



Business Services and External Affairs Division

Water Advisory Committee Update

August 4, 2025

Fiscal services:

- FY24/25 water deliveries:
 - o Actual: 45,184 acre-feet (through June)
 - o Budgeted: 42,826 acre-feet (through June)
 - o Slight increase in revenue helps fund balance
 - o Met debt coverage requirements
 - o November WAC meeting will include a full fiscal services presentation
- Grant funding:
 - o Recent awards:
 - \$86k from DEM (DHS grant) for Video Surveillance/Alarm Monitoring Equipment
 - \$400K from CA Dept of Boating and Waterways to continue QZ Infestation Prevention Program at Lake Sonoma
 - o Applications:
 - Bennett Valley Fault Crossing FEMA Seismic Hazard Mitigation Grant Application – due 9/15/2025; ~\$4.5M Project
 - USBR Water Use Efficiency Rebate Program (\$2.3M) – still pending

Administration/Human resources:

- Full-time employees: 263
- Open recruitments:
 - o SCADA Technology Analyst – hire in process
 - o Safety and Training Administrator
 - o Water Agency Plant Operator
 - o Water Agency Senior Environmental Specialist

- Recently filled positions:
 - o Maintenance manager: Christopher Pegg
 - o Real Property Manager: Sandra Mota
 - o Senior Business Systems Analyst: Sabrina Condon

Community Engagement:

- Lake Sonoma visitors center: In June, there was a total of 1,575 visitors, compared to 752 visitors in June 2024. New educational exhibits and tours are now available daily.
- Water Education Program kicks off 2025/26 school year in August. During the 2024-2025 school year we taught more students than any previous year! Through Direct Instruction (Classroom visits, Field Trips, etc.) we saw 786 classes and 18,200 students and through our ZunZun Musical Watershed Assembly we visited 446 classes and 9,912 students.

Public Information Officer:

- See articles of interest attached.
- Press releases issued:
 - o July 28, 2025: Russian River flows adjusted to safeguard reservoirs and endangered fish – The State Water Resources Control Board issued an order at the end of June to approve temporary urgency change petitions filed by Sonoma Water.
 - o June 3, 2025: Sonoma Water moves forward with regional water bank strategy - Sonoma Water’s Board of Directors voted on Tuesday to develop a Regional Water Bank Implementation Strategy through an agreement with Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc.

Government Affairs:

- Federal Affairs
 - o Issue: FY26 Appropriations
 - o Status: Following the previously released “skinny” budget, the Administration published additional details on the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) President’s Budget Request in late spring, though fell short of submitting a full budget. While the President’s Budget is an important marker of funding priorities and new policy proposals, it is not binding. Ultimately, Congress is responsible for setting the budget and appropriating funds. Lawmakers have now turned to advancing FY26 appropriations bills, which will provide additional insight

into the extent of funding reductions for the next fiscal year beginning on October 1, 2025.

On July 17, 2025, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S. 2354, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026 on a 19-10 vote. On July 15, 2025, the House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee approved its FY26 bill. The measure awaits consideration by the full House Appropriations Committee.

On July 17, 2025, the House Appropriations Committee approved H.R. 4553, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026 on a 35-27 vote – which has yet to be taken to the full House for a vote. Senate appropriators have not yet released their version of the measure.

- Issue: Sub-seasonal to Seasonal Precipitation Forecasting
- Status: Sonoma Water continues to organize and lead efforts to promote federal support for precipitation forecasting to better manage reservoir operations. A broad coalition of water users, water management agencies, and a diverse group of local, state, regional, and national organizations committed to advancing improved sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting in the west and throughout the U.S. continues to advocate for funding and programmatic support.

On June 6, 2025, H.R. 3816, the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Reauthorization Act of 2025, was introduced by Representative Frank Lucas (R-OK). The bill retains language from the version introduced in the 118th Congress authorizing pilot projects on S2S, one of which is focused on western precipitation. A hearing on the legislation was held in July 2025. In June, over 50 water management agencies and organizations signed on to a letter to House and Senate appropriators requesting a \$15 million increase to the U.S. Weather Research Program for FY26 to support a pilot for improving S2S precipitation forecasting in the western U.S. For a fourth consecutive year, support for the request has grown among stakeholders.

- Issue: Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information
- Status: Sonoma Water pursued federal funding for the Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information (AQPI) program. The committee report

accompanying the Senate version of the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026 includes the language below. Report language from FY24 included \$900K for AQPI. Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information System.—The Committee provides not less than the fiscal year 2024 enacted level within the U.S. Weather Research Program for a regional radar array demonstration project to enable better forecasting of extreme West Coast precipitation events, like atmospheric rivers.

- Issue: Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations
- Status: The committee report accompanying the Senate version of the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026 includes the language below.

Operationalizing Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations [FIRO].—FIRO projects have proven beneficial for improving water availability, flood risk management, and improved drought resilience. NOAA is encouraged, through CIROH, to establish a FIRO research-to-operations program involving academic partners, the NWS Office of Water Prediction, and NWS River Forecast Centers in support of the Nationwide FIRO Pathfinder project.

The committee report accompanying the House version of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2026 includes the language below.

Water Operations Technical Support (WOTS), Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO).—Within available funds, \$12,000,000 shall be to continue progress on the FIRO research program. None of the funds recommend in the WOTS line item may be used for the Snow-Informed Reservoir Operations research effort except to the extent snowpack and winter weather analysis is incorporated into the pre-existing FIRO effort.

The Corps is strongly encouraged to coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation to take the steps necessary to initiate a FIRO assessment of Lake Shasta.

The Committee notes the forthcoming conclusion of the current phase of the FIRO effort. The Corps is directed to provide to the Committee not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act a briefing on the next steps for FIRO, how FIRO can become integrated into water control manual

updates moving forward and on a national basis, the transferability of tools developed or other results of the research, and related future funding requirements.

- Issue: Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund
- Status: Despite the proposed zeroing out of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in the President's FY26 budget, House and Senate lawmakers have included \$65 million for FY26 in their respective appropriations bills. Sonoma Water elected officials and staff discussed the importance of PCSRF funding with lawmakers and staff during a trip to Washington in May 2025
- Issue: Army Corps of Engineers Priorities
- Status: The Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2026 approved by the House Appropriations Committee includes funding for the Coyote Valley Dam (\$4.694 million) and Dry Creek (Warm Springs) (\$7.256 million), consistent with the Administration's budget request. As in past years, the House committee report accompanying the appropriations bill does not include language we requested relating to funding for watercraft inspection stations in the Russian River Basin, or for wildfire resiliency at Army Corps facilities. In recent years, per our request, the Senate has included such language.
- State
 - ACWA Wildfire Liability Task Force: We will be convening this working group that consists of members from both the ACWA Legal Affairs Committee and the ACWA State Legislative Committee to discuss a potential legislative proposal for 2026 to help protect water suppliers from liability associated with wildfires. Some considerations for the work group will be determining if this is the right time to address wildfire liability through legislation and if so, what the pathways forward are.
 - SB 616 (Rubio)

ACWA is also seeking feedback from this group on SB 616, relating to wildfire preparedness. This bill would establish the Community Hardening Commission within the Department of Insurance. The Commission would be required to develop community hardening standards and report these standards to the Legislature. One of the standards would be on infrastructure improvements for water.