

TEMPORARY WATER TRANSFERS



Looking for alternative sources of revenue?

Have you considered a short-term or temporary water transfer?

Temporary water transfers are becoming more and more common and are being routinely permitted by the State on a regular basis. **In fact, approximately 560,000 acre-feet of water are permitted for temporary transfer in 2020. That's enough to serve well over 1 million homes for a year.**

Whether it is surface water or groundwater, you may be able to make a temporary transfer of water without risk to your permanent water right. A temporary water transfer is just that, a one-time, temporary transfer of a portion of a seller's water right to a willing buyer.

Interwest staff have successfully led multiple temporary water transfers for public agencies in California resulting in millions of dollars of additional revenue to selling agencies. We have experience with permitting the transfer of both surface and groundwater. Transfers through the Delta have used both the State and Federal Water Projects. These have involved the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the State Department of Water Resources, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Please let us know if you would like to learn more about water transfers, and if they are feasible for your agency.

What is a temporary water transfer?

A water transfer is a reallocation of water among water users and provides benefit to both the seller and the buyer. Water transfers between sellers and buyers can help stretch California's water supplies in dry times, move water to places of critical need and provide flexibility in the allocation and use of water in California. Water transfers are one of the water management tools used by the State to enhance flexibility in the allocation and use of water in California. Transfers are particularly useful for meeting critical needs during drought periods, and in helping to balance over drafted groundwater basins.

Each year hundreds of water transfers occur in California. While most of these transfers are within the same hydrologic basin, water transfers between different basins are becoming more common. Most of the water transfers are short-term, meaning they are in effect less than one year. The regulatory approval process for this type of water transfer is less onerous and does not result in a long-term obligation to the selling agency. In addition, most water transfers seek to move water from northern areas of the state to central and southern areas.

Simplified rules of thumb regarding your ability to transfer water are:

1. You can transfer water if it is your water (you hold a legal water right).
2. The transfer does not injure another legal water user or unreasonably affect instream beneficial uses.

The approval process will depend on the type of water right you hold, whether the transfer is in-basin or across basin boundaries, and what path the transferred water will take to reach the buyer.



For more information, please contact our Water Policy and Planning Team.

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