



The 2022 RURAL RECAP

*A report from the Rural
County Representatives of
California Government
Affairs team*





Patrick Blacklock
RCRC President and CEO

THE YEAR 2022

At A Glance

With coordinated and sustained effort, RCRC embarked on the implementation of the 2022-2025 RCRC Strategic Plan under the leadership of RCRC Chair, Nevada County Supervisor Dan Miller; First Vice Chair, Butte County Supervisor, Doug Teeter; Second Vice Chair, Monterey County Supervisor, Chris Lopez; and Immediate Past Chair, Mono County Supervisor, Stacy Corless with the aim of enhancing and protecting the quality of life in California's rural counties.

Throughout the year, the RCRC advocacy team visited rural communities and met with supervisors, senior staff, and local officials as they discussed and explored issues of utmost importance to our counties.

In April, RCRC formed two ad hoc advisory committees to share feedback to inform key legislative and regulatory priorities; identify potential strategies for the next iteration of the Strategic Plan, and be a venue for related conversations with State and Federal agencies and Legislative representatives. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Drought and Water Resiliency, and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Cannabis concluded their work with recommendations to the RCRC Board of Directors in the respective focus areas.

At RCRC's Annual Meeting, the Basket Drawing and Auction which features county themed baskets from each of RCRC's member counties, raised \$67,150 through the generosity of the rural community and business leaders. The proceeds were presented to four Nevada County nonprofit organizations during the October meeting of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

During 2022, RCRC welcomed both Solano County and Kings County to its membership, making RCRC a forty-member-strong county mutual benefit organization.



*RCRC is the premiere advocate
and innovative service provider
for rural counties in California.*

RCRC 2022 Rural Leadership Awards

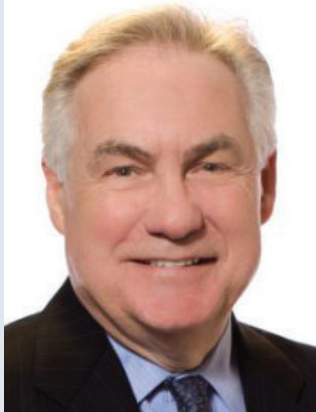


Angela Avery

Executive Officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)

As the Executive Officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (Conservancy), Ms. Avery has worked tirelessly to restore the health and resilience of California's Sierra Nevada-Cascade region. Under her leadership, the Conservancy has been a key partner in local forest health and community strengthening projects. Most notably, Ms. Avery has played a central role in leading the Conservancy's Watershed Improvement Program, developing the Sierra Nevada Landscape Investment Strategy and Landscape Grant Pilot program, bringing attention to the resurgence of California's tree mortality problem in the wake of recent drought, and supporting RCRC member counties and their communities after the State's most devastating wildfires.

Inside the 2022 Rural Recap



Jim Patterson

Member of the California State Assembly

Assembly Member Jim Patterson (R-Fresno, AD-8) has demonstrated leadership on a wide range of issues impacting rural counties—most notably wildfire risk reduction, community safety, and the Williamson Act. He recently authored several bills, strongly supported by RCRC, that reflect a desire to improve the quality of life in rural areas: AB 1154, sponsored by RCRC, sought to create CEQA exemptions for egress route projects in high wildfire risk areas; AB 1773, would have appropriated \$40 million to make Williams Act subvention payments to counties; AB 1078, would have exempted rebuilds of homes destroyed in the catastrophic 2020 wildfires from new California Energy Commission solar power mandates; and AB 431, signed into law in 2021, extended the sunset date for an exemption for the state’s timber harvest plan requirements for projects to create defensible space around structures in high-fire risk areas.

understanding of, and leadership in, rural issues and the unique challenges that rural communities face.

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RCRC engaged in a variety of issues in 2022. Read about a few of the noteworthy issues of the year.

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RCRC Counties

View the map of member counties, a listing of the Board of Directors, and a listing of RCRC staff and advocacy areas.



2022 HOT ISSUES

CARE Court

In March 2022, Governor Newsom unveiled the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court legislation SB 1338, authored by Senator Thomas Umberg (D-Santa Ana) and Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman (D-Stockton). SB 1338 requires that a CARE Act Court be established in all 58 counties, as the venue for a new civil court process designed to provide treatment and long-term plans for those suffering with psychotic disorders. SB 1338 imposes new mandated activities on counties, including but not limited to county behavioral health agencies, county counsel, and public defenders, which will require both one-time and ongoing resources and funding to implement. As the State's partners in delivering critical behavioral health assessments and care, social services, and housing resources, Counties play a substantial role in implementing SB 1338.

RCRC engaged the Legislature and Administration throughout 2022 to address the implementation challenges and resource needs surrounding CARE Court. RCRC was a key advocate, partnering alongside the Urban Counties of California, the California State Association of Counties, and the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California. The extraordinary advocacy work of the group was instrumental in securing significant CARE Court improvements, including some key "wins" for counties:

- Phase-in implementation period.
- Improvements to the sanction process.
- Bolstering private insurance requirements around reimbursement.
- CARE Court petition and process improvements.
- County immunity provisions.
- Start-up planning funding for all 58 counties.
- Additional start-up funding for Cohort One counties.
- Commitment for ongoing county funding.

RCRC will continue CARE Court advocacy in 2023 to address implementation issues and to ensure the provision of adequate funding and resources.



Energy

RCRC's focus on energy issues has been a byproduct of our counties' devastating losses from utility-caused wildfires, the disproportionate impact power outage events on our communities, and the need for significant utility infrastructure investment in rural areas.

RCRC continues to engage with regulatory agencies to improve the safety, reliability and affordability of energy for rural counties. RCRC continues to grow its formal involvement in various California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) proceedings, including a joint RCRC/ESJPA effort for solid waste facilities to help meet local SB 1383 procurement requirements. RCRC continues to weigh in on CPUC implementation of RCRC-supported legislation allowing Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) to participate in the Bioenergy Market Adjusting Tariff (BioMAT) Program.

Additionally, RCRC convened a county-driven working group with PG&E's executive management, the CPUC, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, and CAL FIRE to resolve public safety concerns with PG&E's vegetation management practices, especially with regard to the risks of utilities leaving felled wood in place on private property and community sites.



2022

Noteworthy Issues

Wildfire Prevention and Forest Resilience

The year 2022 saw a distinct focus on wildfire resilience, as the state began programs dedicated to aiding residents in high wildfire hazard severity zones by making their homes more fire-resistant. RCRC was appointed to the state's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee, which was formed pursuant to 2021's Assembly Bill 9 (Wood) as a forum for addressing wildfire mitigation issues and providing resources to California residents.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal continued to aid residents through its California Wildfire Mitigation Program, granting up to \$40,000 per home in three pilot counties (Lake, Shasta, and San Diego) to make them more fire resilient.

RCRC supported several measures to address the state's progress on meeting its wildfire mitigation and forest resilience goals, including the RCRC-sponsored Assembly Bill 1154 (Patterson), which would have expedited safety improvements for communities in high fire risk areas that lack a secondary egress route, and Senate Bill 926 (Dodd) which creates the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program to help encourage the use of prescribed fire for wildfire prevention by non-governmental entities. RCRC also worked with partners to halt measures that would have dramatically impacted the ability of rural communities to complete wildfire mitigation projects, most notably Assembly Bill 1717 (Aguiar-Curry) which would have required payment of prevailing wage for projects done under contract and funded by public dollars. AB 1717 was vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom.

RCRC continued to lead on wildfire policy through the Wildfire and Forest Stewardship Ad Hoc Committee, which completed its work in September 2022. The Committee met with state, federal and local wildfire and forest resilience policy leaders and made significant policy recommendations to the RCRC Board of Directors, which were adopted by the Board at its June 2022 meeting.



Board of Forestry County Operations Water and Drought

Water and Drought

The 2022 Legislative Session ended with significant action on major pieces of legislation. While not all water-related legislation were ultimately passed or signed into law, they collectively represent increased focus on water by the legislature and administration.

The Legislature successfully passed major legislation, including new, more stringent, indoor residential use standards; as well as legislation to add a new tribal/environmental justice member to the State Water Board.

However, other legislation failed, including by way of the veto pen. Legislation that would have created a new ratepayer assistance program, as well as legislation that would have required new stormwater permitting by State Water Board, were both vetoed by the Governor.

Perhaps the most contentious legislative proposal, which would have limited the ability of counties to approve new well permits, ultimately failed in the Legislature after significant lobbying by parties opposed.

Drought conditions resulted in continued curtailments and missed deliveries by state and federal authorities. However, state and federal activity continued on long-time watershed priorities, including removal of the Klamath River project.

The federal government came closer than ever to imposing restrictions on senior allocators on Lower Colorado Basin states.

2022

Noteworthy Issues

Broadband

In 2022, RCRC continued to build on the efforts made by the State with the passage of Senate Bill 156, which provided an historic \$6 billion investment to help close the Digital Divide, by providing partnership to local and state agencies to implement the array of broadband funding and policy changes.

RCRC has engaged with the California Department of Technology and its Middle Mile Advisory Committee on the mapping of the statewide middle mile network, providing comment on behalf of member counties on needed changes to the planned path of construction. SB 156 provided \$3.25 billion to establish a middle mile broadband network to connect unserved and underserved areas of the state.

RCRC has also facilitated the member county utilization of the Local Agency Technical Assistance program, another broadband funding program established through SB 156, providing not only county application assistance but also contracting expertise and funding award management.

However, priority engagement in 2022 focused on State and Federal last-mile broadband deployment and funding opportunities. RCRC has worked closely with the California Public Utilities Commission on the implementation of the Federal Funding Account and the Loan Loss Reserve Program, making comments on all aspects of the Commission Proceedings implementing SB 156, as well as rulemakings aimed at ensuring telecommunication providers more accountable for customer service quality. RCRC is further engaging heavily at the federal level with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which will be administering the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program that is intended to focus on providing reliable connectivity to traditionally disenfranchised populations, including rural residents.

For a guide to RCRC's legislative advocacy of 2022, see the complete Legislative Digest, available on RCRC's website.

RCRC 2022
Legislative Digest



About RCRC

RCRC is dedicated to representing the collective unique interests of its membership, providing legislative and regulatory representation at the State and Federal levels, and providing responsible services to its members which will enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California counties.



Approximately 1 in 7 Californians reside in RCRC's rural counties



RCRC's 40 counties represent two-thirds of the state's total number of counties (58) and more than half (60 percent) of California's 155,779.22 square miles



More than 80% percent of U.S. Forest Service land in California lies within RCRC member counties



Nearly 75 percent of California's available water originates in the northern third of the state, while over 70 percent of the demand occurs in the southern two-thirds of the state and coastal areas

RCRC Affiliated Entites

Rural Alliance, Inc.

golden state
connect
authority



Rural Counties
Environmental Services
Joint Powers Authority
ESJPA



GOLDEN STATE
NATURAL RESOURCES
Preserve. Provide. Protect.



RCRC COUNTIES



RCRC Board of Directors of 2022

* denotes member not returning - View 2023 RCRC Board of Directors at www.rcrcnet.org

Alpine

David Griffith

Inyo

Matt Kingsley

Monterey

Chris Lopez

Siskiyou

Michael Kobseff

Amador

Brian Oneto

Kings

Doug Verboon (2023)

Napa

Diane Dillon*

Solano

Mitch Mashburn

Butte

Doug Teeter

Lake

Eddie Crandell

Nevada

Dan Miller*

Sonoma

Lynda Hopkins*

Calaveras

Jack Garamendi

Lassen

Aaron Albaugh

Placer

Jim Holmes

Sutter

Mat Conant

Colusa

Denise Carter*

Madera

Robert Poythress

Plumas

Kevin Goss

Tehama

Bob Williams*

Del Norte

Gerry Hemmingsen*

Mariposa

Miles Menetrey

San Benito

Bob Tiffany*

Trinity

Jeremy Brown*

El Dorado

Lori Parlin

Mendocino

Glenn McGourty

San Luis Obispo

John Peschong

Tulare

Dennis Townsend

Glenn

Paul Barr*

Merced

Daron McDaniel

Santa Barbara

Bob Nelson

Tuolumne

Kathleen Haff

Humboldt

Rex Bohn

Modoc

Geri Byrne

Shasta

Tim Garman

Yolo

Angel Barajas

Imperial

Michael Kelley

Mono

Stacy Corless*

Sierra

Lee Adams

Yuba

Randy Fletcher*

RCRC STAFF

Administration Team

Patrick Blacklock, President and Chief Executive Officer*
Maggie Chui, Director of Board Operations
Chris Egan, Management Analyst
Layne Frederiksen, IT Director
Carolyn Jhajj, Communications Director

Business Development Team

Craig Ferguson, Senior Vice President*
Lorraine Cummings, Client Relations Representative
Meagan Harris, Program Administrator/Trainer
Felicia Mills, Client Relations Representative
Danh Nguyen, Program Administrator/Trainer
Anthony Rahill, Director of Data Management
Carolyn Sunseri, Director of Marketing
Peter Tran, Director of Operations

Economic Development Team

Barbara Hayes, Chief Economic Development Officer*
Bob Burriss, Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer
Sarah Bolnik, Economic Development Officer
Terrance Rodgers, Economic Development Officer

Finance and Operations Team

Milena De Melo, Finance Director
Sanjay Lee, Financial Analyst
Julie Lunn, Office Coordinator
Linda Petrillo, Accounting Clerk

Legal Team

Arthur Wylene, General Counsel*
Brian Briggs, Deputy General Counsel

**denotes members of RCRC's
Executive Leadership Team*

RCRC Government Affairs Team

Mary-Ann Warmerdam*

Senior Vice President,
Government Affairs

Agriculture, Federal Affairs



Staci Heaton

Senior Policy Advocate

*Air Quality, Forest & Public Lands
Stewardship, Water Quality, Wildlife*



Tracy Rhine

Senior Policy Advocate

*Community & Economic
Development, Telecommunications*



Sarah Dukett

Policy Advocate

*Cannabis, County Operations, Health
Care & Social Services, Public Safety
& Emergency Management*



Leigh Kammerich

Policy Advocate

*Cannabis, Energy, Emergency
Management, Electric Vehicles, Water
Quality*



John Kennedy

Policy Advocate

*CEQA/NEPA, Energy, Solid Waste
Management*



Sidd Nag

Policy Advocate

*Farm Land Conservation,
Transportation, Water & Wildlife*



Dorothy Poole

Government Affairs
Operations Manager



Eric Will

Policy Analyst



Visit RCRC Online

// www.rcrcnet.org

Contact Us

// (916) 447-4806

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**For the latest news, subscribe to RCRC's
weekly newsletter, *The Barbed Wire*.**

*Cover photo by Jay Coberly (Inyo County), Winner
of the RCRC 2022 Rural County Photo Contest*