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**Regional Collaboration Key to State's Future,
California's Top Water Official Says**
Lester Snow Cites Regional Water Authority As Example

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The state's new water resources chief says regional projects that optimize water supplies and increase flexibility will be the driving force in California's water future.

Addressing members of the Regional Water Authority (RWA) on March 24, Lester Snow hailed efforts by Sacramento-area water agencies to craft regional strategies that integrate surface and groundwater and increase overall water supply reliability.

"California's water future is clearly multi-purpose, multi-party regional projects," said Snow, who took office this month as director of the California Department of Water Resources. "It's going to be regional strategies, working together to optimize resources and develop regional and integrated plans. RWA already is going that direction."

Snow added that regional programs that emphasize flexibility, conjunctive use of surface and groundwater and water transfers will be ahead of the game in the future.

"Those who get there first will benefit from the programs and funding available. RWA is way down that road already," Snow said, pointing to RWA's success in securing a \$22 million Proposition 13 grant to implement a regional conjunctive use program.

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Snow stressed that California has a fundamental need for more storage – both surface water and groundwater. He said efforts are underway this year to identify which of five surface storage projects under study should move forward for further review.

He also said the department is committed to helping groundwater management and other programs move ahead as part of the Sacramento Valley Water Management Agreement. Another top priority is the Delta Improvements Package, which he said captures the “whole essence of the CALFED Program in a microcosm in the Delta.”

“We have to show that we can get increased water supply reliability, better water quality and environmental protection, and do it all together,” Snow said.

Other key issues include crafting a state water management framework as part of the department’s Bulletin 160 update. “We want to take a hard look at that to make sure it is a business-oriented framework that regions can fit within and develop their own implementation strategies,” Snow said. “It’s not easy, but it’s the right way to move forward.”

Financing water programs and facilities over the long term is another challenge, he said. Given the state’s budget crisis, the Administration likely will be reluctant to promote another large water bond. “There is a legitimate question now about how we will fund the kinds of projects that need to be built,” he said. “There will be lots of opinions. We need to go through the exercise and come up with a strategy.”

Snow addressed members of RWA as part of a board workshop held in Roseville. RWA is a joint powers authority representing 21 water-related entities in the greater Sacramento area. Its primary mission is to help its members protect and enhance the reliability, availability, affordability and quality of water resources.

RWA members include California-American Water Company, Carmichael Water District, Citrus Heights Water District, City of Folsom, City of Lincoln, City of Roseville, City of Sacramento, Del Paso Manor Water District, El Dorado Irrigation District, El Dorado County Water Agency (associate), Fair Oaks Water District, Fruitridge Vista Water Company, Orange Vale Water Company, Placer County Water Agency, Rancho Murieta Community Services District, Rio Linda / Elverta Community Water District, Sacramento Suburban Water

District, Sacramento Regional Sanitation District (associate), San Juan Water District, Southern California Water Company, and Sacramento Municipal Utility District (associate.)

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