Key Findings

There are several reasons why an updated water rights data system is valuable. Dialogue participants ranked the following as the most important functions of a modern water rights data system:

- Supporting improved implementation of existing water rights system.
- Enabling the collection of higher quality diversion data (where, when, and how water is diverted and used).
- Facilitating better understanding of the tradeoffs in water allocation decisions.
- Improving the ability to obtain important information on existing rights (e.g., documents, history, diversion data).

The current water rights data management system is called the Electronic Water Rights Information Management System, or eWRIMS, and was originally released in 2007 for billing purposes. As such, it was never intended to be a central repository of water rights information. However, it has been adapted over the last fifteen years to allow users to search for water rights records and to file statements of water use and other required reports. While these functions are useful, they are incomplete. For example, water rights are not indexed or searchable by place of use (for more examples see Appendix C from Kiparsky et al 2021). In addition, because eWRIMS has been updated over time on an as-needed basis, it is far from comprehensive, with most records only able to be accessed as paper documents in the State Water Board Records Room. The UPWARD effort is focused on modernizing the eWRIMS system, by migrating it to a new platform, adding features, and converting paper records to digital formats that can be accessed online.

Core Features of a Modern Water Rights Data Management System

While the $30 million investment will be transformational, those resources will only go so far (as is the case for all information technology investments). In the initial system, the State Water Board will need to prioritize the most essential improvements. We were pleased to learn that stakeholder groups agreed on many of the following essential improvements or “core features.”

Core Features identified by this group include:

- User-friendly interface.