

# Upper American River Watershed Group Charter

Revised: January 15, 2025

## PURPOSE AND GOALS

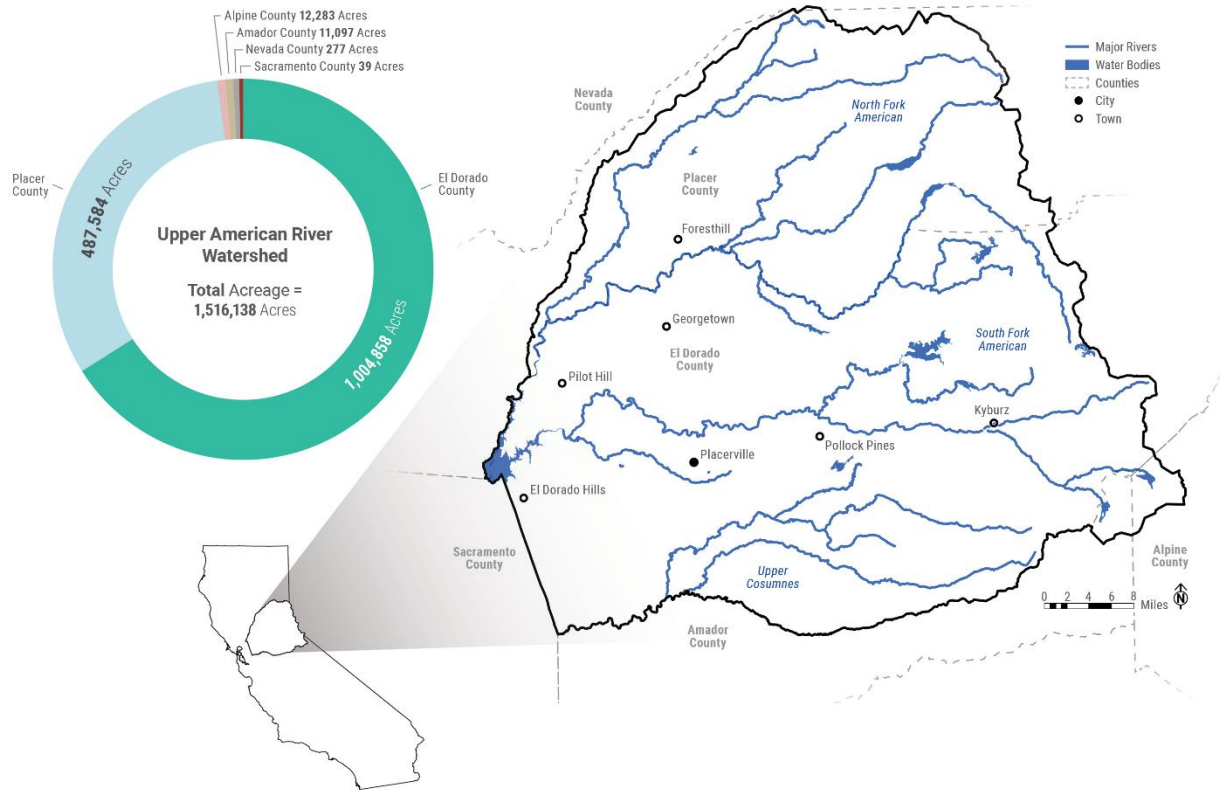
The purpose of the Upper American River Watershed Group (Watershed Group) is to promote the sustainable use of water resources of the upper American River watershed and improve the functioning conditions of its natural, built, and social systems. The Watershed Group is an inclusive, non-regulatory group formed voluntarily for collective watershed management, watershed health, and community resilience.

The goals of the Watershed Group are to:

1. Advance the 2023 Programmatic Watershed Plan (PWP) for sustainably managing the upper American River watershed for long-term resiliency and community prosperity.
2. Identify, develop, and implement joint landscape-scale projects to improve watershed health and community resilience.
3. Foster coordination, cooperation, and collaboration amongst agencies when addressing watershed level challenges of the region.
4. Attract resources and support for watershed management through effective public outreach and education.
5. Track progress made on PWP goals as a result of project implementation.

## BACKGROUND

As shown in the following map, the upper American River watershed includes the American River hydrologic watershed above Folsom Dam and a portion of the Cosumnes River hydrologic watershed within El Dorado County, for which resource management practices and responsibilities are jurisdictionally and managerially integrated. The land's water and natural resources not only sustain indigenous and rural-agricultural traditions but also contribute to the socioeconomic advancement of local communities. These headwaters also provide water for downstream consumptive and environmental beneficial uses of the lower American River watershed in the Sacramento metropolitan area and a substantial portion of the state.



The Watershed Group, convened by the El Dorado Water Agency (EDWA), is an outcome of the recommended actions from the 2022 American River Basin Study conducted by U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation with EDWA and other local regional partners. The Watershed Group brings together a diverse group of interests, consisting of local, state, and federal agencies with watershed responsibilities, Tribes, non-profit organizations, business and economic interests, academics, and other interested parties. The Watershed Group is a specialized subgroup under the Countywide Plenary for Water, which was formed based on EDWA’s Board directive as a standing forum for consistent and proactive engagement with the public and interested parties to promote transparency and constructive dialogue among partners to advance water resource management in El Dorado County and beyond.

The Watershed Group completed the PWP in late 2023 to establish cohesive and shared vision for sustainable and equitable management of the upper American River watershed for long-term resilience. To support the implementation of the PWP, EDWA completed an assessment in 2024 for the economic values of ecosystem goods and services provided by the natural assets in the upper American River watershed for regional, statewide and national benefits to promote sustainable and equitable investments to headwaters and source watersheds. The results suggest that the ecosystem goods and services in the watershed provide more than \$14.8 billion annually and an estimated \$173 billion carbon stock value. California Water Code Section 108.5 recognizes source watersheds as integral components of California’s water infrastructure. The valuation study supports this policy implementation and broadens the recognition of values provided by the UARW including food, water, clean air, hydroelectric power, beauty, flood, drought and fire risk reduction, habitat, recreation, and more.

**MEMBERSHIP**

The Watershed Group membership is comprised of a broad-based and diverse interests in the upper American River watershed. Participation in the Watershed Group is voluntary and is intended to leverage the work and expertise of its members in addressing jointly identified opportunities for coordination,

cooperation, and collaboration. Members are invited to participate in facilitated discussions that reflect their joint interests. Given its inclusive nature, representatives of additional interests may be added to enhance the work of the Watershed Group.

**MEMBERS:**

**County/City Representatives**

- El Dorado Water Agency (Convener)
- County of El Dorado
  - Agricultural Commissioner
  - Environmental Management Department
  - Planning and Building
  - Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience
- County of Placer
- City of Placerville

**Resource & Stewardship**

- El Dorado County Farm Bureau
- American River Conservancy
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- El Dorado and Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation Districts
- Placer County Resource Conservation District
- University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
- California Department of Water Resources

**Utilities**

- El Dorado Irrigation District
- Georgetown Divide Public Utility District
- Placer County Water Agency
- Regional Water Authority
- Sacramento Municipal Utility District

**Tribal**

- Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Watershed Group Members Responsibilities:

**Meeting participation.** Members are expected to attend all Watershed Group meetings and are encouraged to identify an alternate to represent their organization if unable to participate in the meetings.

**Come prepared for meetings.** Read materials and perform tasks as requested in advance of the meetings. Contact meeting facilitator with questions for additional assistance.

**Participate in an open and mutually respectful way.** Share ideas, views, and information on topics and issues related to the purpose of the Watershed Group to advance its goals.

**Serve as a liaison to your agency or community of interest.** Share information from the organization or community that you represent, including their concerns, ideas, and experiences. Keep your organization or community of interest informed on the work of the Watershed Group.

**Act in good faith.** Treat members with respect and acknowledge the unique and varied experiences and knowledge each member brings with them. Work to understand differences in opinions, ideas, and approaches to address issues. Work toward shared understanding among the Watershed Group members.

#### EDWA Responsibilities:

EDWA agrees to:

- Serve as the convener of the group and schedule Watershed Group meetings.
- Provide technical and facilitation support.
- Share meeting agendas and relevant materials in advance.
- Throughout the year, communicate with the group about related efforts to promote information sharing.
- Respond to media inquiries on behalf of the Watershed Group.

### **ATTENDANCE AND MEETING SCHEDULE**

This Watershed Group convened as a long-standing group and will meet at least once a year to assess progress and outcomes of PWP implementation and identify means to address changes in watershed conditions. Members may elect to schedule additional workshops and meetings in response to emerging needs and opportunities such as state and federal technical and financial assistance.

### **PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION GUIDELINES**

- Active, full participation. Every member commits to fulfilling the Watershed Group Member Responsibilities (above) through communication and engagement.
- Focused participation. Members will come to the meetings prepared and will focus their discussions on the agenda items.
- Respectful interaction. Members will respect each other's personal integrity, divergent viewpoints, values and legitimacy of interests. Members will listen courteously while others are speaking. Only one person will speak at a time.
- Integration and creative thinking. Members will strive to be open-minded and to integrate each other's ideas, perspectives, and interests. Members should focus on identifying solutions to problems and challenges. Where members do not support a specific solution or proposal, they are encouraged to offer alternative solutions.
- Satisfy mutual interests. Members will work to satisfy not only their own interests but also those of other members.
- Personal technology courtesy. Members will be present and minimize distractions such as phones and emails.
- Timeliness. Meetings will begin and end on time.

- Consistent messaging. Public outreach and advocacy collateral regarding the Watershed Group will be developed in collaboration with the group members. Media inquiries regarding the Watershed Group will be directed to EDWA for response.

## DECISION MAKING

This Watershed Group Charter recognizes that each member has different roles, responsibilities, and priorities for implementing the PWP and is not intended to modify existing authorities or responsibilities of each member. This Watershed Group Charter does not create an “advisory committee” as that term is defined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (Public Law 92-463), or result in the joint exercise of powers among Parties as set forth in California Government Code section 6500 et seq.

The Watershed Group relies on a consensus-seeking approach to make recommendations and works diligently to find common ground on issues. This can mean developing and exploring various alternative solutions to a question or problem, being sure that all have understood the various options and issues and allowing each perspective to be heard. A “consensus” agreement does not have to mean unanimous enthusiastic support.

Below is a gradient of agreement representing different levels of support to inform the group’s process. A recommendation can pass if all members respond with an agreement level of 1 through 5 during meetings.

1. Proposed decision is fully acceptable. Support the working group’s decision or recommendation.
2. Proposed decision is acceptable with minor reservations. Support the working group’s decision or recommendation.
3. Proposed recommendation is acceptable, even with major reservations, but it is the best recommendation at this time. Support the working group’s recommendation.
4. Not applicable/no opinion: will not block but cannot offer support.
5. Support with conditions (must be able to identify conditions).
6. Cannot support.

