Environmental Stewardship

As a steward of water resources, Zone 7 seeks to protect and enhance the environment beyond protection of local drinking water and flood protection. Through a variety of programs, Zone 7 strives to improve the overall environment and quality of life for the community.

- **Watershed Protection** - Zone 7 helps protect habitat through management strategies, providing opportunities for public education, community cleanup events, such as Adopt a Creek Spot and California Coastal Cleanup Day, and partnerships such as the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program. These activities reduce stormwater and other pollution in creeks.

- **Fisheries Enhancements** - Along with other Bay Area agencies, Zone 7 works collaboratively with the National Marine Fisheries Service on its development of strategies for fisheries enhancement to protect a threatened steelhead trout population such as identifying potential barriers to steelhead migration in Arroyo Mochlo and Arroyo Valle.

- **Eastern Alameda County Conservation Strategy (EACCS)** - Zone 7 has worked with other local jurisdictions, along with state and federal resource agencies, to develop a habitat conservation strategy for eastern Alameda County to coordinate and streamline mitigation requirements associated with various development and infrastructure projects (including Zone 7’s water-supply and flood-protection projects), and to help identify mitigation areas of strategic biological value.

- **Climate Action Leader** - Zone 7 has been certified by the Climate Registry to encourage and promote early actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Zone 7 continuously seeks cleaner and cheaper sources of energy at its water treatment plants and in groundwater pumping, such as the Del Valle Solar Power Array and participation in the Power and Water Resources Pooling Authority (PWRPA), and supports state investments in measures to stabilize future energy costs connected with State Water Project (SWP) water operations.

- **Lake Del Valle Property** - Zone 7 purchased approximately 5,000 acres of rangeland above Lake Del Valle, adjacent to state-owned property, creating a continuous publicly-owned and preserved rangeland offering multiple benefits to the watershed. Zone 7’s ownership of the property allows the Agency to protect downstream drinking water quality and better manage flood risk through various land management practices while also conserving and preserving range-land that provides grassland habitat for sensitive species.

In 1957, Zone 7 of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District was approved by voters of the Livermore-Amador Valley to address inadequate flood protection and water supply. For the past 60 years Zone 7 has continually worked for the residents of the region to meet regional water supply needs and protect public and private property from flooding. As circumstances and needs changed over the years, Zone 7 adapted to meet the water resource needs of the Livermore-Amador Valley. Today, Zone 7’s work includes providing high-quality drinking water, flood protection, groundwater management, and a variety of environmental stewardship activities.
The First Fifty Years

• Zone 7 celebrated its first 50 years in 2007 by releasing a history book and interactive timeline that is still posted on Zone 7’s website (www.zone7water.com/about-us/history).

• In commemoration of its 60th anniversary, Zone 7 plans to release a written summary of its oral history based on interviews with people who have had a key role at Zone 7. It will be posted to the website by the end of 2017.

Key Accomplishments 2007-2017

• The Board adopted and routinely updated the Strategic Planning Priorities enabling Zone 7 to focus on its most immediate needs in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

• Received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for five consecutive years.

• Received the Operating Budget Excellence Award from the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers for four consecutive years.

• For the first time in 2016 the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence from the Special District Leadership Foundation in recognition of Zone 7’s efforts to promote transparency and good governance.

• Restructured the treated water rate to include a fixed charge component that recovers 35 percent of treated water sales revenue, which is critical for Zone 7’s fiscal sustainability and ability to continue providing clean, reliable water to its customers.

• For the first time, a water shortage surcharge was adopted as part of the 2015 Urban Water Management Plan to recover revenue losses as a result of a declared water shortage and associated conservation requests.

• Received for the first time the Certificate of Achievement in Excellence for Financial Reporting from the GFOA.

• Was recognized in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 as the exclusive groundwater management agency within its service area and, in 2016, accepted the role of Groundwater Sustainability Agency, adopting an Alternative Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the area.

• Adopted a new Nutrient Management Plan as part of the Groundwater Management Program; supported the County in updating its well ordinance and signed an MOU with the County for local well administration; and adopted an Ordinance Supporting Sustainable Groundwater Management.

• Completed the Stanley Reach Project to improve channel conveyance and sediment transport while promoting natural habitat and allowing recreational use.

• Added the Mocho Groundwater Desalination Plant, which reduces the buildup of salts and minerals in the local groundwater basin, allows the regional use of recycled water, and improves delivered water quality.

• Implemented early projects from the Stream Management Master Plan, which outlines priority actions to improve or maintain flood protection capabilities for the next 30 years.

• Installed a 348-kilowatt photovoltaic energy-generation system at the De la Valle Water Treatment Plant to reduce energy costs.

• Took steps to pursue new water supplies by participating in the Site Reservoir planning, evaluating the feasibility of expanding storage capacity of Lake De la Valle, and evaluating the feasibility of advanced water recycling and desalinization.

• Persisted through a historic drought with careful water management, accelerated construction of key projects and wise use of supplies stored in off-site groundwater banks, and encouraged the community’s cooperation to stretch every drop of water available.

• Collaborated with DWR and other South Bay contractors to complete South Bay Aqueduct Enlargement and Improvement Project to provide reliable water supply conveyance capacity.

• Played an active role in the decade-long planning, development, and permitting of the California WaterFix to modernize the aging State Water Project infrastructure.

• Lead the effort on Eastern Alameda County Conservation Strategy with major regulating agencies and local entities.

Looking Ahead

Zone 7 is excited about some of the projects underway or in the planning phases that are expected to be completed in the coming years. Some of those projects are:

• Adding ozone to two water treatment plants to reduce taste and odor issues, and provide an effective process to treat cyanotoxins caused by algal byproducts during warm summer months.

• Completing upgrades to the water treatment plants.

• Completing repairs to more than 200 stream banks within Zone 7’s service area and some of the adjacent access roads and trails that were damaged by the storms in early 2017.

• Completing construction of the California WaterFix and other water supply storage projects to improve water supply reliability.

Water Supply

240,000 people receive treated drinking water from Zone 7 through one of four water retailers: Dublin San Ramon Services District, the City of Pleasanton, the City of Livermore, and California Water Service Company. Water supplies come from two primary sources: over 80 percent is imported water from the State Water Project (SWP) delivered through the South Bay Aqueduct (SBA) and the rest is local rainfall runoff captured in Lake De la Valle. Zone 7 uses the local groundwater basin to store excess water in wet years and withdraws the stored water in dry years or periods of high demand. A portion of the imported water is delivered untreated to area agricultural customers, supporting a $200 million per year local wine industry. When plentiful import supplies are available, some supplies are also sent to off-site groundwater banking programs for use during dry years. Three-state-of-the-art treatment plants have the capacity to purify 66 million gallons of drinking water each day. More than 40 miles of water transmission lines and pump stations are operated and maintained by Zone 7.

Flood Protection

Zone 7 owns and maintains 37 miles of flood protection channels within a 425-square-mile area, about a third of all the Valley’s channels and creeks. Zone 7’s Stream Management Master Plan includes environmentally-friendly ways to create a flood-protection program that relies largely on using the future Chain of Lakes, a series of mined-out gravel pits between Livermore and Pleasanton, to detain stormwater in the Valley. The stored water would be released downstream only after storms pass through the area, allowing arroyos to be kept in a more natural state compared to the channelization method. This environmentally-friendly approach is significantly less expensive when it comes to flood control. It also affords opportunities to improve our water supply through groundwater recharge, enhance arroyo water quality and habitat, increase the connectivity of trails and recreational opportunities in the Valley, and promote public understanding of our watershed through educational programs.

Groundwater Management

In 2016, Zone 7 officially accepted the role of Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the local groundwater basin under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Through continued coordination with other local agencies in the region and neighboring groundwater basins or subbasins, Zone 7 will continue to manage groundwater for the entire portion of the Livermore Valley groundwater basin that is within the Agency’s service area as well as a small portion of Contra Costa County that is within the Zone 7 water distribution area. Zone 7 will implement the groundwater management plan it submitted in compliance with SGMA to continue to responsibly and sustainably manage groundwater resources.

The primary groundwater basin Zone 7 manages is a 250,000 acre-foot (AF) underground basin that includes 126,000 AF of available, operational storage. There are 10 groundwater production wells with a total of 42 million gallons per day (MGD) peak capacity but are only used in emergencies and droughts. Zone 7 actively works to recharge the groundwater basin via streambed (Arroyos Valle & Mocho) and is looking to use the Chain of Lakes in the future.