



● **Board of Directors**  
***Water Planning and Stewardship Committee***

8/16/2022 Board Meeting

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**7-11**

**Subject**

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Approve Metropolitan's membership in the California Water Data Consortium and authorize annual membership dues of \$20,000 per year on an ongoing basis; the General Manager has determined the proposed action is exempt or otherwise not subject to CEQA

**Executive Summary**

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The California Water Data Consortium (Consortium) is a nonprofit organization supporting the state's implementation of the Open and Transparent Water Data Act of 2016. The Consortium facilitates collaboration between state agencies, the water industry, and other stakeholders. Metropolitan co-founded the Consortium in 2019 and helped lead its development. In 2020, Metropolitan invested \$200,000 to fund the Consortium's launch and its early operations.

The Consortium plans to transition to a funding model based on membership dues supplemented with other revenue sources. Staff proposes to become a member of the Consortium and pay annual membership dues of \$20,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2022/23. These funds were included in the approved FY 2022/23 and FY 2023/24 budget and will be included in future budgets. Membership in the Consortium benefits Metropolitan and the member agencies by: (1) better aligning water data reporting to state agencies; (2) enhancing access to state agency data; and (3) improving water data management within California.

**Details**

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**Background**

In 2016, the Governor signed AB 1755, known as the Open and Transparent Water Data Act (Water Data Act). The Water Data Act called for improving the sharing, accessing, and management of water data by state agencies. AB 1755 required the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop data sharing protocols and implement a statewide water data clearinghouse. The Office of Planning and Research convened an Advisory Council in 2018 to accelerate its implementation. The Advisory Council recommended and then initiated the formation of the Consortium in 2019.

**California Water Data Consortium**

The Consortium supports the state agencies implementing AB 1755 by acting as a liaison with water agencies and other stakeholders. The Consortium's mission includes:

- Complementing state agency efforts
- Establishing a neutral space for collaboration
- Providing value to stakeholders
- Fostering trust through public engagement
- Building consensus on the use of water data

The Consortium manages programs and budgets through a Board of Directors, a Steering Committee, an Executive Director, support staff, and stakeholder workgroups (**Attachment 1**). In addition to serving on the Consortium's Board, Metropolitan participates in Consortium subcommittees and pilot studies.

## Consortium Activities

The Consortium implements open water data pilot studies and holds numerous outreach events. The three pilot studies currently underway include:

- **Urban Water Data Pilot:** A collaboration with state agencies identifying opportunities to align current water supply and use data reported by local and wholesale water agencies to reduce reporting burdens.
- **Groundwater Accounting Platform and Data Reporting Platform:** A partnership with state agencies and the Environmental Defense Fund advancing an open-source groundwater accounting platform.
- **Lidar Project:** A workgroup with state, federal, and local agencies along with other stakeholders exploring opportunities to collaborate on procuring and sharing Lidar data.

The Consortium has committed to promoting a diverse and engaged water data community to support its open water data initiatives. This includes establishing an Equity Workgroup, a “Data for Lunch” webinar series, and public workshops soliciting feedback from stakeholders. Descriptions of the Consortium’s pilot projects and outreach activities are contained in **Attachment 2**.

## Membership

Initial start-up funding for the Consortium came from foundations and local agencies such as Metropolitan. Metropolitan invested \$200,000 in the Consortium in 2020 for this purpose. Moving forward, the Consortium plans to fund ongoing activities like the pilot studies with a combination of member dues, research grants, contributions from foundations such as the Water Foundation, and in-kind services.

The Consortium’s membership guidelines for water agencies and irrigation districts are under development. The draft guidelines are tied to an organization’s size with three tiers ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000:

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Dues</b>
Small	\$5,000
Medium	\$10,000
Large	\$20,000

Based on these guidelines, staff recommends funding the Consortium with an annual membership of up to \$20,000 on an ongoing basis. This would help fund the Consortium’s ongoing activities and support additional opportunities for improving California’s water data reporting, sharing and access.

## Policy

By Minute Item 51826, dated December 10, 2019, the Board expressed support for establishing the California Water Data Consortium and approved funding of \$200,000 to make Metropolitan a founding member.

By Minute Item 50442, dated April 12, 2016, the Board authorized the General Manager to express support for AB 1755, if amended, (Dodd, D-Woodland) – The Open and Transparent Water Data Act.

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11102: Payment of Dues

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11103: Participation in Projects or Programs Serving District Purposes

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities

## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

### CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA because it involves continuing administrative activities, such as general policy and procedure making (Section 15378(b)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines). In addition, the proposed action is not subject to CEQA because it involves other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (Section 15378(b)(4) of the State of CEQA Guidelines).

**CEQA determination for Option #2:**

None required

**Board Options**

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**Option #1**

Approve Metropolitan's membership in the California Water Data Consortium and authorize payment of dues of \$20,000 per year on an ongoing basis.

**Fiscal Impact:** Funds in the amount of \$20,000 would be paid for membership in the Consortium annually. Membership in the Consortium is included in Water Resource Management's FY 2022/23 and FY 2023/24 budget, and will be included in future budgets.

**Business Analysis:** Membership in the Consortium allows Metropolitan to provide sustained funding support for the Consortium's pilot programs and related initiatives. These activities benefit Metropolitan and the member agencies. Staff would continue to participate in Consortium committees and stakeholder processes.

**Option #2**

Do not approve Metropolitan's membership in the California Water Data Consortium.

**Fiscal Impact:** Metropolitan would forgo paying annual dues of \$20,000 per year. Staff would seek other opportunities for supporting Consortium activities through sponsorships and in-kind services on a case-by-case basis.

**Business Analysis:** Metropolitan would miss an opportunity to sustainably co-fund the Consortium's efforts to improve water data management within California.

**Staff Recommendation**

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**Option #1**

  
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Brad Coffey  
Manager, Water Resource Management

7/28/2022  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Adel Hagekhalil  
General Manager

8/1/2022  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Attachment 1 – California Water Data Consortium Organization (effective July 2022)**

**Attachment 2 – California Water Data Consortium Activities**

Ref# wrm12682882

### California Water Data Consortium Organization (effective July 2022)

The California Water Data Consortium (Consortium) organizational structure includes a governing Board, a Steering Committee, an Executive Director with support staff, and project Work Groups. Tara Moran is the Consortium's Executive Director. Additional information is available on the Consortium's website [Home - California Water Data Consortium \(cawaterdata.org\)](http://cawaterdata.org).

#### Board

The Consortium's nine-member Board of Directors is composed of water leaders representing water agencies, irrigation districts, foundations, academic institutions, and consultants. Current board members are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. California Water Data Consortium Board (Board member terms run for three years)**

Adrian Covert, Board Chair	Bay Area Council
David Orth, Board Vice-Chair	New Current Water and Land LLC
Joone Lopez, Board Treasurer	Moulton Niguel Water District
Eric Averett	Homer LLC
Rick Callender	Valley Water
Debbie Franco	Water Solutions Network
Meredith Lee	UC Berkeley
Mike Myatt	Water Foundation
Deven Upadhyay	Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

#### Steering Committee and Workgroups

Members of the Steering Committee include representatives from state agencies and a diverse set of stakeholders. The Steering Committee develops and recommends studies and projects for the Board to consider. Steering Committee members are selected by the Board through a recruitment process. Workgroup chairs implement pilot studies as directed. Current Steering Committee members are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Steering Committee (Steering Committee member terms run for two years)**

Steering Committee: California State Agencies	
Joaquin Esquivel	State Water Resources Control Board
David Harris	Natural Resources Agency
Nick Martorano	Water Quality Monitoring Council
Joy Bonaguro	Government Operations Agency
Christina McCready	Department of Water Resources
Steering Committee: Water Data Stakeholders	
Drew Atwater	Moulton Niguel Water District
Deb Agarwal	Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
Mike Antos	Stantec Consulting
Martha Davis	Inland Empire Utilities Agency (retired)

## **California Water Data Consortium Activities**

The California Water Data Consortium (Consortium) advances innovative projects demonstrating the value of open and transparent water data. These projects will accelerate the adoption of new technologies and methods for improved data access and quality, resulting in benefits to stakeholders through streamlined water data reporting complemented by better water decisions and outcomes.

### **Pilot Projects**

**Urban Water Reporting Project:** In partnership with the Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, and urban water suppliers, the Consortium is identifying opportunities to improve the current water supply and use data reported by local and wholesale water agencies to reduce reporting burdens. The project will also explore opportunities for expanding access to more timely data necessary for managing water resources in California. The project supports drought mitigation efforts by aligning data reporting across existing drought-related urban water reporting programs supporting water shortage contingency planning and water supply and demand assessments. On June 6, the Consortium held a project workshop with over 50 stakeholders represented, including Metropolitan.

**Groundwater Accounting Platform and Data Reporting Project:** In partnership with the Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, and Environmental Defense Fund, the Consortium is advancing an open-source groundwater accounting platform. This project supports several drought mitigation measures, including scenario planning to support groundwater recharge and identifying domestic wells susceptible to drying under persistent drought. It will facilitate long-term groundwater sustainability planning under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and includes the co-development of groundwater data reporting protocols.

**LiDAR Project:** The LiDAR workgroup is a cross-sector and cross-jurisdictional partnership consisting of local, state, and federal agencies along with NGOs. The LiDAR project increases collaboration and coordination of LiDAR data collection to facilitate data sharing, reduce project costs, and ensure interoperability across datasets. The Consortium effort complements a cross-agency state effort led by the Department of Conservation to expand access to LiDAR data statewide.

### **Outreach**

The Consortium is committed to maintaining an engaged water data community. In addition to ongoing Consortium Steering Committee and project meetings, the activities described below provide additional opportunities for Consortium members and the public to build relationships and foster innovative ideas in advancing open water data in California.

**Equity Workgroup.** A Consortium workgroup for state and non-state partners to advance racial equity, inclusion, and justice in Consortium projects.

**Data for Lunch.** An online webinar for researchers, organizations, and others to learn and share about new and emerging water-related datasets or technologies that are changing water management in California and beyond. The Consortium has hosted seven Data for Lunches since 2020.

**Public Workshops.** The Consortium hosts online public workshops each year to provide updates on the Consortium's work and solicit feedback on next steps.