

General Manager Report

February 18, 2026

North Sac River Corridor

- **Five-pillar framework** guiding coordination:
 - Information Sharing → Joint Analysis → Mutually Beneficial Activities → Coordinated Outreach → Issue Resolution
- **Key technical priority:** Interconnected Surface Water (ISW) — understanding groundwater/surface water interactions at basin boundaries, especially along the Sacramento River
- **ISW Work Plan** in draft: will outline data collection, monitoring, and modeling activities to support Periodic Evaluations due to DWR in **January 2027**
- **Modeling coordination** underway, including use of DWR's C2VSim fine grid regional model
- **Next steps:** GSA coordination meeting in late February; public workshop in Chico likely **April 2026**
- **Bottom line:** Early-stage but structured process — relationships and shared data are the near-term deliverables; formal agreements to follow if/as needed



Water Commission (Feb 4)

- **Chair and Vice Chair selected**
- **Updates:**
 - **Well Ordinance Update** – there will be a stakeholder committee helping to draft new ordinance...stay tuned.
 - **Dry Wells** – there will be a presentation at an upcoming Water Commission hearing by hydrogeologist.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

DONNA BAYLISS, DISTRICT 1
TOVEY GIEZENTANNER, DISTRICT 2
AIMEE RAYMOND, DISTRICT 3
FRED MONTGOMERY, DISTRICT 4
MAUNY ROETHLER, DISTRICT 5
DISTRICT WATER LANDOWNERS
MATTHEW TENNIS
PETER RYSTROM
PRIVATE WELL LANDOWNERS
DAVIN ARVONEN
GEORGE "ERNIE" WASHINGTON

5. REGULAR AGENDA

- a. **Hydrological Conditions Update (Kelly Peterson, Water and Resource Conservation)**

Staff will provide an overview of recent hydrological conditions.

Action Requested - None, information only

- b. ***Update on SGM Grant Funded Projects in the Vina and Wyandotte Creek Subbasins (Christina Buck, Water and Resource Conservation)**

Staff will provide a high level update on the status of the grant projects and expected project completion.

Action Requested - None, information only

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- c. **Priorities and Activities of the Water Department in 2026 (Kamie Loeser, Water & Resource Conservation)**

Staff will provide an overview of the priorities and activities of the Water Department in 2026.

Action Requested - None, information only

6. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Staff will provide updates on the following topics:

- a. **County of Butte Groundwater Sustainability Agency / Shallow Well Installation Access Agreements**
- b. **Feather Ridge Estates Water Systems Improvement Project**
- c. **Integrated Regional Water Management**
- d. **Tuscan Water District Update**
- e. **Well Ordinance Update**
- f. **Drought Resilience and Outreach Project (DROP) Grant Implementation**
- g. ***Other Sustainable Groundwater Management Updates**

Sustainable Conservation

Sustainable Conservation

SC is actively seeking **pilot sites** for on-the-ground recharge projects with multi-benefit focus (drinking water, habitat, flood risk reduction)

Near-term & Long-term

Two project types of interest for TWD:

Recharge basins with ecological benefits — SC may have construction funding; deliverables include landowner guidance document and case study

Flow-Through Basins (FTBs) — developed through DWR's Watershed Studies; multi-benefit approach for flashy small creeks; SC will help seek funding and produce a case study

ON-FARM RECHARGE METHODS MANUAL

A summary of strategies and challenges

Prepared By:
Sustainable Conservation

Funded By:
California Department of
Water Resources

August 2023




Sustainable Conservation

Sites Reservoir – Update

Jerry Brown, Executive Director

“A society grows great when old men and women plant trees in whose shadow they shall never sit.”

Greek Proverb

- **What it is:** Off-stream reservoir west of I-5 near Maxwell; captures high Sacramento River flows — up to **1.5 million acre-feet** of storage; first major upstream water storage project built in California in 60 years
- **Why it matters:** California faces a projected loss of ~4 million AF/year over the next two decades; Sites is a key piece of the state's water supply strategy
- **Design advantage:** Off-stream and rain-fed — no river damming, no salmon habitat disruption
- **Cost & funding:** ~\$7 billion total; state/federal sources (Prop 1, Bureau of Reclamation) cover ~1/3; 22 participating water districts finance the remainder
- **Status:** Draft water right order expected imminently — a critical project milestone
- **Timeline:** Construction begins **early 2027**; ~7-year build; 1,000–1,500 peak construction jobs; Barnard Construction awarded first major contract

Sacramento Valley Groundwater Recharge

Working Group Update

The problem: State Water Board's 90/20 diversion criteria is widely seen as unworkable — too intermittent, difficult to forecast, and limits practical recharge opportunities

MBK's alternative diversion criteria proposes a "green light/red light" approach based on cumulative seasonal flow rather than daily flow thresholds:

- Divert when cumulative water year flow exceeds the **historical 80th percentile**
- Stop when it drops below the **50th percentile**
- Same December–March season and 20% daily flow cap as 90/20

Results across 7 Sacramento Valley streams (2000-2022): Alternative criteria yields 2-4x more diversion days and 2-3x greater annual volumes compared to 90/20

Next steps: Seeking pilot studies; DWR technical assistance funding may be available. NCWA pursuing groundwater recharge legislation in 2026

Hurdles: State Water Board acceptance and potential environmental group protests remain key obstacles

Butte County TAC

WY2025 Water Use Increase

Total groundwater extraction jumped to 273,300 AF in WY2025, up roughly 30,000 AF from WY2024 (243,300 AF), despite WY2025 being classified as Above Normal—the same as WY2024. That's a significant year-over-year swing. Given that WY2025 had fewer extreme heat days than some recent years, what's driving the increase? Is this a real change in pumping behavior, or could it reflect a methodological or data-source change?

Good question. It was discussed at the TAC meeting and will be described in writing in the report narrative.

Table ES-2. Vina Subbasin Total Water Use by Water Use Sector					
Sector	WY 2025				
	Groundwater (AF)	Surface Water (AF)	Total (AF)	Percent of Total Water Use	Total Sector Area (ac)
Agricultural	240,200	25,800	266,000	89%	75,500
Municipal	18,400	--	18,400	6%	--
Rural Residential	14,700	--	14,700	5%	n/a*
Total	273,300	25,800	299,100	100%	
Percent of Total Water Use	91%	9%	100%		

Table 3-1. Vina Subbasin Groundwater Use by Water Use Sector		
Sector	WY 2025 (AF)	Percent of Total Groundwater Use
Agricultural	240,200	88%
Municipal	18,400	7%
Rural Residential	14,700	5%
Total	273,300	100%

Table 3-2. Vina Subbasin Surface Water Use by Water Use Sector for WY 2025			
Sector	Diverted (AF)	Applied (AF)	Percent of Total Surface Water Use
Agricultural	28,800	25,800	100%
Municipal	--	--	0%
Total	28,800	25,800	100%

Table 3-3. Vina Subbasin Total Water Use by Water Use Sector					
Sector	WY 2025				
	Groundwater (AF)	Surface Water (AF)	Total (AF)	Percent of Total Water Use	Total Sector Area (ac)
Agricultural	240,200	25,800	266,000	89%	75,500
Municipal	18,400	--	18,400	6%	--
Rural Residential	14,700	--	14,700	5%	n/a*
Total	273,300	25,800	299,100	100%	
Percent of Total Water Use	91%	9%	100%		

Butte County TAC

Cumulative Storage Change Estimate

The report shows cumulative storage at -327,310 AF after three consecutive Above Normal or Wet years (WY2023–2025). While the annual numbers show recovery, the cumulative figure still seems high given the favorable hydrology. What can be done to increase confidence in this estimate? Are there independent checks—such as comparing storage estimates against observed water level recovery across the RMS network—that could help validate the number?

As the report will describe, the change in storage numbers are indeed based on observed water levels. The larger issue of increasing confidence in the estimate can also in part be addressed through the periodic evaluation work. Let’s discuss more.

Table 4-1. Vina Subbasin Groundwater Extraction, Annual Groundwater Storage Change and Cumulative Change in Storage			
Water Year & Type	Groundwater Extraction (AFY)	Annual Change in Storage (AFY)	Cumulative Change in Storage (AFY)
2000 (AN)	246,600	-41,000	-41,000
2001 (D)	245,200	-40,800	-81,800
2002 (D)	248,900	-30,300	-112,100
2003 (AN)	223,500	-83,900	-196,000
2004 (BN)	267,200	144,100	-51,900
2005 (AN)	198,400	-38,800	-90,700
2006 (W)	214,400	48,700	-42,000
2007 (D)	288,400	-151,700	-193,700
2008 (C)	297,100	-18,900	-212,600
2009 (D)	263,000	20,700	-191,900
2010 (BN)	232,700	-17,600	-209,500
2011 (W)	196,500	-2,100	-211,600
2012 (BN)	261,000	-75,700	-287,300
2013 (D)	287,600	-53,000	-340,300
2014 (C)	293,000	-112,600	-452,900
2015 (C)	260,900	16,800	-436,100
2016 (BN)	205,100	37,200	-398,900
2017 (W)	185,000	140,300	-258,600
2018 (BN)	211,400	-73,900	-332,500
2019 (W)	198,600	106,700	-225,800
2020 (D)	266,600	-109,400	-335,200
2021 (C)	267,980	-120,400	-455,600
2022 (C)	278,700	-90,700	-546,300
2023 (W)	242,000	70,200	-476,100
2024 (AN)	243,300	104,500	-371,600
2025 (AN)	273,300	44,290	-327,310
Average*			
2000-2024 (25 years)	244,900	-14,900	
W (5 years)	207,300	72,800	
AN (4 years)	228,000	-14,800	
BN (5 years)	235,500	2,800	
D (6 years)	266,600	-60,800	
C (5 years)	279,500	-65,200	
GW = Groundwater			
Positive values indicate inflows to the groundwater system and negative values indicate outflows from the			
Water Year Types Classified According to the Sacramento Valley Water Year Index:			
AN = Above Normal, BN = Below Normal, C = Critical, D = Dry, W = Wet			
* Averages of each water budget component for the entire 2000 to 2023 period, and for different water year types within this period			

Butte County TAC

Storage Change Graph – Historical Record

We've raised this previously: the groundwater storage graph currently begins at WY2000, which misses important context. The period from roughly 1985–1994 included eight Below Normal, Dry, or Critical years out of ten, followed by a basin recovery during the wet years of the mid-to-late 1990s. Showing that full cycle would demonstrate how the basin has historically responded to prolonged stress and subsequent recovery—context that's directly relevant to evaluating current conditions and the adequacy of sustainability criteria. Can we extend the graph back to the mid-1980s for the next iteration?

The TAC discussed this and agreed that a longer time frame is helpful for context and understanding longer term trends. This input will influence Periodic Evaluation work, but the Annual Report figures will likely remain unchanged in this year's version since sourcing the data for the extension back in time would take additional effort beyond the scope of the annual report effort.

