

Mountain Democrat

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Words about water: What is the role of a water agency that does not deliver water?

By Supervisor Lori Parlin, EDWA board chair, and Rebecca Guo, EDWA general manager



When you think about a water agency, you probably wonder whether you've paid your bill or if there are water conservation measures in place. Questions about water quality may cross your mind if there is a distinct chlorine smell coming out of the tap or if there is a nearby wildfire where hazardous burned materials could make their way into the water supply.

Many El Dorado County residents may not realize that in addition to the four urban water suppliers and hundreds of small water systems, there is another entity — El Dorado Water Agency — that is responsible for managing water resources in our county.

The main difference between El Dorado Water Agency and other local water entities is that we do not deliver water to residents, businesses, cities or agricultural areas. We do, however, provide countywide water planning and management. We work with county leaders and staff, policy makers, nonprofits, local, state and federal agencies and others to address water issues throughout the whole county and put plans in place to help meet our future water needs.

Some of El Dorado Water Agency's current initiatives include:

- **Drought planning:** There are thousands of properties in our county where residents and businesses rely on small water systems or domestic wells. Many of these communities have aging systems with no backup water or power supplies, which may leave them severely impacted during droughts or power outages. In fact, many have faced water shortages in the past. In coordination with the county and others, we develop drought plans to help address water supply vulnerabilities and reduce hardships in these areas.
- **Ensuring our county has ample water:** We assess our collective countywide water needs and work to secure additional surface water to support planned future growth. We also identify what changes need to take place in order to adapt to changing weather patterns. This includes developing plans to build additional water storage to capture precipitation that will increasingly fall as rain instead of snow.
- **Supporting a healthy forest:** We secured nearly \$2 million in federal funding to remove dead trees and plant new ones after the Caldor Fire to protect the streams that supply water to the Grizzly Flat community. We also brought together 17 agencies to develop a plan to

better manage our watershed and continue to work together to implement on-the-ground projects to create a healthier forest.

- Advocating for our water resources needs: We serve as a voice for our mountain county and advocate for policies that make sense for our unique rural-agricultural foothill communities. We also advocate for funding for projects that protect our local water resources. Many regulations, policies and funding streams are focused on more densely populated urban, low-lying flat lands. It is important that decision makers understand the issues El Dorado County faces and that our unique water resources challenges require tailored solutions.

Unlike the local urban water suppliers, El Dorado Water Agency is not focused on one community or service area. We work to ensure our entire county, which encompasses over 1 million acres, has clean, safe and affordable water for all types of uses such as domestic, municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreational and environmental. Water is at the heart of everything our communities do and need and we are honored to be stewards of our county's water resources.

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