



2026-2030 Strategic Plan

June 6, 2025 Final Draft

About the Water Agency

El Dorado Water Agency was created in 1959 by California State Legislature under the El Dorado County Water Agency Act for leading water resources development and management in El Dorado County. The county covers 1,075,076 acres of Sierra Nevada foothills with nearly 200,000 residents living throughout its predominately rural-agricultural setting and with abundant natural amenities. For more information, visit: <https://www.edwateragency.org>.

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Cover: South Fork American River at Mosquito Bridge⁺

Page 1: Water Agency Board of Directors⁺

Pages 2-3: Fannette Island in the Emerald Bay of Lake Tahoe⁺

Pages 4-5: Equestrians in Cronan Ranch near Pilot Hill⁺

Pages 6-7: Swimmer's Rapid of the South Fork American River⁺

Pages 8-9: Charred trees in snow along Highway 50 near Echo Summit⁺

Pages 10-11: Mushrooms from Forest Floor Farming in Pleasant Valley⁺

Pages 12-13: El Dorado Countywide Plenary for Water in Spring 2024⁺

Pages 14-15: Kokanee Salmon in Taylor Creek, Lake Tahoe⁺



Adapting for the Future, Together

In 2018, the El Dorado Water Agency set out with a bold goal: to lead the way in modernizing how we manage water in our county. We knew that real change would take teamwork—so we insisted on principals of collaboration to ensure our shared success to steward this vital resource.

Today, our work is more important than ever. Our communities are facing big challenges—from extreme weather like droughts, wildfires, and floods, to new regulations, shifting economies, and growing public expectations. In recent years, our county has seen firsthand how quickly things can change, and how deeply those changes can impact our environment, economy, and daily lives.

These impacts are not just local. Our actions need to consider the future needs of our own communities while also recognizing our important role as the steward of the headwaters which contribute to the statewide water supply and general well-being of all Californians.

That's why the Water Resources Development and Management Plan was created as a roadmap to help residents, local governments, and water managers stay ahead of disruptions and prepare for whatever lies ahead. This plan has already made a difference. But we know more is needed.

As we continue this journey, we've updated our Strategic Plan to reflect what we have learned and where we are headed next. We are doubling down on what matters most: protecting our water, supporting our rural and agricultural communities, planning for the future, and strengthening our partnerships for coordinated and cooperative actions. We look forward to another fruitful five years of progress with a renewed commitment to proactiveness and collaboration.

Lori Parlin, Chair
El Dorado County
Supervisor,
District IV

George Turnboo,
El Dorado County
Supervisor,
District II

Brian Veerkamp,
El Dorado County
Supervisor,
District III

Nick Haven,
South Tahoe
Public Utilities
District, Director

Pat Dwyer,
El Dorado
Irrigation
District, Director

Introduction

The El Dorado Water Agency (Water Agency) underwent a major reform in full force with the completion of the 2019 update of the Water Resources Development and Management Plan (WRDMP), which called for the Water Agency to refocus on its responsibilities provided by its authorizing legislation, the 1959 El Dorado County Water Agency Act (1959 Act). The Water Agency and its Board of Directors (Board) recognized that these significant changes will require persistent effort and periodic adjustments to ensure success. The Board also acknowledged the significant amount of time required to establish trusted relationships and build momentum with in-county and out-of-county parties to advance countywide interests and develop a shared water future for El Dorado County. Accordingly, the Water Agency embarked on a systematic progression of change over the past decade.

Three foundational documents control the Water Agency's investment and actions:

- **1959 Act** – Provides the Water Agency with the responsibility to lead countywide water resources development and management to supplement the efforts by individual entities including water purveyors, municipalities, and conservation districts – each with their own roles and responsibilities.
- **WRDMP** – Updated in calendar years ending in 4 and 9, outlines the integrated and collaborative approach to fulfill the Water Agency's mission. The WRDMP has 11 broad resource management strategies with associated actions that rely on coordinated implementation by partners consistent with their individual roles and responsibilities, yet all contributing to a shared water future. Serving as the water plan for the county, the WRDMP also defines the Water Agency's five implementation programs based on its role and responsibilities, consistent with the Board-adopted WRDMP implementation policies and guidance, as well as other pertinent policies.
- **Strategic Plan** - Updated in calendar years ending in 0 and 5, provides goals and prioritized objectives for near-term actions over the next five fiscal years. Organized by the five WRDMP implementation programs, the plan adapts to changed conditions and ensures continued progress toward the Water Agency's mission.

This 2026-2030 Strategic Plan (SP30+) is the outcome of close collaboration between the Water Agency's Board and staff. It reflects the progress and lessons learned over the past five years of WRDMP implementation based on the goals and prioritized objectives of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan (SP25+). For the SP30+, the Board highlights the importance of substantiating partnerships among key agencies and organizations, and anchoring investments and actions to the Water Agency's mission and corresponding role and responsibilities for implementing the WRDMP 2024 Update (WRDMP24).



WRDMP 2029 Update (WRDMP29)

An anticipated next-generation countywide water plan — proactive and refined with regional details, and built on strong partnerships at the regional, state, and federal levels.



2026-2030 Strategic Plan (SP30+)

Set goals and prioritized objectives for WRDMP24 implementation with a focus on regional planning in the West Slope and Tahoe Basin, coordinated advocacy, and expanded partnerships and collaboration.



WRDMP 2024 Update (WRDMP24)

Reflected progress and changed conditions including post-fire recovery, and incorporated outcomes from watershed planning efforts and regional drought planning.



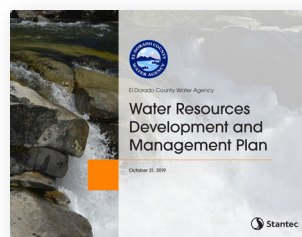
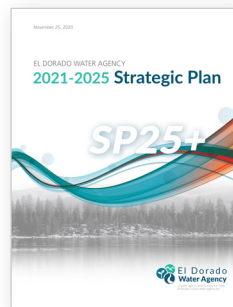
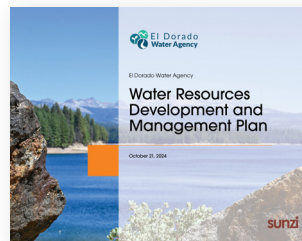
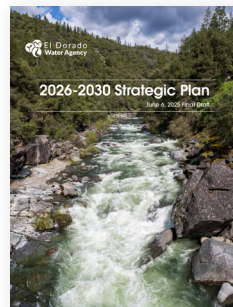
2021-2025 Strategic Plan (SP25+)

Set goals and prioritized objectives for WRDMP19 implementation with an emphasis on drought resilience planning and supporting watershed management issues.



WRDMP 2019 Update (WRDMP19)

Set a new direction to modernize water resources management in El Dorado County based on integrated water resources management and collaboration.



Major policy changes like the Water Agency's reform will take 10 to 15 years to mature assuming adequate resource investment and guidance. The Water Agency will improve the coverage and depth of WRDMP's resource management strategies with a recursive approach to refine major elements at pace with available resources and consistent with prioritized objectives provided by Strategic Plans.



Our Mission

Ensuring that El Dorado County has adequate and affordable water, through collaboration, to support economic prosperity, watershed health, and the rural-agriculture way of life for today and in the future.

Our Vision

Be the leader to develop a countywide resilient and affordable water future that is plentiful for our needs, consistent with the County General Plan, and based on principles of integrated water resources management and collaborative implementation.

Our Core Values

- **Serve Countywide:** Be the steward of headwater resources for countywide needs, our preferred rural-agricultural way of life, and its statewide significance
- **Proactive and Innovative:** Elevate countywide water resources development and management with proactivity and innovation
- **Collaborate for Success:** Commit to the shared responsibility to cooperate and collaborate with our partners for better outcomes
- **Fiscally Forward:** Assert responsible, forward-thinking financial management to support the Water Agency's mission and implementation
- **Focused and Adaptive:** Stay focused on the Water Agency's goals and objectives with agility and flexibility for adapting changes

Goals and Prioritized Objectives

The Water Agency's Board identified a series of goals and prioritized objectives for the next five years. Goals are outcomes the Water Agency intends to achieve to support its mission, and prioritized objectives are specific key steps that the Water Agency needs to take to advance the identified goals in the next five years.

To streamline the Water Agency's WRDMP24 implementation, the goals and prioritized objectives are organized by its five implementation programs (IPs) plus one supporting internal operational goal. The Board worked with the General Manager and staff as a team to refine and clarify these goals and prioritized objectives based on the SP25+ implementation experience and considering enhanced consistency and harmony with the Board-adopted policies and guidance.

The Water Agency staff will develop and implement actions to advance these goals and prioritized objectives, monitor the progress, and provide regular reporting to the Board for updates and guidance on continued implementation.



Coordination, collaboration, and cooperation to achieve countywide benefits is the foundation of the Water Agency's Water Resources Development and Management Plan and is sustained by respecting each other's roles and responsibilities.



IP1: Governance and Partnership

The Governance and Partnership Program focuses on how the Water Agency will function throughout WRDMP implementation to create countywide benefits for El Dorado County. The extent of this program is defined by the Water Agency's authority and includes the Water Agency's involvement to support governance and partnerships that advance the WRDMP's Resource Management Strategies. This includes coordinating or sharing complementary management activities, executing partnership agreements, and supporting state and local programs that have significant benefits to countywide water resources management and community resilience.

Goal

Be a leader and representative for countywide water interests in regional, state, and federal programs, initiatives, and negotiations in coordination with water managers, cities, County, and other interested parties in El Dorado County.



Prioritized Objectives

- a. Establish durable partnerships through formalized agreements with individual entities or collectives, where applicable, that are purposeful and built on a shared understanding of each other's interests, roles, and responsibilities.
- b. Cultivate and expand partnerships with regional, state, and federal governments and entities to advance headwaters and rural community interests in economic viability, watershed health, and community resilience.
- c. Facilitate partnerships with in-county land use, water, and other resource managers, small water systems, and rural communities to advance shared interests and implementable solutions in rural headwater counties.
- d. Integrate the expertise of the Water Agency in the development and implementation of policies and ordinances for the County General Plan for government efficiency and alignment.



IP2: Water Security

The Water Security Program focuses on the Water Agency's efforts to prepare El Dorado County for both projected needs and uncertainty of climate and regulatory conditions. This program is the highest priority and most significant program for the Water Agency, commensurate with the Water Agency's role to ensure proactive planning and actions to secure a reliable and resilient water supply that is plentiful for our needs, consistent with the County General Plan, and based on principles of integrated water resources management and collaborative implementation. It encompasses water management actions to be collaborated with water purveyors and fills the gap for countywide economic development consistent with the County General Plan. It also includes measures to support human rights to water and to mitigate drought and water shortage vulnerabilities for small water systems and rural communities.

Goal

Safeguard the sustainable countywide water availability of, access to, and safe use of an adequate, reliable, and resilient quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, ecosystems, and productive economies.



Prioritized Objectives

- a. Secure and protect water rights and contracts for countywide water security needs and rural source-watershed interests.
- b. Develop a long-term West Slope water blueprint and implementation roadmap for water right and contract acquisition, development of regional surface water storage and conveyance, and supporting policies and operating agreements.
- c. Develop a long-term Tahoe Basin water blueprint and implementation roadmap for water right acquisition, groundwater basin management, regional infrastructure development and operations, and supporting policies and coordination with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.
- d. Align system-specific and regional drought preparedness and emergency response actions within the county and facilitate dependable partnerships among regulatory and implementation authorities to reduce drought and water shortage vulnerabilities, particularly for small water systems and rural communities.
- e. Incorporate regional and statewide benefits, to the extent feasible, in water project and infrastructure development to facilitate broad support and cost-sharing opportunities.



IP3: Watershed Management

The Watershed Management Program includes initiatives and actions of the Water Agency in areas of stormwater and flood management, forest and meadow restoration, and wildfire resilience to support long-term water supply resilience, drought and flood resilience, and water quality protection for El Dorado County. The program is based on the recognition that long-term water resiliency is intrinsically tied to watershed health and nature-based solutions are imperative to provide greater public benefits and durability. The Water Agency has broad authority through the 1959 Act to engage in watershed management actions that support water supply, water quality, and flood management. The resulting socioeconomic benefits from proper management of working landscapes in the headwaters can be realized in communities locally, as well as those throughout the state if not globally.

Goal

Promote a multi-benefit approach to watershed management for healthy ecosystem functions, fire risk reduction, and integrity of headwaters for water resiliency.



Prioritized Objectives

- a. Implement the Programmatic Watershed Plan of the upper American and Cosumnes river watersheds in the West Slope, including landscape-scale watershed management actions and stormwater resources management in accordance with the Board-adopted policies and guidance.
- b. Support Tahoe Basin watershed management consistent with existing plans and management to improve watershed health and community resilience.
- c. Develop data, tools, and information to support advocacy for state and federal investments commensurate with the significant and broad benefits provided by the headwaters in El Dorado County.
- d. Cultivate and expand partnerships through regional programs with an emphasis on benefit-sharing among upstream and downstream watersheds.
- e. Support the County and interested parties in leveraging working landscapes as part of the agricultural and recreation economy in El Dorado County.



IP4: Assistance and Innovation

The Assistance and Innovation Program aims, through technical and financial assistance, to incentivize innovation and capacity building in water resources planning and management that advances WRDMP implementation and Board-adopted policies. To expand the Water Agency's capacity of assistance, this program also includes the Water Agency's actions, individually or in partnership, to acquire alternative funding including donations, grants, and other financing mechanisms that are within its authority.

Goal

Encourage the development and use of innovative approaches and tools in water resources planning and management to promote multi-benefit outcomes and countywide water resilience.



Prioritized Objectives

- a. Foster public water education and social awareness about the importance of sustainable water management in El Dorado County and beyond, and support opportunities for broad public participation.
- b. Implement the Water Agency's grant program to incentivize the modernization of water management practices and information acquisition to support WRDMP implementation in a fiscally-responsible manner and in accordance with Board-adopted policy.
- c. Pursue alternative funding through all viable venues allowable under the Water Agency's authority such as appropriation and assistance from state and federal governments, non-profit organizations, impact investments, and foundations.
- d. Explore opportunities in creating new, or enhancing existing, funding mechanisms at federal, state, and local levels in coordination and collaboration with responsible parties.



IP5: Communication and Advocacy

The Communication and Advocacy Program focuses on building unified and consistent communication and advocacy among in-county entities, interested parties, and partners on implementable resource management solutions commensurate with our headwater, rural agricultural setting. This program includes the Water Agency initiatives and actions to develop, facilitate, and promote effective communication and advocacy at state and federal levels for implementable water resource management solutions.

Goal

Coordinate countywide communication and advocacy efforts related to water resources to foster collaboration and coordinated advocacy for countywide water interests.



Prioritized Objectives

- a. Promote state and federal water policies to recognize our headwater interests and downstream statewide benefits, and to support water management solutions that are implementable and economically viable for rural foothill communities.
- b. Create understanding of countywide and regional perspectives and mutual interests through strategic advocacy and partnerships.
- c. Anchor the Water Agency's in-county communication and engagement on the Countywide Plenary for Water per adopted guidance to advance productive collaboration for WRDMP implementation.
- d. Expand effective communication and outreach to increase public awareness and foster water stewardship.
- e. In collaboration with the County, agricultural businesses, and local communities, support communication and advocacy for a cohesive countywide agricultural economic strategy.



Internal Operational Program

The Internal Operational Program will provide the necessary resources to sustain the Water Agency's internal operations to fulfill its mission and advance the IP goals and prioritized objectives.

Goal

Deliver actions to advance the Water Agency's mission with a sustainable organizational structure in a transparent and fiscally-responsible manner.



Guided by Board-adopted policies and guidance, the Water Agency's five implementation programs are mutually supportive to provide stable and outcome-based implementation.

(Source: WRDMP24)





Prioritized Objectives

- a. Develop an annual balanced budget plan to support the Water Agency's actions for responsible countywide water resources management and proactive consideration of future needs consistent with the County General Plan.
- b. Provide periodic reporting for transparency and accountability on the Water Agency's financial projections, progress in meeting SP30+ goals and prioritized objectives, and anticipated change management.
- c. Explore and pursue alternative funding sources and/or mechanisms proactively and innovatively to augment existing financial resources and thus expand the Water Agency's capacity to serve countywide.
- d. Foster a supporting and safe working environment and maintain a sustainable organizational structure for the Water Agency to ensure passion, continuity, and stability of its services.



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