

## WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

# Federal Legislative Priorities: 2021

### Top Priorities

1. Support administrative or legislative actions to secure funding to help public water systems defray the cost of monitoring and/or remediation of PFAS in drinking water supplies, including “polluter pay” provisions that allow for full cost-recovery by drinking water and wastewater providers.
2. Support low-income customer assistance for those affected by COVID-19 and to have that assistance be administered directly to water agencies.
3. Support increased funding for water-related grant programs such as WaterSMART or Title XVI.
4. Support the reprioritization of resiliency within the Defense Communities Infrastructure Program.
5. Oppose legislative attempts to classify the entire family of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as a hazardous substance without having the proper regulatory requirements clearly met and without the best available science and peer-reviewed research to support it.

### Water Supply Reliability

#### *The Bay-Delta and Conveyance Project*

- Support a Delta conveyance project as well as other policies that recognize, maintain and advance the “co-equal goals” of providing a more reliable water supply for California while also protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.
- Support programs and policies that address the multiple stressors impacting the health of the Delta, including but not limited to:
  - ✓ Water quality.
  - ✓ Wastewater discharges.
  - ✓ Invasive species.
  - ✓ Non-native species.
  - ✓ Predation.
  - ✓ Climate change.
- Support a new Delta conveyance system that:
  - ✓ Contributes to improving the aquatic environment within the Delta to address fishery issues, preservation of native species, and restoration of habitat.

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- ✓ Improves water supply reliability within the Delta and outside the Delta, and allows for better water management and planning for the 25 million California residents who are currently dependent upon the Delta.
- ✓ Provides for improved water quality, with respect to reducing exposure to salinity and naturally occurring organic compounds.
- Oppose legislative or regulatory attempts to either delay or stop the building of a new Delta conveyance project.

### **Storage**

- Support administrative/legislative action, funding and low-interest loan programs for new surface and groundwater storage in California.

## Local Resource and Supply Development

### **Desalination**

- Support additional federal funding for desalination projects.
- Support policies to streamline the regulatory approval process of desalination projects.
- Support research and policies that minimize environmental impacts and reduce the energy use of desalination projects, and develop emerging technologies that will make desalination projects more cost-effective.
- Support continued funding for Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program.
- Support an amendment to the WaterSense Authorization that disallows certification for devices that degrade water quality.

### **Potable Reuse**

- Support policies that treat potable reuse water as a resource and not as a waste, including the possibility of a statutory definition that accomplishes this.
- Support additional federal funding for both direct and indirect potable reuse projects.
- Support for expanded use of indirect potable reuse that continues to protect water quality and human health.
- Support additional research and regulations of direct potable reuse and how to safely and effectively expand its use.
- Support streamlining of permitting to increase the use of potable reuse water statewide to meet state policy goals.

### **Resource Planning and Management**

- Support legislation to authorize and direct the Secretary of the Department of Interior to implement the Drought Contingency Plans for Colorado River consistent with the seven Basin States' related agreements.
- Support legislation to advance the Lower Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan.

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- Support funding authorization for continued implementation of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Plan
- Support policy initiatives that encourage the use of the most current scientific data and analysis to provide enhanced flexibility for water project operations.
- Support administrative/legislative actions that facilitate drought preparedness and drought response projects and programs while maintaining environmental protections.
- Support administrative/legislative actions that improve opportunities for water system staff training and certification.

## Water Quality

### *Quality*

- Support administrative and legislative actions that utilize current science and reflect appropriate cost/benefit analyses to protect public health and to protect and improve water quality from unacceptable risks of various constituents, which include but is not limited to:
  - ✓ Utilizing current occurrence and health effects data,
  - ✓ Developing analytical methods and laboratory capacity,
  - ✓ Providing adequate implementation schedules and funding for treatment and mitigation measures to comply with any new regulatory standards,
  - ✓ Applying the “polluter pays” principle to address contamination,
  - ✓ When appropriate, using the Toxic Substances Control Act to help control the use of chemicals in commerce.
- Support legislation or administrative actions to reduce pharmaceuticals in wastewater and receiving waters through take-back and other source control programs
- Support efforts to promote and secure funding for septic to sewer conversion projects that mitigate impacts to groundwater and surface water supplies.
- Support watershed-based management and point source pollution control programs that protect and improve surface and groundwater water quality for urban and agricultural uses, as well as the environment.
- Support water quality policies and timely regulatory decisions based on sound science and are cost-effective.
- Support continued federal assistance to upgrade water treatment systems.
- Support legislative and administrative efforts to adopt cost-effective, science-based drinking water regulations to help ensure the protection of human health, and maintain or improve water quality from constituents of emerging concern.
- Support policies that provide economically feasible and environmentally sound solutions to both agricultural and non-point source run-off.
- Support authorization for USEPA’s continued oversight of water and wastewater system security through vulnerability assessments and other risk management plans.

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- Oppose efforts to legislate water quality standards that are more appropriately promulgated through the scientifically sound regulatory process.

## Environmental Stewardship

### *Regulatory Efficacy*

- Support measures that achieve science-based regulatory goals while improving regulatory certainty and predictability in the processes – including environmental review under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).
- Support USEPA Science Advisory Board reform to allow for greater participation from industry stakeholders as well as state and local government officials.
- Support administrative/legislative actions for environmental compliance (e.g., air, water, hazardous materials and waste, and health and safety) that provide regulatory compliance flexibility, improve clarity and workability of the requirements, and promote consistency and reduce regulatory duplication, while protective of public health and the environment.
- Oppose legislation, rulemaking or guidance that increases federal jurisdiction of waters, and expands the definition of Waters of the U.S.

### *Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation*

- Support administrative/legislative actions that provide funding and regulatory assistance for regions affected by drought and/or shifting climate conditions for both immediate and long-term water projects that aid in the development, storage, treatment, and delivery of water.
- Support administrative/legislative actions that protect SWP, Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA), and local water supplies from the impacts of climate change and enhance their long-term reliability.
- Support the voluntary inclusion and development of cost-effective renewable energy in the delivery and treatment of water supplies and wastewater.
- Support policies that encourage the voluntary development of diversified local water portfolios and that take into consideration the greenhouse gas emissions associated with those supplies.
- Support policies that recognize, support, and credit the role of water conservation and water use efficiency in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### *Endangered and Invasive Species Management*

- Support comprehensive modernization of the Endangered Species Act that offers integrated multi-species approaches to habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement consistent with principles of best available science, adaptive management, and flexible implementation.
- Support efforts within the current federal Endangered Species Acts to increase operational flexibility while maintaining regulatory and statutory protections for listed species.

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- Support administrative/legislative action and funding to improve information about listed fish and wildlife species and water project operations in the Delta, including data collection, scientific understanding, and real-time monitoring of listed Delta species.
- Support legislation, actions, and funding for controls, mitigation, and elimination of invasive species, including quagga mussels and striped bass.

## Finance, Taxes, and Governance

### *Finance*

- Support efforts to obtain federal funding or an appropriation to cover all or some of the remaining costs on the North Perris Basin Project.
- Support a well-managed, responsible congressionally directed funding (earmark) process, including work plan funds added by Congress to augment the Administration's annual budget request.
- Support measures to reduce the cost of planning, financing, construction, and rehabilitation of water infrastructure projects, such as dams, water conduits, pipelines, canals, pumping and power plants, and associated facilities. Potential financing mechanisms may include but are not limited to, tax-credit financing, tax-exempt municipal bonds, an expanded Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (WIFIA), Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), or Environmental Infrastructure Accounts.
- Support legislation to reauthorize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) state revolving fund to address the growing need for critical water, wastewater, and recycled water infrastructure
- Support for updating the State Allocation Formula within the state revolving fund to recognize increased needs and population growth in California.
- Support administrative or legislative actions to increase issuance of revenue bonds for Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund low-interest loans to reduce state funding backlog; and reduce the lien parity, limitations on future bond issuance, mandatory bond reserve requirements, and other burdensome loan application requirements for agencies with high credit ratings (AA or better).
- Support efforts that seek to bring federal sources of funding to California for water infrastructure development and energy efficiency measures through water management.
- Support funding and administrative or legislative efforts to increase drought resiliency on the Colorado River and Bay-Delta systems.
- Support authorization for federal grant funding for energy efficiency and storage projects, including programs to reduce greenhouse gases and develop renewable resources.
- Support administrative/legislative actions that would provide federal funding or reimbursement for water utility infrastructure expenditures to improve redundancy and reliability.
- Support federal funding for the research and development of technology innovation programs in the water sector and expanded coordination with community technology associations.

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- Oppose legislation that would add duplicative and burdensome reporting requirements on public entities receiving federal grants.
- Oppose legislation, rulemaking, or guidance that unnecessarily increases the cost of water delivery, storage, treatment, and management, without additional funding or other regulatory relief provided by the federal government.

### *Taxes*

- Support legislation or administrative actions to provide that gross income does not include the amount of water conservation rebates.
- Support legislation to modify the U.S. tax code to facilitate the use of tax credit bond financing by water agencies for recycling, desalination, and groundwater remediation projects as well as tax-exempt municipal bonds and other funding mechanisms to reduce the cost of water projects.
- Support efforts to re-instate the tax-exempt status of advance refunding bonds.
- Support administrative/legislative actions to improve supply chain reliability for water treatment chemicals and achieve tax-exempt status for all water treatment chemicals.
- Oppose legislation or administrative actions to limit or eliminate tax-exempt bonds or other financing mechanisms that could be utilized to finance water infrastructure.

## Water-Energy Nexus

### *Renewable Energy*

- Support administrative/legislative actions that facilitate the development of new renewable energy resources, including pumped hydroelectric energy, provided that consideration is given to transmission limitations, cost, and portfolio availability.
- Support renewable energy legislation that acknowledges biosolids and biodiesel from fats, oils, greases, and biogas (digester gas) as eligible renewable energy sources.

### *Energy Storage*

- Support development of energy storage to optimize distributed generation.
- Support incentives to make battery storage more cost-effective and technologically superior.

## Human Resources

### *Labor Relations*

- Support greater employer flexibility to maintain a safe and drug-free workplace.
- Support measures that promote efforts to advance workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Oppose any legislation that would reduce local authority to resolve public employee disputes or impose regulations of an outside agency.

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- Oppose laws and regulations that unfairly penalize employers.
- Oppose any measure that would grant employee benefits that should be decided at the local bargaining table.
- Oppose measures that would require municipalities to pay erroneous retirement benefits.

### ***Retirement/Pensions***

- Support proposals which would increase the portability of government pension and deferred income plans, including by allowing Section 457 transfers to purchase retirement service credits, and which would relax limits on contributions to and benefits from such plans.
- Support proposals to repeal or reduce the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision which reduce the amount of Social Security benefits received by many Federal, state, and local government retirees and their spouses.
- Oppose proposals which mandate Social Security and Medicare coverage of state and local government employees.

### ***Workforce Development***

- Support funding for apprenticeships and education programs dedicated to water and wastewater careers.
- Support collaborative efforts to promote mentorship and internship programs.
- Support legislation which allows persons from the military to obtain credit for their training and promotes the transfer of such skills to the private sector and other government agencies to avoid the time and cost of retraining.
- Support initiatives and efforts to STEM/STEAM education related to the water and wastewater industries.
- Support efforts to improve the educational and vocational skills of employees to help them move upward in their field.
- Support measures that help promote awareness of water and sewer careers in K-12 schools.

## Information Technology

### ***Security and Emergency Management***

- Support legislation that promotes and provides funding for increased ability to manage technology, assistance in adhering to regulatory compliance requirements and reducing the risk of cyber-attacks.
- Support proposals that increase consumer protections against information security attacks, including when a person or program impersonates a trusted source to obtain personal information.
- Support proposals and funding to improve the capacity of state and local governments to plan, prepare, respond to, and recover from disasters or emergencies, including those involving natural or environmental disasters, acts of terrorism, and public health emergencies.

### ***Local Control***

- Oppose legislation that would restrict procurement practices or impact vendor interaction.

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- Oppose legislation that reduces local government control over cellular technology infrastructure development, installation, and deployment.

## Current Federal Issues

### *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*

- Support water and sewer bill payment assistance for low-income customers that goes directly to water and sewer providers.
- Support liability protection of essential employers that comply with all state and federal COVID-19 guidelines.
- Oppose legislation that requires overly burdensome COVID-19 reporting or notifications.

Last Updated: Dec. 21, 2020