



General Manager's Report

CWSD Board Meeting
July 15, 2026

For CWSD Board Discussion Only



Carson River Watershed & Nevada Water Updates

Discussion Areas

1. Nevada Water Updates

- Middle Humboldt Report and modeled impacts to river flow
- Coyote Springs litigation and reported \$1.5 billion claim

2. Carson River Watershed

- USBR OCAP revisions and Carson River groundwater-impact scenarios

3. Carson Water Subconservancy District

- CWSD Activities

Nevada Water Updates – Water Resources Bulletin No. 51

- NDWR and USGS released Water Resources Bulletin No. 51 in June 2026
- It is not a Carson River study, but it is an important Nevada example
- The report evaluates stream capture related to groundwater pumping in the Middle Humboldt River Basin
- The study used numerical groundwater-flow models to estimate historical, future, and potential stream capture
- It shows how groundwater/surface-water questions are being translated into model results for water-management discussion

Nevada Water Updates – Water Resources Bulletin No. 51

- The Middle Humboldt report found that groundwater pumping has increasingly affected Humboldt River flows over time. Estimated stream capture grew from less than 400 acre-feet per year in the early 1960s to about 13,000 acre-feet in 2015, with a peak estimate of about 18,800 acre-feet in 1998.
- Under continued 2015 assumptions, capture could increase to about 23,000 acre-feet per year after 100 years, with Humboldt River streamflow potentially decreasing by up to 19,000 acre-feet per year.

Nevada Water Updates – Water Resources Bulletin No. 51

- It should be treated as a Nevada lesson, not a direct Carson River conclusion
- Different basins have different geology, hydrology, water rights, operations, and data
- The report shows that pumping effects can develop over long timeframes
- For Carson, the takeaway is process and preparedness: build the technical foundation before management decisions become urgent

Nevada Water Updates – Coyote Springs litigation

- The case involves the developers behind Coyote Springs, a long-planned master-planned community roughly 50–60 miles northeast of Las Vegas, in the Clark County/Lincoln County area.
- The litigation is tied to the Lower White River Flow System, where the State Engineer determined that multiple groundwater basins are hydrologically connected and should be managed together.
- The dispute escalated after State Engineer actions in 2020 limited groundwater pumping and affected the ability of Coyote Springs to move forward with residential development.

Nevada Water Updates – Coyote Springs litigation

- In 2024, the Nevada Supreme Court held that the State Engineer has authority to conjunctively manage surface water and groundwater and to jointly administer multiple connected basins based on a shared source of supply.
- The remaining litigation includes takings claims (water rights) by Coyote Springs interests, who are reportedly seeking at least \$1.5 billion, plus interest and attorney fees.

Nevada Water Updates – Coyote Springs litigation

- The case is proceeding in Clark County's Eighth Judicial District Court, with the underlying takings case involving the State, the Nevada Division of Water Resources, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Nevada State Engineer.
- The case highlights the financial stakes that can arise when water-right expectations, hydrologic limits, development assumptions, and regulatory decisions collide.
- The facts are unique to Coyote Springs and the Lower White River Flow System, but the broader lesson matters statewide: difficult water-management decisions are increasingly being tested through science, policy, and litigation.

USBR OCAP Revisions and Carson River Groundwater-Impact Scenarios

- On June 16, 2026 CWSD participated in a meeting with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and its consultant to discuss the Newlands Projects Operational Criteria and Procedures (OCAP) update .
- Reclamation is evaluating scenarios where upstream Carson River groundwater development may reduce flows at Fort Churchill and affect Newlands Project operations.



USBR OCAP Revisions and Carson River Groundwater-Impact Scenarios

- Reclamation presented a range of potential flow assumptions at Fort Churchill. On one end, earlier runoff timing could increase modeled flows by approximately 4,100 acre-feet per year.
- On the other end, maximum assumed upstream groundwater development could reduce modeled flows by approximately 28,500 acre-feet per year.
- These figures are Reclamation scenario assumptions.
- The range highlights why the Carson River Basin needs a shared technical foundation to understand assumptions, evaluate operational effects, and communicate what the numbers mean.

USBR OCAP Revisions and Carson River Groundwater-Impact Scenarios

- CWSD submitted a comment letter to Reclamation on July 2, 2026, regarding OCAP demand-change scenario development. The letter was neutral and basin-wide in scope.
- CWSD's message was that potential reductions in Carson River flows near Fort Churchill should be understood in the broader Carson River Watershed context, not solely as a Newlands Project issue. Fort Churchill connects upstream Carson River hydrology, water-right administration, Lahontan Reservoir inflows, and downstream Newlands Project operations.

USBR OCAP Revisions and Carson River Groundwater-Impact Scenarios

- CWSD encouraged Reclamation to continue sharing the assumptions, findings, and technical basis for any scenario that includes upstream groundwater development as a factor in reduced flows at Fort Churchill.
- CWSD also offered to assist by identifying appropriate stakeholders, sharing accurate information, and supporting coordination as the analysis develops.

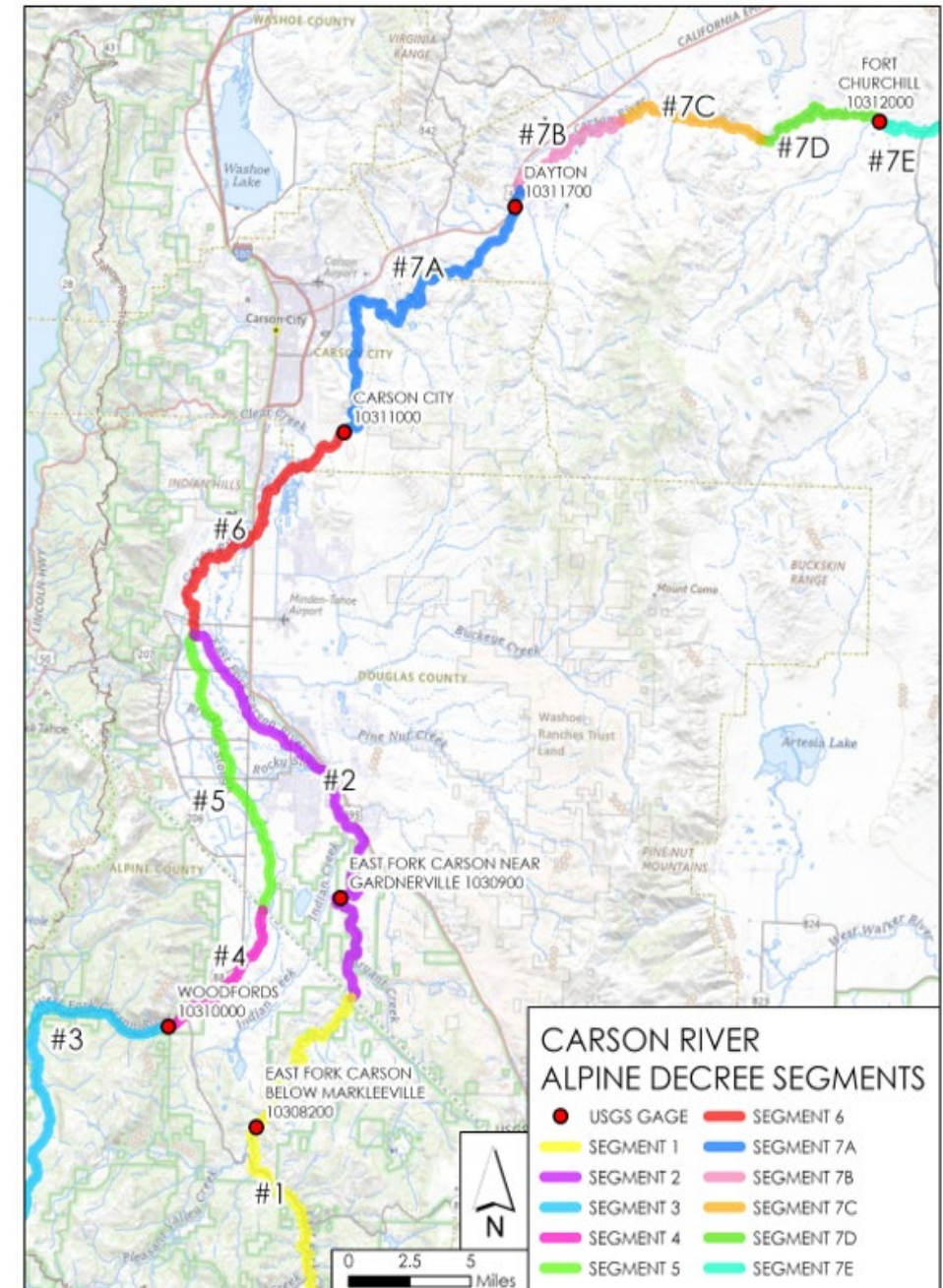


Nevada Water Updates – Executive Takeaway

- Three separate Nevada water issues point to the same need: better technical foundations
- Reclamation is evaluating Fort Churchill flow scenarios that include groundwater-driven reductions
- NDWR/USGS modeling in the Middle Humboldt found groundwater pumping can capture streamflow and reduce river flows over time
- Coyote Springs shows the potential financial stakes of contested water administration
- Groundwater and surface water questions are moving from technical studies into operational, legal, and financial decisions

CWSD Activities

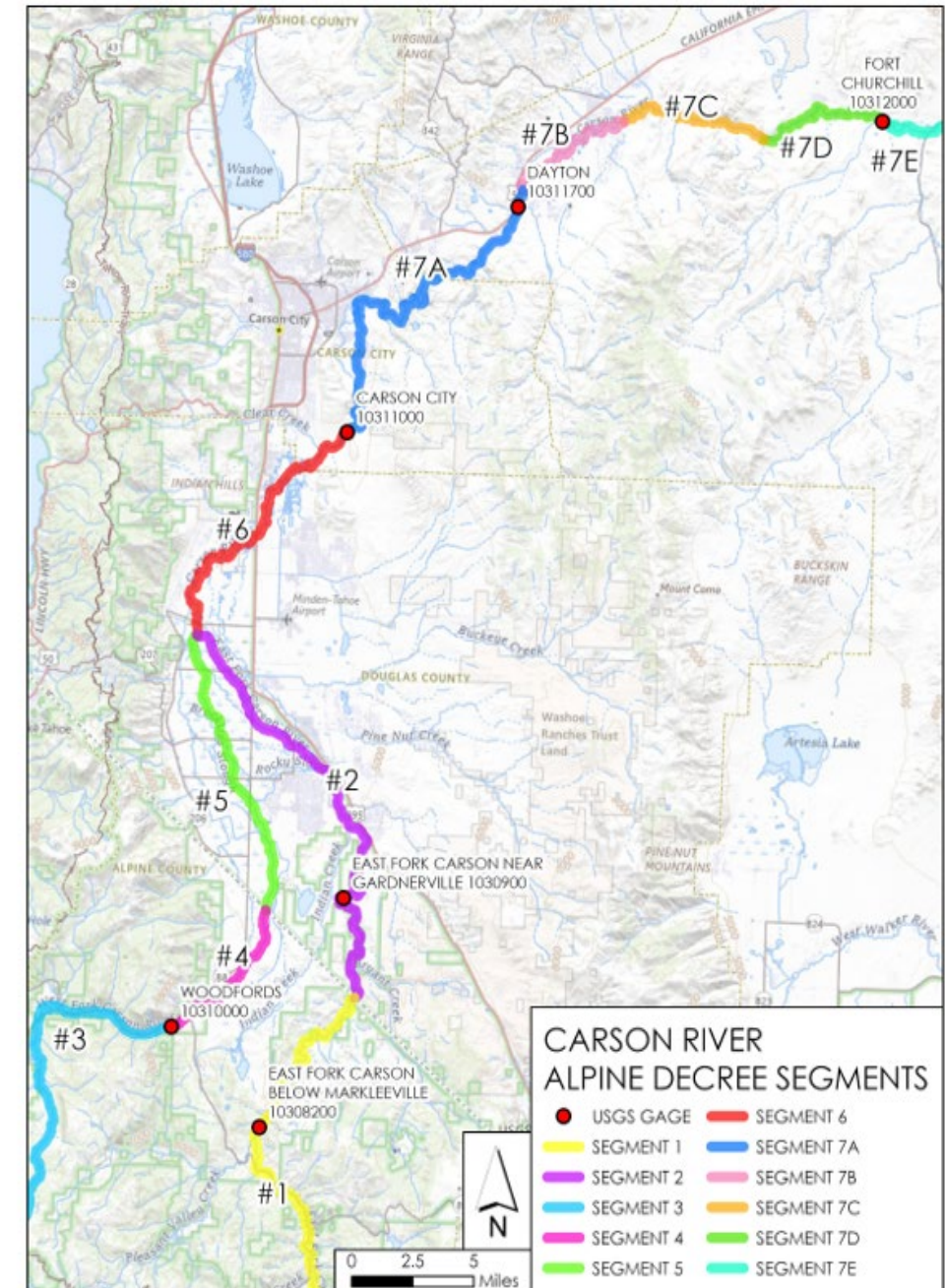
- On July 7, CWSD submitted the final application documentation for the USBR Applied Science Grant to develop a RiverWare model for Carson River operations, including Alpine Decree Segments 1–7 and groundwater/surface-water interactions.
- The technical model development would be centered around the U.S. Water Master's operational knowledge, with CWSD supporting grant management, coordination, review, and outreach.



CWSD Activities

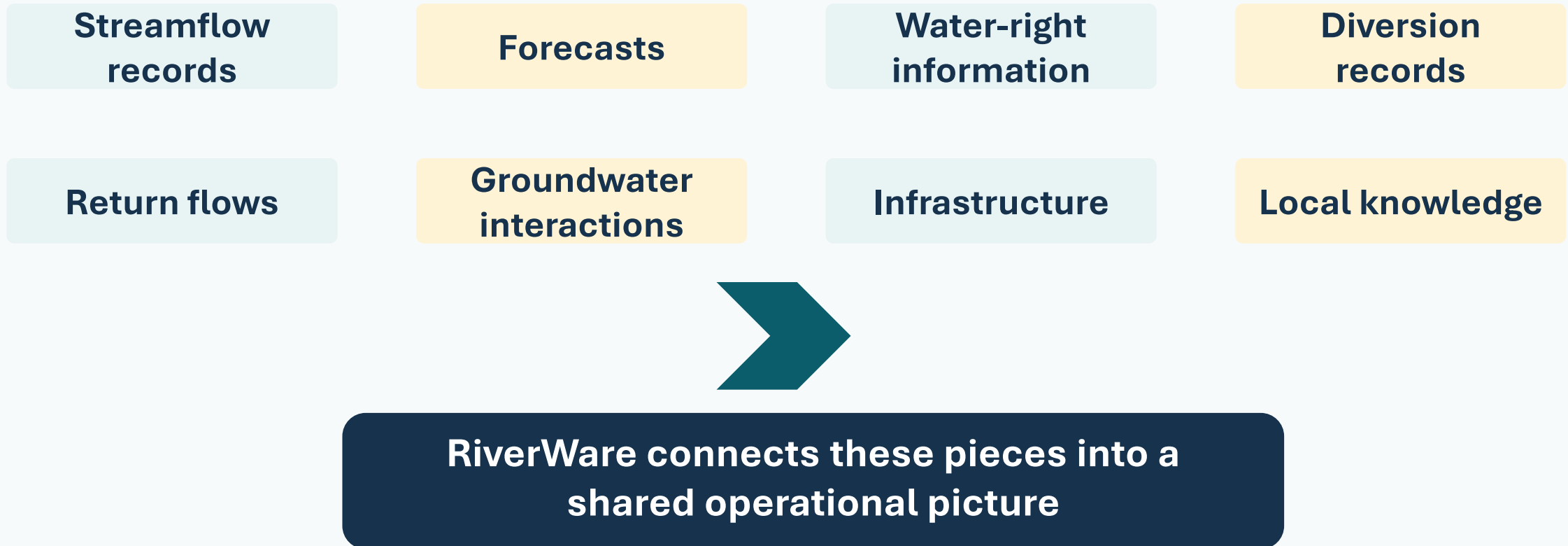
CWSD's Role

- Grant applicant, administrator, and project sponsor
- Neutral regional convener for watershed-scale coordination
- Support for U.S. Water Master operational knowledge
- Coordination among agencies, counties, water users, and partners
- Public communication, transparency, and stakeholder engagement
- Long-term basin capacity for better-informed water-management decisions



From Fragmented Information to a Shared Operational Picture

The information exists — but it is not yet connected in one operational framework.



What RiverWare Would Do

A practical decision-support platform for forecasting, accounting, and “what-if” questions.

Represent operations

Segments 1–7, reservoirs, return flows, groundwater interactions and operational constraints.

Improve forecasting

Use forecasts to anticipate runoff, regulation timing, delivery constraints, and Lahontan inflows.

Support scenario analysis

Test drought, low-runoff, infrastructure, and operational alternatives before conditions are urgent.

Strengthen communication

Give agencies and stakeholders a common technical foundation for discussion.

What RiverWare Would Not Do

✗ **Change water rights**

✗ **Reinterpret the Alpine Decree**

✗ **Replace the U.S. Water Master**

✗ **Make regulatory decisions**

✗ **Eliminate uncertainty**

✗ **Resolve every future conflict**

It supports better-informed human decisions by making data, assumptions, and operational scenarios easier to see and discuss.

How This Helps the Carson River Watershed

Preparation

Build technical capacity to evaluate future water right changes.

Transparency

Help stakeholders see the same information and understand the process.

Coordination

Improve discussions among CWSD, USWM, NDWR, Reclamation, counties, and water users.

Resilience

Support drought response, water supply planning, and long-term operational flexibility.

Why RiverWare

Without a Shared Tool

- Information stays fragmented
- Assumptions are harder to see and explain
- Decisions may be driven by urgency, conflict, or litigation

With RiverWare

- Data, operations, and scenarios are connected in one framework
- Partners can test options before conditions become urgent
- The basin is better prepared for drought, groundwater issues, and operational challenges

Questions?

