



# SACRAMENTO WATER FORUM BUSINESS STRATEGY (2022-2030)

*As confirmed by the Water Forum Plenary on July 28, 2022*

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## Introduction

The original Water Forum Agreement was signed in 2000 and for the last 22 years, the Water Forum has created consistency and strength in the region by maintaining the coequal objectives:

*Provide a reliable and safe water supply for the region's economic health and planned development through to the year 2030; and*

*Preserve the fishery, wildlife, recreational, and aesthetic values of the lower American River.*

Former Executive Director of the Water Forum, Leo Winternitz, recently remarked that over the course of his forty-year career, he's seen a plethora of governance models come and go, but the Water Forum stands out as an organization that has persisted. Inherent to our success is the unique approach to our work: mutual gains, clear communication, scientific rigor and integrity, and commitment from a range of interests. The value of trust between the four caucuses, as well as between all of the caucuses and the Executive Director, of the Water Forum cannot be overstated. While not identified as a priority action, the work of building and maintaining trust is integral to the viability of the organization and the success of our future endeavors.

In 2020, at the start of the global coronavirus pandemic, the Water Forum embarked on a new journey to review and revise the historic agreement. The last two+ years have ushered in massive societal and political changes that have touched all our lives. The region is experiencing the very real impacts of climate change in the form of extended statewide drought, unpredictable precipitation, extreme heat, and wildfires. And while the past two+ years have presented challenges and distractions, we have continued with negotiations on Water Forum 2.0. Through that process, we have recognized a need to delineate the efforts related the ongoing implementation of the original Water Forum Agreement and the Water Forum 2.0 negotiations.

This Final Draft Business Strategy captures an important point in the Water Forum's history. With 8 years remaining on the original agreement, the Business Strategy outlines how the organization will implement core programs for habitat management, flows and operations, science and monitoring, communications, and administration of the Water Forum Successor Effort (as outlined in the original agreement). It demonstrates that we are growing as an organization with the help of outside funding and support.

The Business Strategy, just like the river, thrives with consistent adaptive management. I'm looking forward to working with the Water Forum plenary and our stakeholders to adjust and refine this report on an annual basis. Onward!



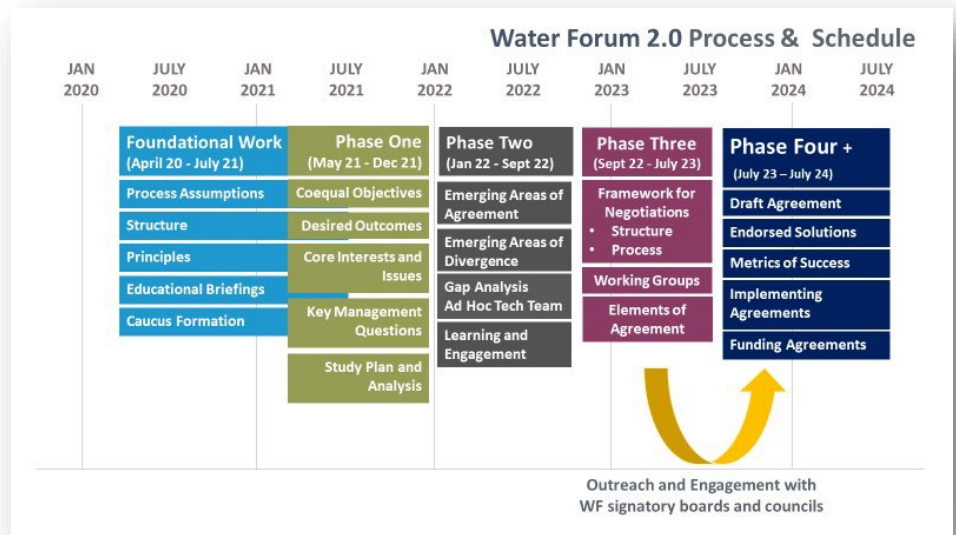
Jessica Law

Executive Director

## Water Forum 2.0 and the Business Strategy

While the Business Strategy focuses on laying out a gameplan for carrying out existing Water Forum programs over the next eight years, it is important to say a few words about the Water Forum 2.0 process, as it will be a priority in the near-term. The original Water Forum agreement took seven years to negotiate, but we are expecting to complete the Water Forum 2.0 process in about half the time prior to the expiration of the original agreement in 2030. The negotiations focus on many of the original elements of the Agreement; however, caucus interests align on solving how the region can adapt to climate change with solutions such as enhanced conjunctive use, protection of groundwater supplies, and a stronger emphasis on the health of the American River, including but not limited to fisheries.

This figure shows progress and schedule for the continued negotiations, with the majority of FY 22-23 occupied by Phase 3. Phase 3 will focus on the framework for negotiations – including reaching agreement on the structure and process – before diving into the technical and highly detailed working groups that will hammer out the details of the new agreement. Within the first 9 months, the hope is to reach a common understanding on the core elements of the agreement. Consistent with the Water Forum way, outreach and engagement with WF signatory boards and councils will be an essential part of the process as we launch into Phase Four and the development, and ultimately signing of the agreement.



Water Forum staff and consultants will continue to conduct the work of the Water Forum Successor Effort (WFSE), and the priorities for our core programs as outlined in this document.

Please see Appendix 1 for additional budget information regarding the Water Forum 2.0 process and the WFSE core programs.

## WFSE Business Strategy for Existing Program Areas (2022-2030)

### 1.1 Habitat Enhancement

The Water Forum is well regarded for its long-standing habitat work on the lower American River (LAR). The LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Projects are at the core of the program, largely supported by Federal funding through the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA). In its 14<sup>th</sup> year, this program incorporates best-available science to continually improve spawning gravel and rearing habitat through regular construction projects on the river. In 2020 the Water Forum was awarded \$5 million in Prop 68 funding from the State for early implementation of the Statewide Voluntary Agreement process which complements the existing funding for the program, but while also amplifying the pace and scale of implementation. In the near-term, the Water Forum will be focused on refining design, analysis, and implementing construction with a phased approach at each of the ten approved sites. In addition, the Water Forum is evaluating feasibility of other habitat enhancement sites on the LAR, continuing our efforts on multi-benefit projects such as Cordova Creek naturalization, and working to strengthen connections to organizations and stakeholders working to improve river corridor health on the LAR.

<b>Table 1.1 Habitat Enhancement</b>	
<b>Near-Term Priority Actions (FY 2022-2024)</b>	
a.	Finalize 5-year LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program funding, design, analysis, and implementation strategy (grant funded)
b.	Develop gravel/habitat enhancement maintenance and monitoring plan (grant funded)
c.	Cordova Creek Phase 1 and Phase 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with local partners to support Phase 1 monitoring and maintenance</li> <li>• Prepare CEQA to prep for WCB eligibility for Cordova Creek Phase 2 Final design and construction grant funding</li> <li>• Pursue WCB grant funding to complete design and construct Phase 2 Cordova Creek</li> <li>• Continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure project support; partner with parkway advocates (Soil Born, CNPS, SARA, etc.)</li> </ul>
d.	Engage with State and Federal agencies on implementation of LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program consistent with Statewide Voluntary Agreement early implementation actions (grant funded)
e.	Finalize publications highlighting LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program work over past 10 years (partially grant funded)
<b>Ongoing Annual Actions</b>	
f.	Construct phases of LAR Salmonid Habitat Program each year (grant funded)
g.	Implement outreach and communications strategy for LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program and other habitat enhancement projects (partially grant funded)
h.	Work with public water agencies (PWAs) and State and Federal agencies to track progress of Water Forum efforts regarding other programs (30x30; Statewide Voluntary Agreements, Cutting Green Tape, etc.) or requirements
i.	Continue to co-convene the Lower American River Task Force (LARTF) with SAFCA

<b>Table 1.1 Habitat Enhancement</b>	
j.	Coordinate with Regional Parks on Natural Resources Management Planning (NRMP) implementation and monitoring
<b>As Time Allows</b>	
k.	Seek grant funding for assessing the feasibility of creek enhancement projects (e.g., Buffalo Creek, Carmichael Creek, Steelhead Creek)
l.	Seek grant funding for assessing the feasibility of rearing site enhancement projects as identified in Rearing Review Report (August 2020)
m.	Continue to track and update the FISH plan (Draft 2019), and other related efforts
n.	Support local river education programs at Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Sacramento Valley Conservancy, Soil Born Farms, and Sacramento Valley Chapter of CNPS

## 1.2 Flow and Operations

In 2006, the Water Forum published the first Flow Management Standard (FMS) for the LAR. This methodology for protecting river health and water supply has continued to evolve and improve with new modeling and technical efforts. Water Forum efforts to continue to improve the FMS are linked with similar efforts to ensure that the methodology is included in regulatory processes such as the re-initiation of consultation on the Biological Opinion. To support understanding and implementation of the FMS, the Water Forum will publish a consolidated version of the methodology for reference by US Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and other state and federal implementing agencies. The Water Forum's technical team of staff and consultants are critical to communicating and interpreting the FMS with scientific rigor.

<b>Table 1.2 Flows and Operations</b>
<b>Near-Term Priority Actions (FY 2022-2024)</b>
a. Publish consolidated 2017 Modified FMS report
b. Continue to work with Reclamation to implement the existing MOU and refine as needed
c. Engage with Reclamation and other key agencies or stakeholders in the re-initiation of consultation on the Biological Opinion (BiOp) to ensure that the FMS standard continues to be productive and protective of the river
d. Engage in the American River Group stakeholder discussions while working towards clarifying roles and responsibilities related to WF's expertise
e. Publish updated Modified FMS documentation following completion of the pending BiOp process (2022-2023)
<b>Ongoing Annual Actions</b>
f. Continue Modified FMS monitoring/updates/adjustments
g. Work with PWAs and State and Federal agencies, WF and other stakeholders to review assumptions on Modified FMS, environmental flows, and operations regarding other programs (Statewide Voluntary agreements, Water Portfolio, etc.) or requirements
h. Engage WF members; and provide technical assistance to State and Federal agencies throughout the year on temperature planning, pulse flow operations, power bypass and storage targets
i. Coordinate with Reclamation and fisheries agencies on FMS implementation
<b>As Time Allows</b>
j. Track environmental reviews for major projects that could impact the coequal objectives to determine whether further engagement is warranted
k. Pursue adoption of FMS by SWRCB

### 1.3 Science and Monitoring

The Water Forum takes a practical approach to science and monitoring. Each study is directly tied to work that will support learning and adaptive management of the LAR Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Projects, understanding the need and the feasibility of future habitat actions, or supports decision-making related to the FMS. This program is growing in importance as the state and the water management system are under increased strain due to extended drought and climate change.

<b>Table 1.3 Science and Monitoring</b>
<b>Near-Term Priority Actions (FY 2022-2024)</b>
a. Develop “Year on the River” calendar of monitoring and scientific information to support decision making
b. Review monitoring information from past projects to determine their efficacy and improve future projects through adaptive management
c. Conduct water quality monitoring (i.e., dissolved oxygen at existing temperature/gage locations)
d. Conduct eDNA or other short-term studies (drought monitoring, etc.) to inform management decisions based on river health
e. Conduct LAR-wide topographic change analysis [LiDAR and 2D DEM/model update] (with CVPIA-USBR/SAFCA cost share)
f. Complete restoration value study for LAR
g. Conduct required pre/post-project monitoring (Prop 68 grant supported)
h. Complete life history/flow management evaluations (otolith), mark-recapture (genetics, restoration effectiveness), ESHE juvenile model, and peer-reviewed publications (with CVPIA-USFWS grant funds)
<b>Ongoing Annual Actions</b>
i. Publish WF relevant fisheries and riverine ecosystem data in a central data repository
j. Publish WF scientific findings in peer reviewed journals
k. Present WF scientific findings at conferences
l. Seek funding and support from State and Federal agencies to implement a robust science program
m. Work with PWAs and State and Federal agencies, WF and other stakeholders to participate in regional or statewide monitoring, modeling, and adaptive management efforts (e.g., CVPIA Science Integration Team, Salmon Recovery Partnerships, Statewide Voluntary agreements) or other requirements
<b>As Time Allows</b>
n. Seek funding to support a historical landscape ecology study of the LAR
o. Form a science advisory committee to provide input on WF efforts and provide expert reviews



## 1.4 Communications

Communication and outreach to WF members are critical to the success of the Water Forum. With its caucus structure, the Water Forum has both an internal audience, and an external audience represented by the larger audience of WF signatory agencies and other partners. In the near-term Water Forum staff and consultants will continue to improve our communications systems and strategy to reach appropriate audiences. The Coordinating Committee will continue to serve as the main venue for review of external communications (e.g., media statements, press releases, letters).

<b>Table 1.4 Communications</b>
<b>Near-Term Priority Actions (FY 2022-2024)</b>
a. Work with the Coordinating Committee to develop annual communications and stakeholder outreach strategy based on current issues and opportunities
b. Refresh the WF external website with new design and branding
c. Create a WF member-only web page to support facilitation of WF meetings and information exchange
d. Implement the WF Tracking and Oversight process as agreed by WF members in 2017
e. Coordinate with regional GSAs to better understand the work that they are doing to implement the GSPs (monitoring, action plans) and how it relates to the coequal objectives
<b>Ongoing Annual Actions</b>
f. Advocate for the American River region with State and Federal agencies and other stakeholders
g. Connect with and amplify organizations that are working on the LAR
h. Promote the work of the WF with relevant stakeholders
i. Continue to convene effective and engaging Plenary, Coordinating Committee, and Caucus meetings
j. Provide facilitation support to WF signatories as appropriate and upon request
k. Continue to provide “Learning and Engagement” sessions for WF members and the public to highlight key issues in the region, including but not limited to groundwater sustainability, water conservation, water management, water for economic and development needs, and river health
<b>As Time Allows</b>
l. Complete “State of the River” report every five years

## 1.5 Administration

The Water Forum, also known as City-County Office of Metropolitan Water Planning, is housed at the City of Sacramento. As such, Water Forum staff work closely with City of Sacramento to track and manage our finances. In the near-term, Water Forum staff will work to improve our internal processes to allow for long-term viability of the organization.

<b>Table 1.5 Administration</b>
<b>Near-Term Priority Actions (FY 2022-2024)</b>
a. Review internal processes to ensure required fiscal tracking measures are in place
b. Pursue additional funding to support WF 2.0 process (i.e., WF members, external funding)
c. Review current funding structure to align with ongoing efforts such as the Statewide VA process
<b>Ongoing Annual Actions</b>
d. Prepare quarterly and annual reports of actual spending
e. Prepare budgets and approval by WF members and the Sacramento City Council, and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
f. Prepare and execute contracts to conduct WF work
g. Prepare and submit required grant progress reports
h. Implement appropriate fiscal tracking measures
i. Work with the Coordinating Committee to review progress on near-term actions and annual priorities; Review annual progress reports and priorities with the WF plenary
<b>As Time Allows</b>
j. Work with Coordinating Committee to develop a 5-year financial forecast and budget estimate

Appendix 1: Water Forum Priorities and Budget (FY 22-23)

Table 1.6 Water Forum Priorities and Budget (FY 22-23)							
	SERVICES				FTE	TOTAL BUDGET	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Priority Project	Local Funding	State and Federal Grant Funding	Total	% Local Funding	All Sources		
Water Forum 2.0	\$250,000	\$126,496	\$376,496	66%	\$167,757	\$544,253	9%
<b>Existing Programs</b>							
1.1 Habitat Enhancement	\$100,000	\$2,900,211	\$3,000,211	3%	\$271,836	\$3,272,047	55%
1.2 Flows and Operations	\$175,000	\$43,500	\$218,500	80%	\$121,393	\$339,893	6%
1.3 Science and Monitoring	\$149,000	\$839,818	\$988,818	15%	\$65,789	\$1,054,607	18%
1.4 Communications	\$170,000	\$48,880	\$218,880	78%	\$115,547	\$334,427	6%
1.5 Administration	\$150,533	\$0	\$150,533	100%	\$253,104	\$403,637	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$994,533</b>	<b>\$3,958,905</b>	<b>\$4,953,438</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>\$995,426</b>	<b>\$5,948,864</b>	<b>100%</b>