

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NEW SURVEY FINDS PCWA WATER QUALITY REMAINS AMONG THE BEST IN AMERICA

**Auburn, Calif. (February 15, 2024)** — A new independent survey of conditions in Placer County Water Agency’s American River watershed has found that water quality remains excellent overall, despite some initial concern following recent forest fires and erosion of ash and sediment that followed.

The PCWA Board of Directors on Feb. 15 heard a report from Starr Consulting of Colfax about water quality during the five-year period from January 2018 to December 2022 in the American River watershed.

The survey found that PCWA’s drinking water quality far exceeds regulatory requirements. It also found no need to modify PCWA’s drinking water treatment activities.

“The American River Watershed survey confirmed that PCWA’s drinking water supply from the American River continues to be of exceptionally high quality,” said consultant Bonny Starr. “The survey again reveals that watershed vulnerabilities are being managed to ensure protection of the drinking water supply.”



*The Rubicon River is a tributary of the Middle Fork American River, where PCWA’s Hell Hole Reservoir is located.*

The survey identifies potential contaminants from human and natural activities and how PCWA can manage those contaminants, ensuring drinking water remains safe and reliable. The survey assesses turbidity (suspended sediment), microbiological germs (E. coli, cryptosporidium, giardia), and chemical contaminants that may occur as a result of spills or historic mining.

The State Water Resources Control Board requires the survey be completed every five years. The last survey, also by Starr Consulting, likewise found exceptional water quality throughout PCWA's American River source watershed, which Starr said, "is essentially snow melt."

But since then, nearly 200,000 acres of the American River watershed has burned due to wildfires. The largest of these affecting PCWA, the Mosquito Fire, burned more than 76,700 acres and led to significant erosion. Thus, a concern existed that water quality might be compromised.

"We're very pleased to see these results," said Robert Dugan, chair of PCWA's Board of Directors. "Our customers can rest assured they are receiving some of the best-quality drinking water in America. I'm proud of the work we're doing to safeguard that water supply for the future, including the forest stewardship projects the Agency is leading."



*The French Meadows Forest Restoration Project has been a huge success. Thousands of acres have been treated by removing overgrown brush and thinning trees to help clear the understory and reduce the accumulation of flammable materials.*

Among those projects is the ongoing French Meadows Forest Restoration Project. PCWA is working with the U.S. Forest Service and a number of other partners to thin overgrown forests near and surrounding the reservoir to reduce the risk of another major wildfire. So far, work has occurred on about 12,000 acres to restore the tree density to healthier fire-resistant conditions.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors will be Thursday, March 7, at 2:00 PM, at the PCWA Business Center, 144 Ferguson Road, in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.

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### **About PCWA**

Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) is the primary water resource agency for Placer County, California, with a broad range of responsibilities including water resource planning and management, retail and wholesale supply of drinking water and irrigation water, and production of hydroelectric energy.