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910 K STREET, STE 100 • SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
916.441.4545 • FAX 916.441.7893 • www.acwa.com

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Contact: Lisa Lien-Mager, Director of Communications, 916/441-4545 or 530/902-3815 (cell)

ACWA Releases Recommendations for Improving Water Transfers and Access to Water Markets in California

Actions Address Continuing Drought and Long-Term Water Management Needs

MONTEREY, Calif. – Calling voluntary water transfers a vital management tool that will be increasingly valuable in the future, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) today officially released a suite of recommendations for improving the transfer process and access to the voluntary water market, especially for smaller agencies.

The recommendations, titled “[Recommendations for Improving Water Transfers and Access to Water Markets in California](#),” come as ACWA and other organizations are discussing market-oriented solutions as part of a comprehensive water management strategy for California. Developed by a statewide advisory committee with expertise in transfers, the recommendations are guiding ACWA’s advocacy efforts on transfer legislation this year.

ACWA released the recommendations in conjunction with a town hall session on water markets during the association’s 2016 Spring Conference & Exhibition in Monterey.

ACWA Executive Director Timothy Quinn noted that water transfers played an important role in past droughts. He said that while California has a water market that functions relatively well for some agencies, streamlining the transfer process and making water markets more accessible would yield a number of benefits for agencies across the state.

“These recommendations not only address water needs during a multi-year drought, they create the foundation for more effective water management in the future,” Quinn said. “Legislation in the early 1990s helped improve the water transfer process, but more can and should be done, especially as the state looks to implement a comprehensive water management policy.”

Enhancing the voluntary water market is a key priority for ACWA and other organizations this year. ACWA is actively engaged in discussions with stakeholders, the Brown Administration, the California

Legislature and the appropriate state and federal agencies, including the California Department of Water Resources.

DWR Director Mark Cowin said ACWA's recommendations will help advance the conversation this year.

"Moving water from willing sellers to willing buyers can help stretch supplies and minimize water shortages, but it's got to be done in a way that protects other water users, local communities, and fish and wildlife," Cowin said. "ACWA's recommendations were generated by a broad panel that includes people with first-hand water transfer experience. We take these recommendations seriously and welcome the input as we work toward a more accessible, transparent, streamlined water market."

ACWA's recommendations were developed by a Water Market Technical Advisory Committee that included ACWA member agency representatives with special expertise in water transfers and representatives from the Public Policy Institute of California and the Environmental Defense Fund.

David Festa, senior vice president of ecosystems for the Environmental Defense Fund, said improvements to the voluntary water market are highly desirable and could benefit the environment by enhancing overall water supplies, particularly during drought.

"California's water market has a key role to play in helping the economy, the environment and disadvantaged communities become more resilient in the face of climate change," said Festa, who participated in the town hall at the ACWA conference. "We welcome ACWA's recommendations and encourage various stakeholders to work together to build consensus on policy actions this year."

The recommendations note that improving the transfer process and enhancing access to the market would have several benefits, including:

- Helping to protect existing local and regional investments in drought-resilient strategies;
- Improving coordination among water agencies;
- Incentivizing significant investments in water use efficiency projects and programs;
- Increasing water supply reliability for urban and agricultural water users;
- Increasing the quantity or improving the timing of water available for transfers by providing information to buyers and sellers who might not otherwise have sufficient information to participate in water markets; and
- Enhancing the state's water supplies and potentially increasing the amount or improving the timing of water available for environmental uses.

ACWA is a statewide association of public agencies whose more than 430 members are responsible for about 90% of the water delivered in California. For more information, visit www.acwa.com.

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