including PFAS funding); ii) wastewater; iii) groundwater cleanup; iv) water recycling; and v) cross-border water quality. Encumber a minimum of \$200 million of drinking water or wastewater funds by June 30, 2022. Develop policies and spending plans to use potential federal funding. [DFA]

- *Board amended the 2021/22 SRF Intended Use Plans at the March 15 meeting to prioritize and direct 2021 Budget Act funding for drinking water (\$650M) and wastewater (\$650M). SFY 2021/22 encumbrances are as follows: \$108M for drinking water, and \$102M for wastewater.*

Board adopted resolution at May 24 meeting giving initial direction on 2021 Budget Act funding for groundwater cleanup and water recycling.

Coordinated with CalEPA, Colorado River and San Diego Regional Water Boards, Legislature, DWR, U.S. EPA, International Boundary and Water Commission, California cities and counties near the U.S.-Mexico border, the Secretary of Environment for Baja California, the Secretary of Water of Baja California, representatives of the City of Tijuana, Water Francisco Bernal (Baja California), and the Government of Mexico to identify shovel-ready projects to meet the intent of the 2021 Budget Act to address water quality problems in the Tijuana River and the New River.

DFA has developed draft Intended Use Plans to describe use of the federal infrastructure funding (and State general fund money for PFAS); draft IUPs scheduled for public review and Board workshop in late July/August.

3.2.5 * Conservation. Adopt urban efficiency and water loss standards for urban retail water suppliers. These efforts implement the Make Conservation a Way of Life laws (Senate Bill 606 and Assembly Bill 1668, 2018) and Senate Bill 555 (2015). [ORPP] (WRP 2.1.)

- *Behind schedule. Staff has worked closely with DWR on its technical recommendations to the State Water Board on outdoor water use standards, and its report to the legislature recommending revisions to indoor use standards. Held workshops on water loss, wastewater impacts, and impacts to trees. Staff is about to being a second comment period for water loss and intends to complete the water loss standards this year.*

3.3 Support sustainable management of California's groundwater resources.

3.3.1 * SGMA. Implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Support local implementation and, where basin managers are unable or unwilling to meet the goals of SGMA, exercise appropriate authorities. Support the Department of Water Resources. Provide tools, resources, and incentives to encourage long-term drinking water solutions and water quality planning. Coordinate with the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Drinking Water Program, the Recycled Water Policy program, CV-SALTS, and the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, where appropriate. [ORPP] (WRP 3.1.)

- *Obtained positions and statutory change in budget. Basins could be referred to Board by DWR in the next months. Supported DWR by submitting public comment letters on five Groundwater Sustainability Plans to DWR in 2020 so far. The program plans to send public comment letters on an additional five plans this year. SGMA and GAMA staff co-developed a water quality analysis tool for SGMA implementation that shows which constituents should be considered and managed by plans in each basin.*

3.5 Use stormwater more fully and effectively to provide multiple benefits.

3.5.1 * Stormwater cost of compliance: Statewide Industrial General Permit. Release public review draft of the revised Statewide Industrial General Permit. Include an evaluation of use of the secondary maximum contaminant level for infiltration as part of the stormwater cost of compliance. [DWQ]

- *This analysis will be conducted during development the reissuance of the Statewide Industrial General Permit, which has been delayed as staff have been focused on the reissuance of the Statewide Construction Stormwater General Permit.*

3.5.2 * Site-specific objectives guidance for copper and zinc. Adopt guidance for Regional Water Boards to develop site-specific water quality objectives for copper and zinc using the biotic ligand model. The implementation of more

accurate site-specific water quality objectives will reduce the cost of compliance for municipal stormwater permittees. [DWQ]

- *DWQ staff will submit the draft guidance for external peer review by January 2023. Staff are considering use of an updated model, rather than the Biotic Ligand Model, based on recent work completed by US EPA.*

3.5.3 * Cost of municipal stormwater permit implementation. Adopt guidance for standardized cost reporting for the implementation of municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits as part of the stormwater cost of compliance. Information and data will be used by Regional Water Boards when issuing new permits and permit requirements. [DWQ]

- *Staff have developed a draft cost reporting breakdown and are working on developing an electronic reporting system. Staff anticipate release of a draft policy for public comment in Spring 2023.*

3.6 Manage the Bay-Delta to balance water supply reliability and a healthy ecosystem.

3.6.1 * Bay-Delta Plans: Implement the San Joaquin/Southern Delta Bay-Delta Plan, including the consideration of voluntary agreements. Complete the Sacramento/Delta update to the Bay-Delta Plan, including consideration of voluntary agreements. [RIGHTS]

- *Behind schedule, but significant progress made. Creation of Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced working group, draft biological goals, Notice of Preparation all within last six months. Ongoing as expected and within timelines described to board in December 2021. Sac/Delta staff report: working with VA parties to integrate governance, metrics, and outcomes. Also working on Scientific Basis Report. Anticipate some additional delay due to drought workload and continued work on VAs.*

3.6.2 * Legal Delta: water rights. Clarify, organize, and vet water right claims with points of diversion within the Legal Delta using stakeholder-driven “crowd correction” when possible and enforcement action when necessary. [ODW]

- *Significant progress made. Completed year-long investigation of allegations of unlawful diversion in the Legal Delta in cooperation with CVP contractor complainants; the resolution summary is currently under review by stakeholders. Implemented the Delta Dry-year Response Pilot Program; based on pilot success and persistence of drought, the program has been funded on a broader basis for water year 2023. Currently implementing the Delta Alternative Compliance Plan with first water use*

reports based on crop evapotranspiration of irrigated crops due on February 1, 2023; water users will link each point of diversion enrolled in the ACP with the related place of use in georeferenced, digital format. Reduced (and will soon eliminate) duplicative reporting under licenses and statements through collaboration with stakeholders. Filed Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to consolidate water use reporting periods and due dates and to clarify the requirement to notify the Water Board of changes of ownership of water rights/claims.

4. Strengthen internal capacity and systems to accomplish the State Water Board's mission strategically, transparently, equitably, and efficiently.

4.3 Manage data effectively.

4.3.1 * Modernize water rights data. By July 2023, develop stakeholder engagement process, release vendor solicitation, and secure vendor to implement the "Updating Water Rights Data for California" (UPWARD-California) project. UPWARD-California will modernize the state's water rights data management system, digitize paper records, and create a 21st century data system to help California respond to drought and ensure long-term water resilience. [RIGHTS] (WRP 22.7.)

- *Significant progress made. Secured \$30M in FY21/22. Vendor selection anticipated by September 2022. Solicitation released December 2021. 12 staff hired, consultant hired.*

4.4 Support evolution of organizational structures, processes, and culture.

4.4.1 * Racial equity. Maintain a cross-organizational steering committee and working group to address systemic, institutional, and individual racism at the Water Boards. In alignment with the Board-adopted racial equity resolution, develop an action plan to advance racial equity, both internally and in program implementation, and apply a racial equity lens to all actions in this work plan and the State Water Board's core workload not listed here. [Executive Office, Racial Equity Team]

- *In June, Executive Director Sobeck combined the Steering Committee and Working Group into Racial Equity Team to strengthen equity and collaboration. About half of the original team stepped down, and we onboarded 15 new members. Beginning in spring 2022, OPP notified tribal governments of the opportunity to consult with the State Water Board on our racial equity action planning efforts. In addition, Racial Equity Team leadership vetted and selected consultants specializing in justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, who led us through action plan scoping, visioning*

and strategizing. Informed by the board's resolution, we developed racial equity pillars and four strategic directions on which to base our action plan. Further, we have developed a document that outlines draft goals and actions and will serve as a starting point for the action plan. In May and June, the Racial Equity Team hosted two action plan feedback sessions for employees during our monthly racial equity support lunches. July 20-27 the Racial Equity Team, in coordination with OPP, is hosting four public workshops in different parts of the state to listen to feedback on our draft action ideas and to gather new ideas. Finally, the racial equity consultants have developed a draft toolkit that the Racial Equity Team will refine and distribute to staff to support them in applying a racial equity lens to their work.

4.4.2 * Workforce strategy. Take actions to ensure appropriate staffing, organizational support for staff, and opportunities for staff. [DAS, DIT, ORPP]

- *Reduce vacancies.* Reduce vacancy rate to 5 percent or less for State and Regional Water Boards.
 - *Progress has been made, but we have not yet reached the 5% goal. As of July 1, 2022, we are at an approximately 8% vacancy rate. Since June 1, 2021, we have filled 514 vacancies. Candidate pools remain generally deficient across all our classifications, both technical and administrative.*
- *Workforce and Succession Plan.* Develop a plan addressing staff recruitment, hiring, retention, program and cross-programmatic training, and leadership development, by February 2022. Other related actions include expanding the implementation activities of the recently established recruitment unit, and the internship and fellowship program.
 - *Significant progress has been made. The workforce and succession plans are undergoing a final editorial review, and should be ready later this summer. We have significantly expanded our recruitment unit efforts to include both in-person outreach efforts at various colleges and universities, as well as electronic outreach to colleges, universities, professional groups, and student associations. This additional outreach has included both professional- and diversity-related components. Our internship program is continuing. An internal mentorship program has been developed and will be rolled out to staff this summer as well.*
- *Water Leadership Program.* Expand program to include managerial and executive cohorts.

- *Program is going well. Participation by senior staff is lower.*
- *Telework policy and hybrid workforce strategy.* Develop and implement a long-term telework policy and solve associated space management challenges. Document effective procedures for remote supervision.
 - *The new CalEPA Telework Policy was approved by the Department of General Services in June 2022. We will be transitioning from our emergency telework program to the new long-term telework program in August 2022. We have been developing a hoteling program to convert offices and cubicles to hoteling stations on each floor of the CalEPA building, as well as in the Regional Board and Drinking Water offices, for staff to use when they come into the office. The rate of that conversion has largely been limited by equipment supply issues, such as docking stations and sit-stand desks, which the state as a whole is experiencing.*
- *HR Center of Excellence.* Complete tasks and milestones associated with the newly-established Human Resources (HR) Center of Excellence, in coordination with all CalEPA organizations, to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of HR programs and ensure the Boards put the right people, processes, and culture in place to achieve the State Water Board mission.
 - *Substantial progress has been made in standardizing our HR processes with the other CalEPA organizations. Work is continuing on this effort. We are in the process of collectively hiring a consultant to help us identify and implement further HR process improvements.*

4.4.3 * Fi\$Cal. Implement additional workflow processing changes in the Accounting Branch to improve use of California’s new financial management system, Fi\$Cal. Planned changes include additional staff training and development and preparation of written procedures to increase our adeptness with Fi\$Cal. These changes are intended to improve the timeliness of payment processing and help meet external due dates for monthly and end of year reporting commitments to the Department of Finance and the State Controller’s Office. Complete year-end close-out for fiscal year 2020-21 by January 2022. [DAS]

- *Although significant progress has been made in implementing Fi\$Cal, we did not meet the January 2022 goal. Improvements made have set us up to close year end earlier this year (anticipated to be Fall 2022), and be more timely with our real-time financial data. We are also getting caught up*

enough that we can now provide program staff with more timely expenditure data.

New workload, other accomplishments

DAS, DIT, EEO

- *Various actions related to switching from a primarily office-based workforce to a remote-based workforce. The have included:*
 - Working with the other CalEPA Agency Boards, Departments and Offices on the drafting and adoption of the new Agencywide Telework Policy.
 - New administrative requirements, such as the emergency telework plans and the new telework stipend program.
 - Switching to digital signatures on most of our internal and external accounting and procurement documents.
 - Procurement and distribution of IT equipment needed for routine remote work, such as laptops and docking stations for most of our staff.
 - Procuring and setting up software tools for all staff or remote work, such as Microsoft Teams, VPN, and AdobeSign.
 - Switching from physical phone lines to VOIP for all staff.
 - Reasonable accommodations related to both the COVID testing program as well as routine remote work.

Water Rights

- *Approved College Lake/Pajaro Water Right Application and hearing*
- *Coordination, collaboration with Attorney General's Office, Agency, and others on delta related litigation and operations (including voluntary agreements).*
- *SB 19 (stream gauging) technical report released to public in collaboration with Department of Water Resources, and Fish and Wildlife, and Dept of Conservation.*
- *Mono Lake amended licenses issued in October 2021*

- *Enforcement coordination, settlements with Attorney General's Office and others; enforcement actions (particularly drought related)*

DAS

- *Various actions related to the COVID pandemic and maintaining "normal" business operations. These have primarily involved our Human Resources, Business Services, Budgets, and Health and Safety staff, and have included:*
 - *Setting up, running and tracking the onsite COVID testing center and the at-home testing programs in the Regional Board and Drinking Water offices.*
 - *Implementing various workplace health and safety measures to address the effects of the pandemic, including the regulatory CalOSHA requirements that have been promulgated.*
 - *Weekly budget and human resources reporting on financial and staffing impacts of the pandemic.*

DFA

- *Amended the SRFs' Master Trust Indenture at March 15, 2022, meeting to ensure SRFs can track tax-exempt bond funds in compliance with federal tax rules; additional database and accounting programming should be completed by end of 2022.*
- *Processed grants for four projects identified in the 2021 Budget Act; one was a study of power delivery services and required extensive negotiations because it was a four-party agreement and required advance payment of funds.*
- *Developed draft guidelines for Prop. 68 Drinking Water Treatment Operations & Maintenance Funding Program and completed public review of draft guidelines.*
- *Completed re-organization of its Branches to consolidate its administrative staff into one Branch.*
- *Continued to work with CASA and WateReuse CA on the CWSRF management study report.*
- *Board adopted resolution at the April 19 meeting to authorize the Overflow and Stormwater Grant program grant application to US EPA and authorize implementation of the grant award; grant application in process; award expected in September.*
- *Cooperated with the State Auditor's Office in their audit of drinking water funding program and prepared formal response to their findings and recommendations.*

Summary of “non-priority,” core workload

DFA

- Quintupling the amount awarded in Orphan Site Cleanup Fund grants in response to increased need generated by USEPA/DWQ’s stalled case initiative to clean up contaminated soil and groundwater
- Encumbering \$350 million of the Cleanup Fund’s UST claims authority, given the concurrent demands of the arrearages program.
- Maintaining 50% increase in closures for UST sites under the Expedited Claim Account Program.
- Negotiating bespoke SRF agreements to align loan terms with municipal bond market debt issued by public agencies. (DFA, OCC)

Water Rights

- Review, evaluate, and process drought-related water transfers.
- Review, evaluate, and process water right applications.
- Review, evaluate, and process water right petitions and TUCPs.
- Implement and update the Board’s Cannabis Policy regional instream flow planning. Process cannabis SIURs.
- Water rights enforcement, annual water use reporting and failure to file workload.
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) certifications, amendments, compliance, and implementation.
- Temporary groundwater recharge (underground storage) water right applications.
- Water Quality Certification for the Lower Klamath (amendment) and subsequent implementation.
- Cannabis enforcement and coordination activities (Water Rights and Water Quality)

DWQ

- Winery order implementation.
- 401 Water Quality Certification permitting: Nationwide permits, CalTrans, High Speed Rail.
- Water Quality Petitions – Region 3 Agricultural order 4.0, Dairies.
- Compost order implementation.
- ILRP, Healthy Soils, Dairy Program management.
- VTP implementation.
- NPS Program Management including subgrant funding tracking and shifts.
- SMARTS & GeoTracker management and implementation.
- Border coordination – Need to identify a lead with retirement of Rich Breuer.
- MAA with DPR management – Need to identify a lead with retirement of Rich Breuer.
- Title 23 regulation updates for leak prevention.
- Underground Storage Tank cleanup closure petition and closure denial reviews.
- Beach Watch Program management including subgrants to coastal counties.
- Federal Grant management including subgrant management.
- Attorney General's Office support – e.g., PFAS and PCB data and information gathering, confidentiality agreements, etc.

DDW

- Response to wildfire impacted community water systems.
- Responding to small water system failures and non-drought outages.
- Issuing monitoring orders for public water system monitoring for PFAS contamination.

- Permitting new PFAS treatment systems for public drinking water supply wells above Response Level.
- Assuming regulation of water systems from returned Local Primacy Agency (County) programs. Returned: Amador 2020, San Diego 2022, Stanislaus pending decision 2022. Revoked: Inyo 2021.
- Reviewing recycled water engineering reports (Title 22 reports).

ORPP

- Emergency management.
- Training – non-leadership (leadership is mentioned in the list).
- Water use, conservation, and water waste reporting, data management, and analysis.
- Scientific peer review.
- Economics.
- Climate change coordination.

COMMS

SAFER

- Facilitated and coordinated, 11 public meetings, 341 participants
- Developed state-small and domestic-well funding program webpage
- Developed the SAFER Outreach and Engagement strategy
- Solicited applications for and selected a Funding Partner for the SAFER Outreach and Engagement strategy
- Created a multi-agency tribal drinking water tracker to share information between Indian Health Service, US EPA, DWR and SWB and held monthly meetings with these agencies
- Developed and implemented a metrics tracking system across all SAFER programs within the WB

- Redesigned SAFER webpages to improve people’s online experiences and provide clearer, stronger messaging
- Supported the communications rollout for the 2022 SAFER Needs Assessment, including social media and press release

Tribal Affairs

- Solicited consultation requests for the Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) and held three consultations regarding REAP. Responded to inquiries regarding REAP from 14 tribes
- Supported Tribal Summits for Regions 2, 6, and 9 and Tribal Beneficial Uses (TBU) hearings in Regions 4 and 5
- Presented regional TBU updates at the USEPA Reg 9 RTOC meeting
- Conducted two trainings for SWB staff, one was a Tribal Affairs Overview for the underground storage tank group, the other was a Traditional Ecological Knowledge training for tribal coordinators
- Further developed draft TBU Overview Document
- Updated TBU quarterly progress webpage. Created templates, instructions and calendar reminders for quarterly progress webpage deadline and tracker.

Communications Strategy, Media Relations and Issues Management

- Since Jan. 1, developed and wrote 27 press releases, 13 of which relate to drought or conservation
- Managed daily media queries and interview requests on state conservation actions (regulations), water rights actions (both regulations and enforcement), regional enforcement, cannabis enforcement, groundwater management, harmful algal blooms, SAFER program, drinking water emergencies and financial assistance, all of which have received heightened attention due to deepening drought
- Organized multiple media briefings to offer reporters a deeper understanding of drought and water resilience
- Developed several dozen talking points documents for board member appearances

- Provided proactive and reactive management around arising issues of concern, developing talking points with staff from across divisions and regional boards, and coordinating with Agency/GO
- Led communications rollout for the draft TMDL for Hexavalent Chromium, including a FAQs, press release, social media and embargoed media story that led the coverage
- Established new approach to larger communications rollouts that increases collaboration and coordination between OPA and OPP
- Supported messaging strategy and media management for the Drinking Water and Wastewater Arrearages Program, including three press releases (since fall 2021)
- Co-led the communications rollout for the Santa Susana Field Lab MOU with DTSC, including FAQs, mediation support, press release, media briefings and media management
- Lead ongoing communications rollout for monthly Urban Retail Water Supplier conservation updates
- Began the promotion of the board's financial assistance on several fronts, including support for and arrangement of board member participation in ribbon-cutting and groundbreaking events, press releases on the 2021-22 fiscal year and major projects, and coordination with U.S. EPA to jointly promote our assistance for disadvantaged communities and water resilience.

Digital Strategy

- Launched new Instagram and Facebook accounts to support drought and other Water Boards' communications
- Boosted the followers on the State Water Board's Twitter channel to 13.6K followers over the past year through curated and strategic messaging (a minimum of three tweets per day) that supports programmatic efforts and promotes drought resilience and conservation messaging
- Increased the influence of the Twitter channel as evidenced through more retweets, eagerness by commenters, and exponential attention to priority messaging, especially conservation (top tweet - 17K impressions, more than our follower base)
- Incorporated Spanish into some social media posts to increase the impact of conservation messaging and support SAFER outreach

- Launched and maintaining homepage slide carousel to better promote priority Water Boards projects
- Added/elevated social media icons in various locations on the website to increase followers
- Provided leadership and editorial input for creating (and recently updating) our racial equity webpages
- Redesigned drought webpages to improve people's online experiences and provide clearer, stronger messaging

Support for Regional Boards

- Managed all media appearances and queries for the nine regional boards
- Developed and prepared press releases on major enforcement penalties and board decisions

Emerging priorities

Proposed by divisions and offices in July 2022.

Tentatively categorized by themes, otherwise in no particular order.

1. Protect public health by ensuring reliable access to safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation.

- a. Develop proposed regulatory changes to drinking water and wastewater operator certification requirements. (DFA)
- b. Utilize the new Request for Qualifications process to identify and fund new eligible drinking water technical assistance providers to expand the capacity of the program. (DFA)

2. Protect and restore watersheds, marine waters, and ecosystems.

- a. Delta Conveyance (draft EIR anticipated July 2022). (Water Rights)
- b. Develop permanent (non-emergency) instream flows for the Scott River following recommendation received May 2021 from CDFW (on hiatus pending drought, resources). (Water Rights)
- c. Processing underground storage water rights applications and petitions. (Water Rights)
- d. Long-term efforts to implement instream flows on Mill and Deer Creek, including potential voluntary agreements. (Water Rights)
- e. Oil and Gas Program aquifer exemption review and concurrence and project by project reviews. (DWQ)

3. Increase statewide water resiliency in the face of climate change and other threats by expanding and integrating California's water supply portfolio.

- a. Develop policy options to consider and address sea level rise and other climate impacts in the permit processes and in the Board's coordination with the Coastal Commission. (ORPP)
- b. Expand Climate Resolution implementation to address disproportionate extreme hydrologic conditions and sea level rise impacts on BIPOC communities. Needs

assessments, for example, may need to be expanded to fully consider climate impacts, including impacts on systems of all sizes. (ORPP)

- c. Implement drought response funding, including funding Countywide and Regional Programs to support households served by state small water systems and domestic wells. (DFA)
- d. Recycled Water Policy implementation and aridification of California actions including stormwater capture and use and desalination project permitting. (DWQ)
- e. Once Through Cooling Policy Amendments - Amend the One-Through Cooling Policy to ensure compliance with the Policy does not negatively affect electrical grid reliability. (DWQ)

4. Strengthen internal capacity and systems to accomplish the State Water Board's mission strategically, transparently, equitably, and efficiently.

- a. Restructure the organization of the SRF Intended Use Plans; the IUPs have become a vehicle for a multitude of funding sources and trying to reconcile the sometimes competing/conflicting requirements of the sources is becoming problematic. (DFA)
- b. Develop online application portal for drinking water and wastewater operators. (DFA/DIT)
- c. Develop proposed regulatory changes to drinking water and wastewater operator certification requirements. (DFA)