

PPIC WATER POLICY CENTER

# Inspiring Change in California’s Water Policy

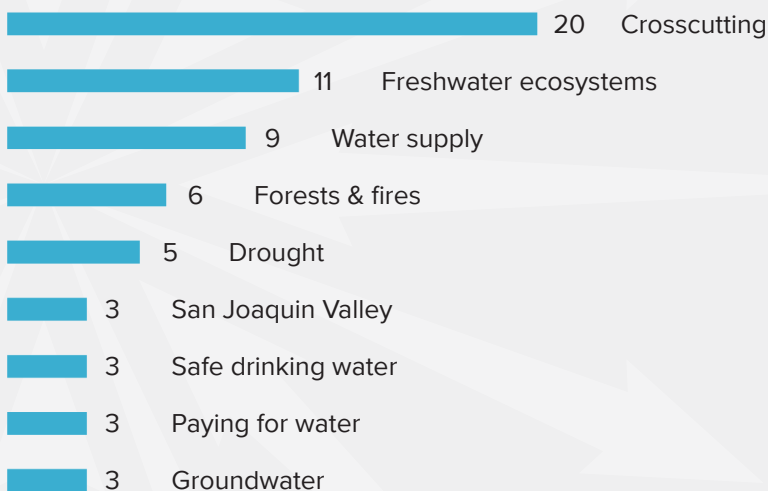
This past year’s wave of emergencies—the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a statewide wildfire siege, and an unrelenting drought—upended California and roiled its water world. These crises worsened long-standing inequities in access to water services, and made it harder to improve the resilience of the state’s water system and ecosystems.

Our water team rose to the challenge and kept pace with this rapidly shifting landscape. New research and virtual events helped foster consequential conversations on key problems and possible solutions. Our blog covered timely issues and shared insights from diverse experts on some of the state’s toughest challenges. And we met with a wide range of stakeholders and helped grow the audience engaged in finding innovative ways forward. Key impacts of our work in 2021 include:

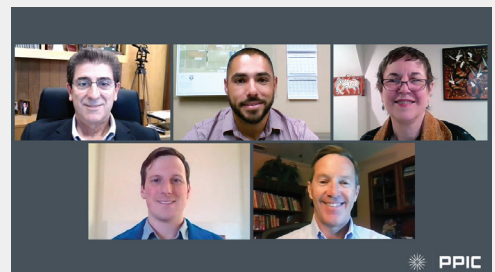
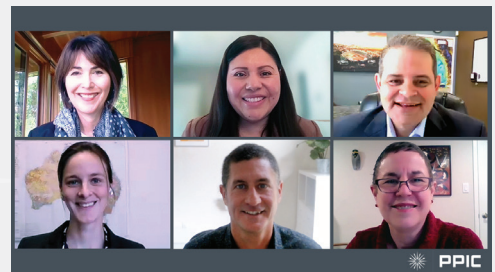
## Studying drought impacts and improving resilience

Our drought indicators project is improving drought warning systems in California to mitigate impacts, and it has already allowed us to produce impactful visuals and data analysis that were deeply appreciated by the water community in 2021. Our blog post [“California’s Latest Drought in 4 Charts”](#) was seen over 10,000 times, and the extensive engagement process has generated a lot of interest from different stakeholders, including state officials and the California Urban Water Agencies association.

### Center products covered a wide range of water issues



### We held virtual events throughout the year with thousands of viewers



## Planning for groundwater sustainability

As the San Joaquin Valley starts to implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), we took an in-depth look at how improving water trading and groundwater banking in California could ease the transition to a future with less groundwater. We also examined how to ensure a smooth transition for the valley's groundwater-dependent cities and suburbs as the region adapts to SGMA. Our researchers authored op-eds, appeared on the Maddy Report, and provided briefings to the state legislature and members of California's congressional delegation. And our ongoing work on SGMA's implications for agricultural land is generating insights on possible land use alternatives such as solar energy, habitat restoration, and water-limited farming for lands that may otherwise go fallow. This work is informing a new state program that supports multi-benefit farmland repurposing.

## Improving freshwater ecosystem health

California's river ecosystems have been significantly altered by dams, diversions, and land conversions, which have disrupted the processes that sustain ecosystem health and created a crisis for native fish and wildlife. We built on our body of work about improving freshwater ecosystems with cutting-edge guidance on how to advance ecosystem restoration through smarter permitting. This work—coupled with meetings with legislative staff, agency staff, and NGOs—has helped raise awareness of the opportunities for permitting reform. And our timely new analysis of public programs to purchase water for the environment is informing this year's budget discussions about expanding state support for such efforts.

For information on supporting the PPIC Water Policy Center, please contact Ava Gambero, development associate, at [gambero@ppic.org](mailto:gambero@ppic.org) or 415.291.4429.

[PPIC.ORG/WATER](https://ppic.org/water)

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