

Rural County Representatives of California Annual Report | 2017



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Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)

is dedicated to representing the collective, unique interests of its membership, providing legislative and regulatory representation at the state and federal levels with the mission of protecting and enhancing the quality of life in rural California counties.

The RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected members of the Boards of Supervisors from its 35 member counties. RCRC staff work in partnership with the Board of Directors to deliver a rural perspective when legislation and regulations are being discussed and developed in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

RCRC Represents:



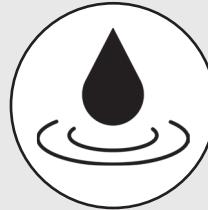
35
MEMBER
COUNTIES



80%
U.S. FOREST
SERVICE LAND



3.7M
RESIDENTS



75%
OF CA'S
AVAILABLE WATER



55%
OF CA'S
LAND MASS



President's Message

Counties are on the front lines in providing a full range of services that are the “nuts and bolts” of representative democracy and service delivery, including conducting elections, maintaining roads, operating jails, managing solid and hazardous waste and administering health and human services programs. California’s rural counties, in particular, must provide these services despite facing tighter budgets, increased responsibilities and additional state mandates.

In addition to our ongoing legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts, I am proud of the progress that we’ve made on rural economic development and community giving. Our economic development efforts are ramping up, with projects focused on rural broadband deployment, water infrastructure, and local export workshops designed to provide resources to rural business owners to take their goods and services to the global market. On the giving front, RCRC and its affiliates have contributed nearly \$4 million to support victims of wildfires, homeless veterans, foster youth and California’s school children. The generosity of our Board of Directors continues to amaze me and I know this substantial investment in rural California will serve as a legacy for the organization.

I am grateful to our Board of Directors and proud of the work we’ve accomplished this year. This annual report will provide a summary of some – but certainly not all – of the issues addressed and programs engaged in by RCRC throughout the year. Many challenges still lie ahead and we appreciate the opportunity to help improve the quality of life in rural California.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Norton". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Greg Norton
President and CEO

Key 2017 Legislative Wins

<p>Assembly Bill 1250 (Jones-Sawyer) County Contracting</p>	<p>AB 1250 seeks to establish restrictions on the use of personal service contracts by counties. AB 1250, which RCRC opposes, will inhibit counties from contracting with nonprofits and others to provide critical county services. AB 1250 continues to await consideration in the Senate Rules Committee.</p>
<p>Senate Bill 94 & Assembly Bill 133 Cannabis Regulatory Structure</p>	<p>This legislative package unifies both the medical scheme and the adult-use scheme to achieve a single regulatory structure for cannabis.</p>
<p>Senate Bill 1 (Beall) Transportation Funding</p>	<p>SB 1 provides additional monies for maintaining the existing road and highway infrastructure. The package is based largely on increasing taxes on motor fuels and indexing them in future years.</p>
<p>Senate Bill 649 (Hueso) Small Cell Towers</p>	<p>Vetoed by Governor Brown, SB 649 was strongly opposed by a coalition of local government associations, including RCRC, the California State Association of Counties, Urban Counties of California, the League of California Cities and the American Planning Association. SB 649 would have required counties to allow small cell wireless facilities on public property both in and out of the public right-of-way for a lease rate far below market rate.</p>
<p>Cap-and-Trade Program</p>	<p>The Legislature passed an extension of the state's Cap-and-Trade auction program and expenditure plan. There are three critical items of importance to RCRC member counties in the Cap-and-Trade package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates the State Responsibility Area fee permanently and backfills the fund from Cap-and-Trade auction proceeds through 2030 • Appropriates \$200M in funding for healthy forest programs to alleviate wildfire risk and aid in tree mortality mitigation • Appropriates \$40M in funding to the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery for organics diversion programs <p>Unfortunately, the Cap-and-Trade package did not contain a modified definition of "disadvantaged communities" (DACs) that will allow more rural areas to compete for targeted Cap-and-Trade dollars. RCRC will continue to advocate for a broader definition of DAC throughout 2018.</p>
<p>Federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes & Secure Rural Schools</p>	<p>Federal PILT funding provided through January 19, 2018 at the 2017 funding levels (\$465M).</p>

Fighting for Local Funding

State Budget

The 2017-18 State Budget Package touted maintaining a balanced budget while preserving the state's core achievements from the past four years, including K-12 education, higher education, counteracting the effects of poverty, strengthening infrastructure and paying down debts and liabilities.

Key issues and changes affecting RCRC member counties included:



\$400M to mitigate the In-Home Support Services cost shift associated with the elimination of the Maintenance of Effort within the Coordinated Care Initiative



\$97.6M to continue/commerce activities associated with the regulation of both medical and adult use cannabis, and the creation of a single unified regulatory scheme for both medical and adult use commercial cannabis activities



\$42.3M to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to increase staffing and purchase equipment to complete a greater number of fuels reduction projects (including tree mortality mitigation projects) during off-peak season



\$3M in economic development grant funding through the California Small Business Development Center



\$644K for the State's Payment in Lieu of Taxes program



Additional monies to expand the rural Certified Unified Program Agency program to an additional eleven rural counties



The reduction and repurpose of emergency drought response funding to address "drought legacy issues"



Additional funding to K-12 education and community colleges



A modest amount of additional monies for state fairs



Significant reforms to the State Board of Equalization



PHOTO CREDIT: JANICE CARABINE

Preserving the Quality of Life in Rural California

Senate Bill 447 (Nielsen) Assessment

Appeals Boards

SB 447 authorizes two or more counties to create Assessment Appeals Boards to hear taxpayer appeals. SB 447 helps low-population counties to maximize the use of Assessment Appeals Boards given the complex nature of developing the county's property tax roll.

Redefining Disadvantaged Communities

As part of the Cap-and-Trade extension package, RCRC advocated for a more equitable definition of "disadvantaged communities" (DACs) and/or "low income communities." A change in the language would capture more communities in RCRC member counties. Under the current definition, 27 of California's rural counties are immediately disqualified from accessing funding specifically directed for DACs. Unfortunately, the Cap-and-Trade package did not contain a modified definition of DACs that will allow more rural areas to compete for targeted Cap-and-Trade dollars.

Housing Package

Governor Brown signed into law a 15-bill housing package aimed at creating more affordable housing in California. Two funding bills, Senate Bill 2 (Atkins), which provides a permanent source of affordable housing funding, and Senate Bill 3 (Beall), which authorizes a \$4B bond for housing require voter approval in November 2018.

2018 Farm Bill

Approximately every five years, Congress establishes agricultural, food and rural policy in an omnibus Farm Bill. Many of the provisions in the current Farm Bill are set to expire in 2018 and Congress has begun the reauthorization process. There are several titles of interest to rural California, including the Rural Development Title and the Forestry Title. Working with our federal advocacy team in 2017, RCRC has initiated preliminary conversations with key members of Congress and staff on the importance of retaining adequate funding for these Titles and is revisiting the definition of "rural" by which these program funds are disbursed. The current population threshold of 35,000 continues to ill-serve rural counties and RCRC is advocating for an increase in the population threshold to 50,000. This definition should be standardized for all rural development programs at this population limit.

Senate Bill 1 (Beall) Transportation Funding

SB 1, a transportation financial package, was enacted to provide the resources for helping maintain the existing road and highway infrastructure. This RCRC-supported measure provides approximately \$52B in new transportation revenues (over a 10-year period) to address the approximately \$6B annual state and \$8B annual local transportation maintenance backlog.

Stewarding California's Natural Resources

Federal Forest Reform/Wildfire Funding

This year, a number of federal legislative measures were introduced that contained provisions of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDFFA), which seeks to end the practice of “fire borrowing” by treating catastrophic wildfires like other natural disasters. Under the WDFFA, the actual disaster response for catastrophe-level wildfire events would be issued from a different funding source than the bottom-line federal land management agencies’ budgets from which prevention and forest management projects are funded.

RCRC recognizes that the current funding system leaves fire prevention and other forest management activities shortchanged and will continue to advocate for a common sense approach toward reducing the effects and severity of wildfires in California over the past decade.

Tree Mortality

California’s forests are experiencing unprecedented levels of tree die-off due to pest infestation caused by several years of extreme drought conditions. RCRC has been a leading force in the efforts to address the public health and safety risks posed by the growing numbers of dying trees in an effort to address tree mortality mitigation.

Senate Bill 623 (Monning) Water Quality

SB 623 would establish the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund and provide grants, loans or services to assist those without access to safe and affordable drinking water. The funding to accomplish these goals includes fees on public water system

connections. The proposed fee ranges from \$0.95 per month to \$10 per month. At the request of RCRC, water systems of 200 service connections or less would be exempt from this charge, as are specified low-income customers and non-potable uses of water. SB 623 is a two-year bill and RCRC will continue working with the author in 2018.

California WaterFix/Water Infrastructure Investments

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) certified the environmental analysis of the proposed WaterFix (also known as the “twin tunnels” project), a key milestone in the modernization of the state’s water delivery system by which water would move through the Delta. In addition to the certification, DWR and the Federal Bureau of Reclamation have completed a substantial portion of the proceedings before the State Water Resources Control Board to change the point of diversion for the state and federal water projects to allow operation of the proposed WaterFix project. RCRC will continue to work on assuring long-term water supply reliability and the need for additional investments in an aging water infrastructure system.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Implementation

June 30, 2017 marked the first key deadline under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). By this date, proposed agency boundaries and organizational structures were to have been adopted for submission to the Department of Water Resources. Approximately 99 percent of the state’s groundwater basins now have a Groundwater Sustainability Agency identified as part of SGMA implementation.



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS STARKEY

Providing the Rural Perspective on Statewide Regulations

Cap-and-Trade

The Legislature passed an extension of the state's Cap-and-Trade auction program and expenditure plan. Of importance to RCRC member counties, the Cap-and-Trade package:

- Eliminates the State Responsibility Area fee permanently and backfills the fund from Cap-and-Trade auction proceeds through 2030
- Appropriates \$200M in funding for healthy forest programs to alleviate wildfire risk and aid in tree mortality mitigation
- Appropriates \$40M in funding to CalRecycle for organics diversion programs

Cannabis

Budget trailer bills Senate Bill 94 and Assembly Bill 133 harmonize the medical cannabis and adult-use cannabis regulatory structure. Initially, RCRC and local government partners opposed AB 133; however, counties removed their opposition due to productive discussions with the Brown Administration. AB 133 was signed into law by Governor Brown.

Solid Waste

This year, RCRC and its Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority (ESJPA) staff focused primarily on proposed mandatory organics diversion regulations, disposal reporting requirements and "Bottle Bill" reform.

Of importance, RCRC-supported Senate Bill 458 (Wiener) will, until July 1, 2020, direct CalRecycle to authorize up to five limited-term mobile recycling pilot projects that are designed to improve redemption opportunities in unserved convenience zones.

Protecting Local Control

Assembly Bill 1250 (Jones-Sawyer) County Contracting

AB 1250 would establish restrictions on the use of personal service contracts by counties. AB 1250 does not address RCRC's concerns as it will continue to inhibit counties from contracting with nonprofits and others to provide critical county services. This RCRC-opposed bill continues to await consideration in the Senate Rules Committee.

Senate Bill 649 (Hueso) Small Cell Towers

One of RCRC's top priorities in 2017 was the defeat of SB 649, which would have amended an existing law which states that a wireless telecommunications facility is subject to a city or county discretionary permit and is required to comply with specified criteria. Despite promises made by the wireless industry, the sponsor of SB 649, the bill would have eliminated public input and full local environmental and design review. This RCRC-opposed bill was vetoed by Governor Brown.



Supervisor Bob Williams, RCRC's 2017 Board Chair at the podium. (Tehama County)

Economic Development

California's rural communities continue to face many challenges maintaining and growing economic competitiveness while retaining and attracting an educated and qualified 21st century workforce. Innovative policy approaches are necessary to strengthen and grow critical and emerging industry sectors that will attract the living-wage jobs rural communities need.

The following is a synopsis of RCRC's 2017 economic development project priorities:

Rural Broadband Deployment

The Digital Divide continues to persist throughout California's rural communities. High-speed broadband deployment in rural California is one of the most critical missing infrastructure components and often precludes unserved and underserved communities from competing in the 21st century economy. High-speed broadband provides essential benefits by allowing increased economic and trade opportunities for small to medium-sized businesses, access to medical care (telehealth/telemedicine) and educational opportunities (distance learning), enhanced public safety and improving overall quality of life.

Water Infrastructure

RCRC is working with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and several counties to secure grant and low-interest loan funding necessary to rehabilitate and construct water and wastewater treatment facilities throughout rural communities. RCRC is working to develop innovative funding mechanisms and programs and advocates for legislation that can assist rural communities with planning, designing, financing and operating and maintaining water, wastewater, storm drain and collection and other similar systems.

Global Trade & Small Business Workshop Series

RCRC partnered with the California Centers for International Trade Development, the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development and the U.S. Department of Commerce to host a series of free workshops across rural California. These workshops included a series of industry expert speakers who outlined exporting basics, trade opportunities and resources available to take their products and services to global markets. The speakers also provided details about California's various incentives and services available to small and medium-sized businesses.



**Approximately seven
water projects are currently
under review with USDA
and county staff.**



Connie Stewart

2017 President's Award

Presented during RCRC's Annual Meeting each September, RCRC's President's Award was established to acknowledge individuals that exceed their everyday roles to further advance the cause of rural counties. Connie Stewart, Executive Director for the California Center on Rural Policy, received the 2017 RCRC President's Award for her efforts on two key public policy areas – rural health care and the deployment of broadband in rural California. Ms. Stewart remains RCRC's go-to person for on-the-ground advice to help expand broadband deployment in rural communities.



**Assemblymember
Anna Caballero**



**Senator
John Moorlach**

2017 Rural Leadership Awards

RCRC's Rural Leadership Awards are presented each January at RCRC's Installation of Officers and Rural Leadership Awards Reception. The award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated an understanding of, and leadership in, rural issues and the unique challenges that rural communities face. Assemblymember Anna Caballero (D-Monterey) and Senator John Moorlach (R-Orange) were the recipients of RCRC's 2017 Rural Leadership Awards.

**We couldn't have come this
far without the hard work and
commitment of our volunteer leadership
and courageous partners.**

Thank you!

Community Give-Back

RCRC and its affiliates, Golden State Finance Authority and National Homebuyers Fund, Inc., (NHF) have contributed nearly \$4M to California's rural counties and residents. Aligning community giving with the organizations' missions has led to funding a human trafficking education program, renovating an apartment complex for homeless veterans, providing disaster assistance to Californians impacted by wildfires and providing a laptop computer to every eligible foster youth and former foster youth within RCRC's member counties.

PROTECT

The Prevention Organized to Educate Children on Trafficking (PROTECT) program was founded by three anti-human trafficking organizations – 3Strands Global, Love Never Fails and Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives – with the goal to reduce the vulnerability of the state's children to human trafficking. PROTECT uses a three-pronged approach to fight human trafficking by providing educational curriculum modules for school-aged children in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 and training for educators and professionals.

Veterans Housing

As part of its commitment to support veteran housing projects, NHF joined Volunteers of America, HomeAid Sacramento and several other public and private donors to fund the Dealynn Street Veterans Housing project in Sacramento. The Dealynn Street project consists of three separate buildings, with 12, two-bedroom, one-bath apartment units. Once completed, the project will provide an additional 23 beds for local homeless veterans and their families from Sacramento, Placer, Yolo and El Dorado Counties.

NHF donated \$320K towards the renovation project to bridge the gap in funding needed to bring the project to completion.

Emergency Disaster Assistance

Wildfires have devastated rural communities throughout the state over the past several years, destroying lives and property. Recovery from these disasters often takes years and leaves many in immediate need of temporary housing and funds to assist in rebuilding.

GSFA has provided \$2.5M in funding to assist residents impacted by wildfires in Calaveras, Lake, Mariposa, Butte, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada and Yuba Counties.

Laptops for Foster Youth

In December, RCRC and NHF allocated a total of \$400K to support the iFoster 1 Laptop Program in RCRC's 35 member counties. Research shows having access to a computer at home impacts three key measures: academic performance, social connectedness and life satisfaction. iFoster's mission is to ensure that every child growing up outside of their biological home has the resources they need to become independent adults and have access to the opportunities to reach their full potential.

The one-time contribution will provide a laptop to the 1,139 eligible foster youth aged 16-21 within RCRC's 35 member counties.

In 2015, RCRC and NHF provided nearly \$500K in grant funding to launch PROTECT, a statewide educational program in RCRC's 35 member counties.

External Affairs

RCRC's external affairs program was established to supplement the advocacy efforts of the governmental affairs team. The main objectives of RCRC's external affairs strategy are:

- To increase RCRC's visibility, profile and awareness with the California legislature, state and local media representatives and RCRC member counties
- To position RCRC as the rural thought leader and "voice" for rural county issues in California
- To educate urban-focused media regarding the efforts and contributions of rural counties

Member County Resources

Website (www.rcrcnet.org)

RCRC's website serves as an up-to-date resource for members, media, legislators and staff, housing RCRC's advocacy letters, reports, The Barbed Wire, press releases and news clips along with descriptions and positions on the myriad issues impacting California's rural counties.

Newsletter: The Barbed Wire

Distributed weekly, The Barbed Wire highlights the latest state and federal legislative and regulatory news impacting California's rural counties. A trusted source for local media outlets, The Barbed Wire is a clearinghouse for resources and opportunities available to California counties.

Find us:



Executive and Legislative Roster



Greg Norton,
*President and
CEO*



**Mary-Ann
Warmerdam,**
*Senior Legislative
Advocate*



Craig Ferguson,
*Vice President
Business Operations*



Tracy Rhine,
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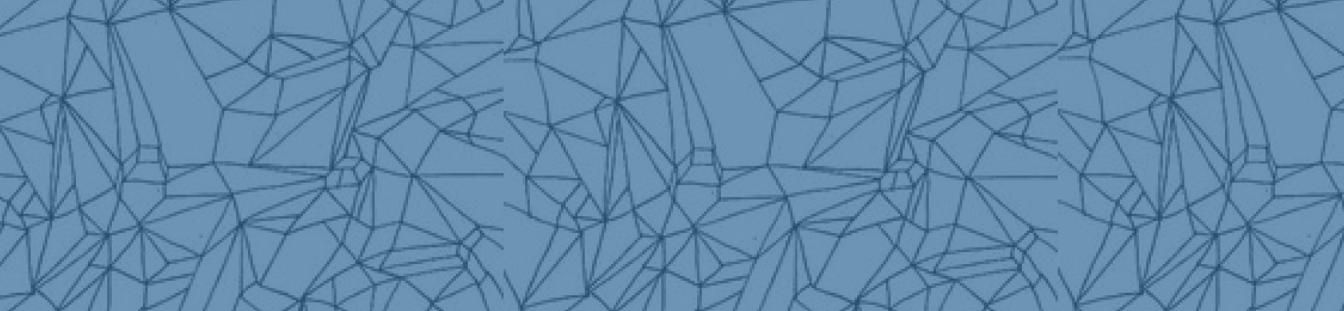


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