

## ***The High Stakes Of A Community Water Plan***

The River Valley Times recently reported on the new *2026 Watershed Resilience Plan for the American Cosumnes Rivers*. This plan, released by the Regional Water Authority can be viewed or listened to here: <https://rwah2o.org/watershedsplanreleased/>. The plan clearly defines the challenges to our water supply that arise from changes in temperature, snowpack, seasonal flows, flood and fire.

This Plan must be carefully considered as we evaluate our future water supply and the demands that future development will make upon it. The Cosumnes River is presently Rancho Murieta's single source of potable water. The Cosumnes is a fragile watershed and believed to be the most impacted water source in the American River Basin.

The report does not debate or challenge the amount of precipitation the watershed may expect in future years. Instead, it offers challenging assumptions of how forecasted changes will impact the River's seasonal flows. Peak flows are already occurring earlier and earlier in the year. Snowfall is predicted to be significantly replaced by rain, which will travel downstream much earlier in the calendar year. Days where temperatures exceed 100 degrees are forecast to double impacting evaporation in our reservoirs. The probability of wildfire and flood are expected to increase in both amount and intensity. Here are the key findings in this comprehensive analysis:

*The plan's key findings for the Sacramento region:*

- Critical snowpack feeding our watershed may decline by approximately 60% at mid-century
- Snowmelt is projected two to four weeks earlier than historical averages
- Extreme heat days over 95 degrees could increase by roughly 20 days annually
- Wildfires are projected to become 17% more frequent
- Extreme precipitation events could become 15% more intense creating flood
- Peak flood flows could increase by approximately 19%

It is likely that late seasonal flows that now "top off" our reservoirs in April and May will decline or may, intermittently cease. Drought will more frequently interrupt flows on the River. Should a sustained drought occur and meet head on with these reduced flows, it may prove catastrophic and create a severe water emergency.

The American River Basin Study, prepared by the Department of the Interior in 2017 mirrors these conclusions. I point to both studies. I urge your agreement that we, the existing Community, do not approve radical increases in water demand which will impact our sole source of potable water.

*A full-on "water emergency," when it happens, will result, at the very least, in radical conservation. At worst, we will run out of water.*

We must prepare an Urban Water Management Plan and prioritize, protect and enhance the water supply *for those of us who already live here*. Water law requires we do this. It is time for future development to line up for water behind our existing residents. . When we have done all we can to protect our existing residents, I would be

more than willing (or even advocate) for a future, well planned expansion of our community. However, we must first satisfy existing demand to comply with water law and be sure that you and I are protected from drought as best we can do so.

*This is not “Anti Development” It is a lawful approach to rational expansion. For you, this means preservation of your quality of life and the value of your home. Please support candidates that advocate for a careful and rational water strategy that puts you, the existing resident at the “head of the line” in water entitlements.*

*Respectfully  
John Merchant  
August 23, 2026*