

URBAN WATER INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



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Groundwater Mapping

Location, location, location: New tool shows where groundwater recharge will maximize benefits
By Anna Schiller (7/10/2020)
Environmental Defense Fund

Recharging groundwater with rain and snowmelt is one strategy water managers are embracing to help balance groundwater supply and demand and comply with the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Depending on the location, recharge can also deliver other valuable benefits, such as additional habitat for wildlife and a more resilient water supply for people.

With support from EDF, four UC Santa Barbara graduate students have developed a new mapping tool for California's Central Valley to identify the best locations for groundwater recharge to secure these bonus benefits. The tool, called Recharge for Resilience, is available [online](#) and also can be [downloaded](#) by users with more technical expertise. ... (see page four for more)

UWI COVID-19 Survey

UWI Member Survey - The Results Are In
By: Ane Deister and Andree Johnson

In our May edition of the Urban Water Institute (UWI) newsletter we began communications around changes occurring with our members in their operations, planning, and administration. We have featured stories from Rancho Water District and SmartCovers, where they shared their operational adaptations to the COVID-19 pandemic in some detail. Yet, we have heard other anecdotal comments in our business interactions with our colleagues. That sparked an idea to solicit input from our membership using a doodle poll. The results are in! Two charts summarize the results from our members – answering two questions. ... (see page two for more)

UWI Webinar: Join Marcus & Mulroy, August 19th

Urban Water Institute invites you to attend an Informative Discussion with Felicia Marcus & Pat Mulroy on Wednesday, August, 19, 2020 beginning at 9:30am.

Spend the morning with two of the most respected and thought-provoking water leaders over the past few decades. Felicia Marcus and Pat Mulroy have been iconic representatives of Western water policy helping push the public policy thinking about water in new directions. Equipped with humor, insight and experience join us as they share their streaming wisdom with us.

The webinar will be made available on Zoom. A conference code will be sent to each registered guest prior to the webinar.

Need more information? Please contact Stacy Davis at 949-679-9676 or stacy@urbanwater.com.

Register online at <https://www.urbanwater.com/webinar/>.

UWI COVID-19 Survey

(from page one) ... Question 1: In what areas has the COVID-19 pandemic altered operations at your utility? Check all that apply.

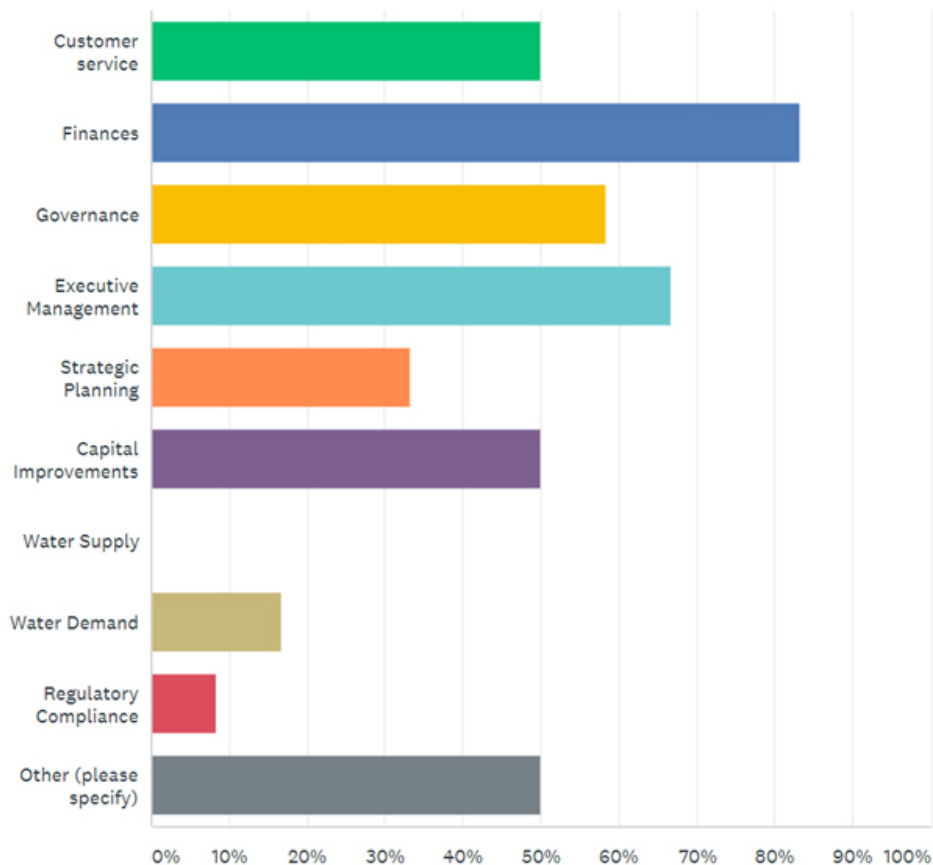


Figure 1: Areas of impacts due to COVID-19

Not surprisingly the number one area impacted by COVID-19 is Finance, followed closely behind by Executive Management, then Governance. It was a 3-way tie for the next place with Customer Service, Capital Improvements, and the 'Other' category. The types of things included in the 'Other' category are: employment practices, safety and training practices, allowing remote work, and increasing labor costs. In this case the 'Other' category clustered around HR practices generally handled in-person, with the immediate need for more remote work options.

Strategic planning, Water Demand and Regulatory Compliance completed the list of COVID-19 adapted impacts.

Interesting that customer service was not at the top of the list. One observation is that much of the communications with customers was converted to electronic and virtual communications some time ago, so the communications virtual platforms existed prior to the pandemic.

The in-person communications model with customers has been moving progressively toward virtual and electronic formats to expand access and allow greater participation by their customers. Even several state agencies, such as the State Water Resources Control Board, have recently noted that they were fortunate to have shifted to online forms of communications previously to receive public input on proposed board decisions.

Some may have predicted that water supply impacts would be higher – with all the new home gardeners emerging during the pandemic. But with people at home more they are also able to practice responsible watering and not rely on over watering schedules as they might have in the past.

The key areas of finance, executive management and governance comprise a basic organizational leadership triangle for many of our member organizations. For over a decade these functions have incorporated in-person. ... (see page three for more)

(from page three) ... collaborations, including active listening sessions with stakeholders inside and outside the organization. Those activities have enhanced the executive management functions of the organizations and our members recognize the need to keep them as a part of the decision-making process. That trifecta is perhaps the key suite of impacts felt immediately and at the very top of the organization.

In follow up we asked the next question:

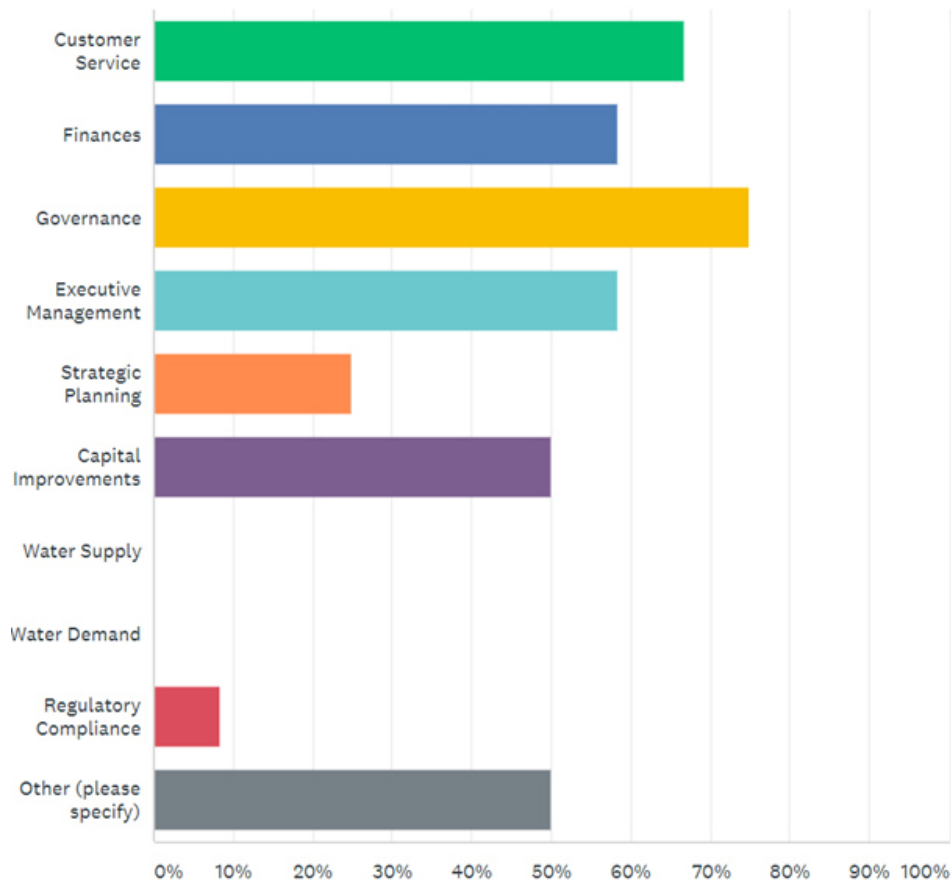
Question 2: In what areas have you adopted modified practices to adjust to the impacts of COVID-19?

We wanted to compare the areas they reported as being impacted by the pandemic with the areas they have modified during these past several months.

As expected, the trio of leadership areas – finance, governance and executive management made the list at a high level. But Customer Service responses reported the second highest values. While there may not have been an urgent need to shift the style and format for customer interactions, it appears utilities also recognized the value of enhancing and changing up their customer service operations as a preventive and attentive strategy. Assuring the customers that the organization is adjusting operations appropriately reflects their service is in good hands. Calling out customer service as a priority is a tenet in the water industry and these survey results reflect that.

The 'Other' category of changes includes the following: use of technology, slower invoice collections, delayed water use efficiency investments, online delivery of education programs, and modified work locations/schedules to accommodate employee childcare needs. ... (see page four for more)

Figure 2: Areas of Changes to Adapt to COVID-19 Impacts



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Groundwater Mapping (continued)

(from page one) ... **A one-of-its-kind tool for water managers**

While at least two other tools exist to help choose locations for groundwater recharge, the UCSB students' mapping platform is unique in that it allows users to consider more factors to identify locations and leverages open-source data, making it less expensive. Users can customize the weighting of those factors, which include groundwater-dependent ecosystems, permeability of soils, water quality considerations and proximity to water conveyance.

In addition to EDF experts, the students consulted recharge experts like Kamyar Guivetchi, a manager with the California Department of Water Resources, who praised their work.

"The Recharge for Resilience team has developed a flexible, publicly available and easy-to-use spatial analysis tool to assist water and resource managers design groundwater recharge projects that can provide an array of benefits – aquifer replenishment, local water resilience, flood risk reduction and ecosystem enhancement," Guivetchi said.

More data to deliver multiple benefits

The students compiled public data from a variety of sources to build the tool. The ArcMap based model is available for download [here](#).

"We considered recharge suitability based on soil and subsurface conditions as well as historic agricultural inputs that could adversely affect groundwater quality," explained Jenny Balmagia, who worked on the project as a summer intern at EDF. "We also wanted to highlight areas that could provide multiple benefits with recharge – such as areas near existing wildlife habitat that depend on groundwater and nearby domestic wells that have run dry in past droughts."

While recent analysis has underscored that **groundwater recharge is not a silver bullet** to balance groundwater supply and demand, it is still an important strategy, especially because of the additional community and environmental co-benefits.

(Source: <http://blogs.edf.org/growingreturns/2020/07/10/new-tool-california-groundwater-recharge-maximize-benefits/>)

UWI COVID-19 Survey

(from page three) ... The UWI membership is diverse, with water utilities of all sizes and a wide array of services. Yet the overall results of the survey of impacts and changes and adaptations occurring during the pandemic reflect similarities among the responders. As water utilities have evolved to use more and more in-person participation in the leadership functions of the organization, the value of collaboration has been established as a best practice. As a result, despite the pandemic impacts that limit in-person gatherings, our members are adapting virtual and electronic means to continue to reap the benefits of stakeholder involvement and have done it seamlessly in a timely fashion.

Coming Soon!

Be on the lookout for our upcoming Zoom Call in October with Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager & CEO for The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD).

MWD is the largest municipal water provider in the nation delivering an average of over 2 billion gallons of water a day to 19 million customers across Southern California.

MWD serves one out of every two Californians in the six counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura.

As general manager, Kightlinger manages the District's \$1.8 billion annual budget and 1,800 employees to ensure the safe and reliable delivery of high quality water every day throughout Southern California. He reports to a board of 38 members representing 26 member agencies.

Kightlinger has an undergraduate degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a law degree from Santa Clara University. He serves on a number of boards including the Coro Foundation, the USC Price School of Public Policy, the UCLA Sustainability Advisory Board, the Climate Action Reserve, the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy, the Los Angeles Economic Development Council and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, among others.



Highlights: California State Legislature

The Legislature was expected to return from its Summer Recess on July 13 but, on July 8, the Senate and the Assembly announced that both bodies were delaying their return from summer recess until July 27. This was the result of two members of the Assembly and several legislative staffers testing positive for COVID-19.



When the Legislature returns, both the Assembly and the Senate plan to limit the number of policy committee hearings they will hold.

At this point in time, nearly 800 bills remain eligible for consideration.

Relatively few of the bills that remain eligible for consideration have been set to be heard in a committee. Additional bills could be set in the coming week, or weeks, as bill authors and advocates press their cases. Legislative Leadership has been clear that the number of bills that will be put up for consideration will be substantially fewer than the number that remain eligible.

Additionally, the Legislature will revisit the State budget following the delay of the tax-filing deadline to July 15.

On Friday, July 17, the Legislative Analyst's Office, which analyzes fiscal matters for the Legislature, noted that personal income tax and corporate tax collections across April to July came in about 20 percent (\$3.7 billion) above projections.

The Legislature is expected to finish the 2020 regular session with votes on the floor of each house from August 17 until adjournment on August 31.

Contributed By: Irvine Ranch Water District, UWI Member

Meet Our August 19, 2020 Webinar Sponsors



Register For UWI's Online Webinar, August 19, 2020 at 9:30am at <http://www.urbanwater.com/webinar>