

# Water Projects at a Glance

## RECENTLY COMPLETED

### [How Can California Protect Its Water Supply From Wildfire?](#)

*Funder: U.S. Geological Survey through the California Institute for Water Resources*

California's ability to provide access to clean and affordable drinking water is threatened by the increasing frequency and severity of wildfires across the state. This project brought together leading academic researchers and stakeholders across disciplines and institutions to identify opportunities to advance research at the water-fire nexus.

### [First-of-Its-Kind Needs Analysis for Drinking Water in California](#)

*Funder: California State Water Resources Control Board*

Supported by a \$3 million contract, this study identified a risk for failure among a significant portion of the state's drinking water systems. The report is the first comprehensive analysis of how clean water is provided in California, and it estimates how much it would cost to deliver safe water to every resident.

### [Keeping the Lights and Water On: COVID-19 and Utility Debt](#)

*Funder: Chan Zuckerberg Initiative*

We assessed household utility debt burden in Los Angeles and found that between 25% and 30% of all households face financial difficulties paying for water and electricity. Communities of color face the greatest utility debt burden. Our recommendations inform equitable, accessible, and targeted relief programs for low-income ratepayers during and after the pandemic.

### [Testing and Eliminating Lead Exposure in Drinking Water in Early Care and Education Sites](#)

*Funder: First 5 LA*

This partnership supported the implementation of a state-legislated program to test for and remediate lead in drinking water and other water quality issues affecting children in daycare facilities in Los Angeles County. We convened three community roundtable discussions which informed policy recommendations.

### [Informing California's Water Affordability Actions](#)

*Funder: California State Water Resources Control Board*

We worked with all major water system providers and environmental justice groups in California to provide the conceptual and empirical evidence base for a state-wide low-income rate assistance program for drinking water—the first of its kind in the U.S. In February 2020, the Water Board in collaboration with the Luskin Center released the report containing our analysis and recommendations for this statewide program.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

### [Human Right to Water Solutions Lab Launch](#)

LCI has launched the Human Right to Water Solutions Lab, directed by Greg Pierce and advised by a team of 11 collaborators from across the U.S. The lab will support policy, advocacy, and civic leadership solutions to advance the Human Right to Water across the United States. The lab's three objectives are

to: advance fundamental research, generate user-friendly data and training resources, and provide practical support and amplify collaborator efforts.

### **An Initial Roadmap for a National Drinking Water Quality Needs Assessment**

*Partners: Rural Community Assistance Partnership and The Water Foundation*

LCI led an effort of partners to support the California State Water Board to perform the first comprehensive analysis, the “Needs Assessment” of how safe water is provided in California. Other states have similar drinking water quality funding needs but lack the data and assessment to fully motivate or map out investments. This scoping effort, informed by an advisory committee and interviews, will present an initial roadmap for individual states and the federal government to carry out similar, albeit not identical, drinking water quality needs assessments.

### **Mapping Water System Governance in Los Angeles County**

*Funder: The Water Foundation*

Los Angeles County contains a complex network of over 200 community water systems, each managed by a separate set of decision-makers and policies. We are creating a mapping tool to empower residents to understand who governs their water and become active participants in holding their water system leaders accountable to provide clean and affordable drinking water.

### **Assessing the Success of L.A. County’s Safe Clean Water Program**

*Funder: L.A. County Flood Control District*

L.A. County’s Safe Clean Water program funds projects to capture, clean, and reuse water runoff — and ultimately strengthen the local ecosystem and build community resilience. We are conducting a 2-year study with collaborators from across UCLA, funded by the L.A. County Flood Control District. Our team is leading the equity focus of the study, measuring how the program allocates funding to disadvantaged communities and how residents prioritize project types. Results from the study will help assess the priority of investment proposals and the impacts of the program over time.

### **Enhancing the Resiliency of LA’s Water Supply through Recycling**

*Funder: L.A. Department of Water and Power*

We are supporting what is expected to be one of the largest water projects of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Southern California. Los Angeles has committed to recycling all of the wastewater that it manages at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant — the largest wastewater facility west of the Mississippi — by 2035, with the goal of replenishing local groundwater reserves. We are assessing the proposed project and estimating the value of benefits for ratepayers. These benefits include avoided future costs in the event of droughts and seismic activity, which can impact the delivery of imported water.

## **CONTACT**

**Gregory Pierce**, co-director ([gpierce@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:gpierce@luskin.ucla.edu))

**Peter Roquemore**, project manager ([proquemore@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:proquemore@luskin.ucla.edu))

**Kristin Dobbin**, postdoctoral research fellow ([kdobbin@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:kdobbin@luskin.ucla.edu))