

# Northern Tulare County Regionalization

## *Community Meeting*



SAFER Program – June 18, 2025

# Welcome and Local District Boards Roll Call

- Cutler Public Utility District
- Sultana Community Services District
- Orosi Public Utility District
- Yettem-Seville Community Services District
- East Orosi Community Services District

# Welcome & Introductions



*Johannus Reijnders,*  
*State Water Board*



SAFER Program – 2025

# Welcome & Introductions

## **State Water Board:**

- Bryan Potter
- Bridget Chase
- Adriana Renteria
- Caitlin Juarez

- Julia Glick
- Johannus Reijnders
- Aaron Dickinson
- Icelyn Yepez

## **Provost & Pritchard:**

- Maija Madec
- Ryan Jensen

## **UC Berkeley, UCANR:**

- Kristin Dobbin

# Meeting Agenda

- Welcome/introductions
- Recap project goals and comments received
- Governance structure
- Next steps



## Welcome & Introductions

### What We Welcome

- We welcome waiting to give your questions and comments until we reach the discussion portion for each section
- We welcome your comments
- We welcome speaking one at a time and using the microphone
- You can comment several ways: speak during the discussion, fill out a comment sheet for us to read out loud, or leave your feedback after

# Recap: Why We're Here & What We Heard

Johannus Reijnders



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# Project Purpose: Building a Stronger Northern Tulare County Regional Water Future

Our Shared Goal: Ensure every community in the region has long-term, sustainable, and affordable access to safe drinking water.

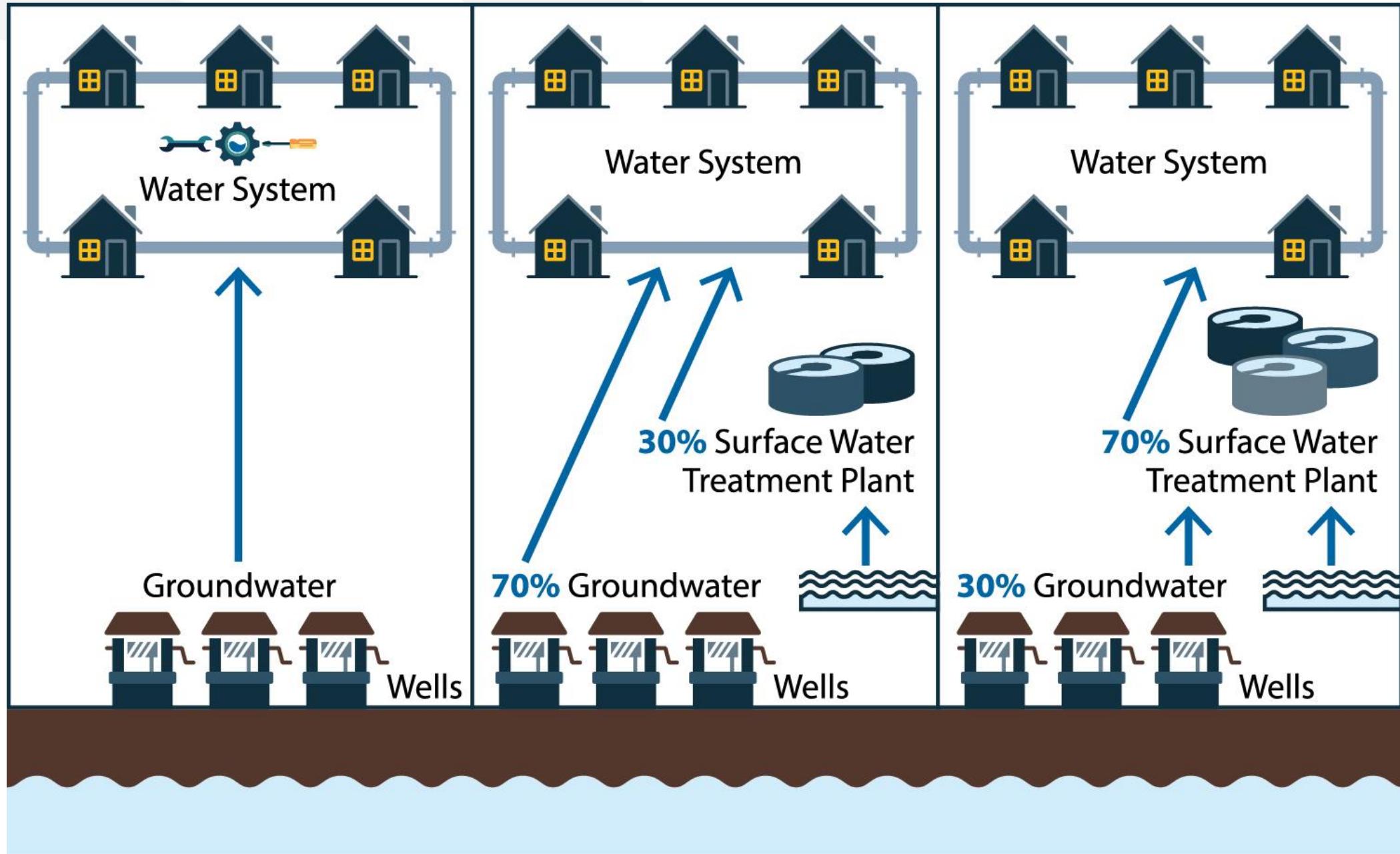
How the State Water Board can support:

- Create space for open dialogue to shape a shared regional vision
- Fund studies to explore drinking water solutions that benefit the whole region
- Share examples of regional governance partnerships that have worked elsewhere
- If there is broad interest, support the region in preparing a strong funding application
- Provide technical assistance help to take the next steps toward a regional drinking water solution

# What We Heard from the Last Meeting

The following topics were brought up:

- concerns of costs and funding, concerns around issues with pipes impacting water quality, a need for expectation setting within communities on the results/timelines of the projects, private wells, public education, engagement, and outreach.



# Governance Structure

Kristin Dobbin



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# Governance Discussion

Benefits, challenges and outcomes of any regionalization will be informed by:

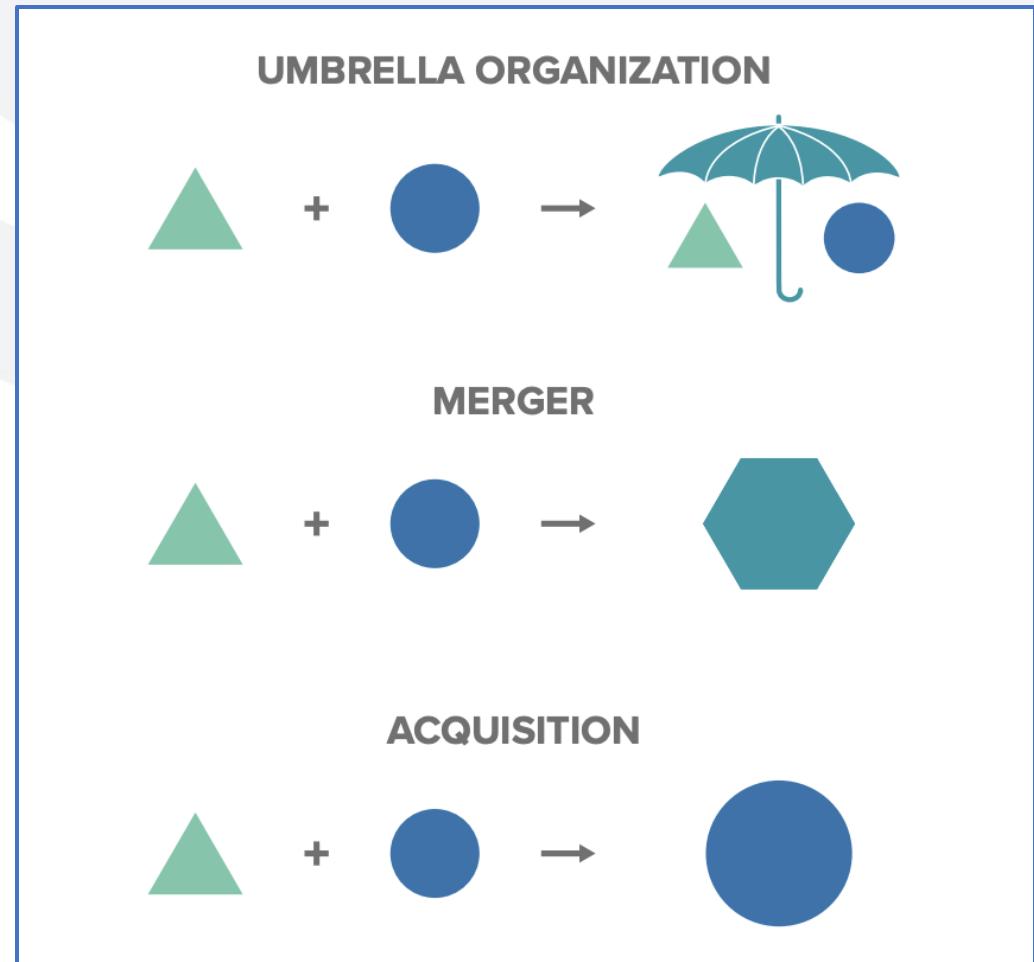
1. Project alternative selected
2. How the regionalization is structured
3. How the resulting entity is governed



Governance

# Governance Discussion

**3 options for structuring regionalization**



# Governance Discussion

## 5 options for the governing entity

1. Independent special district
2. Dependent special district (county service area)
3. Joint Powers Authority
4. Investor Owned Utility
5. Mutual Water Company

## Governance Discussion

**Q:** With so many different options/combinations possible, how do we choose?

**A:** Evaluate options based on community and region-specific needs and priorities

# Activity #1

*What are we trying to achieve?*

1. What are the most pressing challenges facing your community and water system today?
2. What would you most like to accomplish through regionalization?

# Governance Discussion

**Case study:  
Ukiah Valley  
Water Authority**



## Governance Discussion

# Ukiah Valley Water Authority

### Background

- 5 water systems (1 city, 4 county water districts)
- Managerial regionalization in 2024
  - Structure: Umbrella organization
  - Governing entity: Joint Powers Authority
- Previous regionalization attempts in 1990s and 2016

### Goals (Needs and priorities identified)

- Increasing drought resiliency by sharing water supplies regionally
- Reduce costs and share staff/resources
- Address inequities in water supply and drought impacts regionally
- Infrastructure improvements and upgrades

## Governance Discussion

# Ukiah Valley Water Authority

### Accomplishments

- Increased regional cooperation on shared challenges
- Increased ability to complete work “in-house”
- Professional development for staff
- Secured affordable agreement with chlorine distributor

### Limitations

- Large administrative costs of running 7 monthly meetings
- Increased demands on “same set” of board members
- Drought resiliency and increased service equity goals require physical consolidation

## Governance Discussion

# Ukiah Valley Water Authority

### In-progress work and next steps

- Completing SAFER funding application
- Exploring governance options for physical consolidation
- Unifying fees/rates across 5 water systems
- Establishing shared services agreements with neighboring systems

## Governance Discussion

# Ukiah Valley Water Authority

*“Just because it hasn’t worked in the past  
doesn’t mean it can’t work now.”*

# Governance Discussion

## Comparing options for structure

### Umbrella organization:

- Strengths: Can be used for collaboration when there are legal/financial impediments to mergers; Often less disruptive
- Challenges: Administrative redundancies; Can be less reliable long-term
- Example: Ukiah Valley Water Agency

### Merger:

- Strengths: Staffing and administrative efficiencies; Economies of scale savings; Longterm stability
- Challenges: Intensive creation process; Can impact other services
- Example: American Valley CSD

# Governance Discussion

## Comparing options for structure

### Acquisition:

- Strengths: Straightforward to implement (no reinventing the wheel)
- Challenges: Requires approval by regulators (LAFCo/CPUC); Limited governance options
- Example: Tahoe City PUD acquisition of Tahoe Cedars and Madden Creek systems

# Governance Discussion

## Comparing options for governance

### Special district:

- Strengths: Broad powers, direct representation of residents
- Challenges: Requires LAFCo approval
- Example: Cobb Area County Water District

### Joint Powers Authority:

- Strengths: Tailorable; Easier to create
- Challenges: More limited powers; Time intensive decision-making and often slower to act;
- Example: Woodland-Davis Clean Water Agency

## Governance Discussion

### Combining considerations – Example governance alternatives

1. Districts merge into a newly formed County Water District to manage all functions, 5 existing PUDs/CSDs dissolve.
2. Districts annexed into one CSD/PUD to manage all functions, 4 remaining PUDs/CSDs dissolve.
3. Creation of an umbrella organization via JPA to manage only shared infrastructure (treatment plant & wells), 5 existing PUDs/CSDs remain to manage local distribution, billing/accounts

# Governance Discussion

## Evaluation criteria

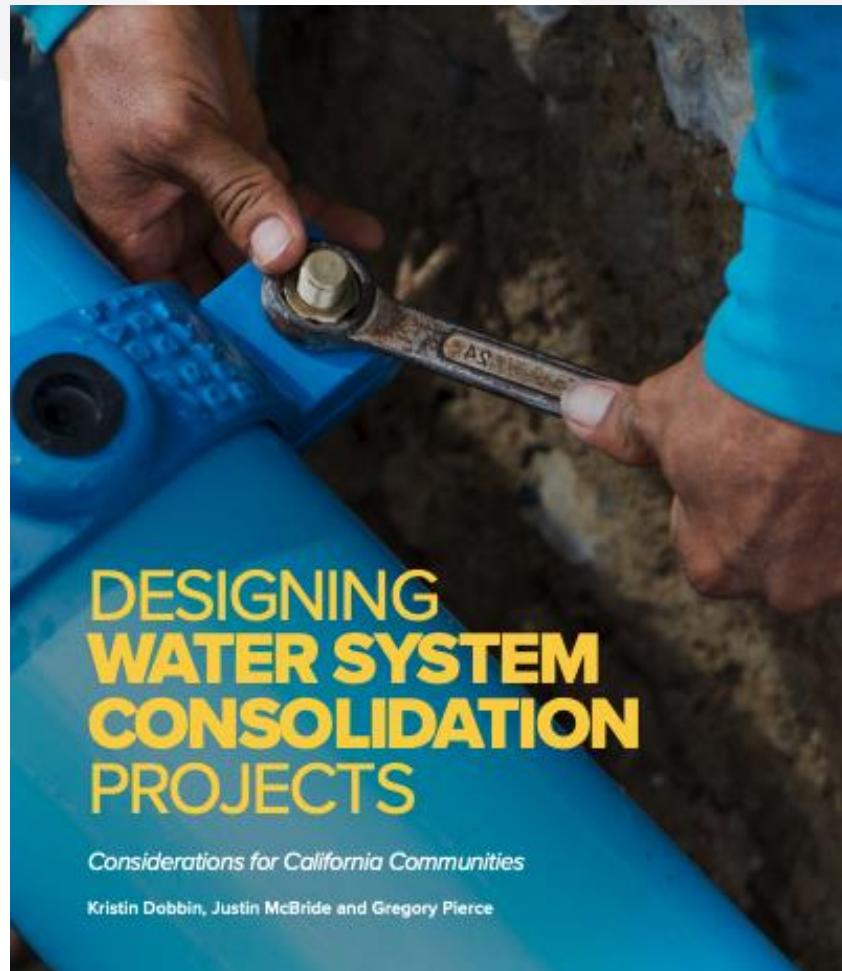
- 1. Access to safe, reliable drinking water
- 2. Scope of powers & authorities
- 3. Implications for other services & powers
- 4. Revenue & cost features
- 5. Technical, Managerial & Financial (TMF) capacity
- 6. Representation & transparency
- 7. Flexibility & administrative transaction costs
- 8. Sustainability & climate resilience
- 9. Affordability

Additional consideration: Grant/funding competitiveness

## Activity #2

### *Small Group Discussions*

1. Breakout Groups
  1. Assign someone to report out for your group
2. Discuss your assigned alternative using evaluation criteria and tool kit
3. Report out



Community Guide for Designing Water System Consolidation Projects explains evaluation criteria

**UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation**

## Designing Consolidations Tool Kit

Welcome! This tool kit is designed to accompany the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation [Designing Water System Consolidation Projects Guide](#) and Water System Entity Statutory Review (see Appendix A of guide). Here we feature our compilation of different exercises and resources intended to help stakeholders put the information provided into action. Each "tool" is presented as a stand-alone exercise targeting a specific phase or component of consolidation discussions as described below. We have included instructions for their use as we envisioned them but also encourage you to adapt and combine them to suit your own unique needs. Whether you are considering the feasibility of consolidation, discussing or fine-tuning a consolidation proposal, or implementing a consolidation project, we hope these resources assist you in designing the most locally beneficial solution possible. For questions, suggestions or assistance in using this tool kit, please contact Dr. Kristin Dobbin at [ktdobbin@berkeley.edu](mailto:ktdobbin@berkeley.edu).

**Tool kit contents**

- [Exploring potential partners](#) - This worksheet walks stakeholders through the process of identifying potential partners for consolidation. Use this tool if you are considering consolidation for the first time or if you are in the early stages of designing a consolidation project to make sure all potential partners are considered and included.
- [Identifying promising approaches](#) - This worksheet helps identify promising approaches for structuring a consolidation project based on the key challenges facing your community (now or in the future). Use this tool if you or others in your community have just started thinking about the prospect of consolidation or are unsure if consolidation is a good option for you.
- [Guided discussion questions](#) - Discussion questions organized thematically by the nine considerations covered in the guide. Use this tool to foster productive conversations among stakeholders anytime after one or more consolidation alternatives have been identified.
- [Evaluation tool for consolidation proposals](#) - An evaluation tool for consolidation proposals structured around the nine considerations presented in the guide. Use this tool to dig into the strengths and limitations of a specific consolidation proposal under consideration.
- [Side by side comparison tool](#) - A worksheet designed to directly compare two consolidation proposals using the nine considerations presented in the guide. Use this tool when you are trying to choose between consolidation alternatives or narrow down options.

Designing consolidations tool kit includes worksheets and discussion questions

# Next Steps

Johannus Reijnders



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# Next Steps: Process & Timeline

- **FALL 2025**
  - Finalize governance decision
  - Engineering Report process begins
    - If the communities commit to move forward, the State Water Resources Control Board MAY fund the Engineering Report
    - How much will it cost to operate and maintain the system
    - Preliminary rates study
  - Creation of governance entity that will apply for funding
  - Completion of funding application: design of solution and environmental impact analysis
  - Created governance entity develops and submits construction funding application

# Next Steps: Meetings

- **AUGUST 2025**

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> joint community meeting will take place on **Aug 27** in **Cutler**. Narrowing down between the preferred alternatives and governance structures.
- Report outs from each of the participating water boards.
- Please reach out to [SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov) with any questions about this meeting or this project.

- **DECEMBER 2025**

- The 4<sup>th</sup> joint community meeting will take place on **Dec 9** in **Sultana**.
- Confirming community alignment around: preferred alternative, governance structure, and community interest.
- Please reach out to [SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov) with any questions about this meeting or this project.

## Q & A

# How to Continue the Conversation

- Drop off a **comment card** at your local water district's office.
  - Take a comment card home with you today.
  - Fill one out at your local water district's office.
- Email: [SAFER@Waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:SAFER@Waterboards.ca.gov)
- Online Form: <https://bit.ly/saferntc>

# Closing Meeting Local District Boards Roll Call

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