



Official Memorandum

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To: SLDMWA Water Resources Committee Members and Alternates
From: Scott Petersen, Water Policy Director
Date: June 1, 2026
RE: Update on Water Policy/Resources Activities

Background

This memorandum is provided to briefly summarize the current status of various agency processes regarding water policy activities, including but not limited to the (1) Implementation of Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, including environmental compliance; (2) State Water Resources Control Board action; (3) Central Valley Regional Water Board Action, (4) San Joaquin River Restoration Program; (5) Delta conveyance; (6) Reclamation action; (7) Delta Stewardship Council action; (8) San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint, and (9) San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Plan.

Policy Items

Implementation of Executive Order 14181

On January 2024, President Trump issued Executive Order 14181¹, directing analysis of potential changes to the operations in the 2024 Record of Decision (“ROD”) for consideration by the Administration. On December 4, 2025, Reclamation executed a Record of Decision on the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, as a first step towards implementing EO 14181.

Implementation of 2024 Record of Decision on Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project

On December 4, 2025, Reclamation executed a Record of Decision² on the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, as a first step towards implementing EO 14181, updating operations associated with the Record of Decision executed by Reclamation and the Biological Opinions issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries in December 2024. This new operation is described as “Action 5”.

Specifically, the Action 5 ROD updates the operations of the Projects by:

- (1) **Removing the Delta Smelt Summer and Fall Habitat Action (Fall X2)**, in response to findings by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the action is not anticipated to have observable effects on delta smelt survival,

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-01-31/pdf/2025-02174.pdf>

² https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=54661



- (2) **Removing the early implementation measure of the Delta export reduction of the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (“HRL”) program**, in response to uncertainties associated with the timing of potential adoption and implementation of the HRL Program by California’s State Water Resources Control Board,
- (3) **Updating the Delta operating criteria** to expand the opportunities for Old and Middle River (“OMR”) management at no more negative than -5,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), and a stormflex action of -6,500 cfs, including the use of predictive tools for real-time assessment of environmental conditions.

Modeling of these proposed operational changes has estimated between 250 – 400 TAF improvement in combined CVP and SWP export capacity under Action 5 operations, with the SWP benefits being uncertain based on how the SWP operates under the Incidental Take Permit required for compliance with the California Endangered Species Act.

There is additional analysis being performed to assess the efficacy of additional potential operational changes that could improve water supply and maintain species protections, as well as alternative methods to address environmental effects on species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) and advance species recovery efforts.

Note: There are also Endangered Species Act consultations on the Trinity River and Klamath River that may have overlap/interactions with the operations of the CVP/SWP.

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Activity

Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan Update

Background

The State Water Board is currently considering updates to its 2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (“Bay Delta Plan”) in two phases (Plan amendments). The first Plan amendment is focused on San Joaquin River flows and southern Delta salinity (“Phase I” or “San Joaquin River Flows and Southern Delta Salinity Plan Amendment”). The second Plan amendment is focused on the Sacramento River and its tributaries, Delta eastside tributaries (including the Calaveras, Cosumnes, and Mokelumne rivers), Delta outflows, and interior Delta flows (“Phase II” or “Sacramento/Delta Plan Amendment”).

During the December 12, 2018 Water Board Meeting, the Department of Water Resources (“DWR”) and Department of Fish and Wildlife presented proposed “Voluntary Settlement Agreements” (“VSAs”) on behalf of Reclamation, DWR, and the public water agencies they serve to resolve conflicts over proposed amendments to the Bay-Delta Plan update.³ The State Water Board did not adopt the proposed VSAs in lieu of the proposed Phase 1 amendments, but as explained below, directed staff to consider the proposals as part of a future Delta-wide proposal.

³ Available at <https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/Blogs/Voluntary-Settlement-Agreement-Meeting-Materials-Dec-12-2018-DWR-CDFW-CNRA.pdf>.



Phase 1 Status – San Joaquin River and its Tributaries

The State Water Board adopted a resolution⁴ to adopt amendments to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary and adopt the Final Substitute Environmental Document during its December 12, 2018 public meeting.

On July 18, 2022, the State Water Resources Control Board issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP)⁵ and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Scoping Meeting for the Proposed Regulation to Implement Lower San Joaquin River Flows (LSJR) and Southern Delta Salinity Objectives in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta Plan).

In response to the release of the NOP, the Water Authority and member agencies provided scoping comments⁶ and the State Water Board is working through a long-term process to address Phase 1 elements of the Water Quality Control Plan Update.

A long delay in Phase 1 action occurred as legal activity was undertaken.

Recently, on September 19, 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board (Board) released a [Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment and Workshop on the Draft Scientific Basis Report Supplement for the Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement](#) Proposal (Draft TVA Scientific Basis Report), to which the Water Authority provided comments⁷.

Next Steps

- Final draft Staff Report for Tuolumne River VA
- Board workshop and consideration of Tuolumne River VA
- Final draft EIR and regulation implementing Lower SJR flows and South Delta Salinity
- Board consideration of regulation implementing Lower SJR flows and South Delta Salinity

Phase 2 Status – Sacramento River and its Tributaries and Bay-Delta

In the State Water Board's resolution adopting the Phase 1 amendments, the Water Board directed staff to assist the Natural Resources Agency in completing a Delta watershed-wide agreement, including potential flow and non-flow measures for the Tuolumne River, and associated analyses no later than March 1, 2019. Staff were directed to incorporate the Delta watershed-wide agreement as an alternative for a future, comprehensive Bay-Delta Plan update that addresses the reasonable protection of beneficial uses across the Delta watershed.

Revised Draft Sacramento/Delta Updates to the Water Quality Control Plan

Background

In July, the Board released a draft Bay Delta Plan (July 2025 revised draft), which included proposed changes to the draft Bay Delta Plan released in October 2024 (2024 draft), based on public input and comments

⁴ Available at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2018/rs2018_0059.pdf.

⁵ Available at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public_notices/notices/20220715-implementation-nop-and-scoping-dwr-baydelta.pdf

⁶ Request from Authority staff

⁷ Request from Authority staff



received throughout the planning process, including comments on several options for possible changes to the plan identified in the 2024 draft. Specifically, the 2024 draft identified the possible inclusion of flow, cold water habitat and related provisions that were based on the proposed Plan amendments and alternatives identified in the 2023 draft Staff Report in support of updates to the Bay Delta Plan, as well as options for these provisions. The 2024 draft also identified the possible inclusion of Voluntary Agreements (VAs) to provide flows and non-flow habitat proposed by state and federal agencies and water users referred to as the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes proposal, as well as options associated with inclusions of VAs. The regulatory provisions would apply to all water right holders if the Board did not move forward with VAs, or in the event the Board moved forward with VAs would apply to water rights not participating in approved VAs. The 2025 revised draft proposes to move forward with the inclusion of VAs in the Bay Delta Plan for water rights included in approved VAs (VA pathway) and the regulatory provisions for water rights not included as part of approved VAs (regulatory pathway). The 2025 revised draft also includes proposals for addressing other options identified in the 2024 draft. The 2025 revised draft also proposes the designation of Tribal Tradition and Culture (CUL) beneficial use as part of the current Bay Delta Plan update.

Current Activity

On September 16, 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) rescinded the August 22, 2025 Second Revised Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment and Hearing on Revised Draft Sacramento/Delta Updates to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed (Bay-Delta Plan or Plan). The Rescinded Notice is available on the [Board's website](#). Accordingly, the hearing previously scheduled for September 24-25, 2025, and the associated public comment period are cancelled and will be rescheduled to a future date.

Instead, the Board has released a revised Bay-Delta Plan, with workshops that occurred on January 28-30, and written comments due on February 2. Water Authority staff coordinated written comments⁸ with member agencies and other interested parties.

Additionally, the State Water Board has received term sheets for additional voluntary agreements from Nevada Irrigation District (NID) and South Sutter Water District (SSWD) specific to the Bear River, Yuba River, and Auburn Ravine that are available to the public.

San Joaquin River Restoration Program

Restoration Allocation

On May 15, Reclamation issued an update to the 2026 Restoration Allocation and Default Flow Schedule⁹. Consistent with the Restoration Flows Guidelines and based upon the best available forecast information, the Restoration Allocation covering the period March 1, 2026 through February 28, 2027 **is set at 281,739 acre-feet at Gravelly Ford and is a Normal-Dry year type.**

⁸ Request from Water Authority staff.

⁹ Request from Water Authority staff.



The Restoration Administrator recommended a flow schedule¹⁰ on May 4, which Reclamation is reviewing at the time this memo was drafted. This Restoration Allocation will be posted on the Program website in the coming days: <http://RestoreSJR.net>.

For Information about Restoration Flows, please visit <https://restoresjr.net/flows/>.

For the Restoration Administrator recommendations, please visit <https://restoresjr.net/flows/flow-scheduling/>.

Delta Conveyance Project

Bond Financing Plan

On May 19, the California Department of Water Resources [dismissed](#) its second Validation Action, by which it sought judicial approval of its Conveyance financing plan.

Ruling against DWR in the first Validation Action, the trial court found that DWR had exceeded its delegated authority. DWR and its allies among the State Water Contractors appealed. In a unanimous Decision, the Court of Appeal later affirmed the judgment against DWR. (*Department of Water Resources v. Metropolitan Water District of So. Calif., et al.* (2025) 117 Cal.App.5th 751.)

DWR then petitioned the California Supreme Court in an effort to overturn the Court of Appeal's Decision. Last month, the Supreme Court, sitting *en banc*, denied DWR's petition for review and its alternative request for depublication of the Decision.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Reclamation Manual

Documents out for Comment

- No Documents out for Comment

San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint

The Water Blueprint represents water users, districts, farmers, and municipalities across the Central Valley. Their problem statement is crystal-clear; California faces a major water supply shortfall that could affect one million acres, costing \$7.2 billion in farm revenue and 85,000 jobs statewide. Engaging various stakeholders inside and outside the Central Valley, the team advocates for a combination of infrastructure investments and policy changes to capture excess flows during wet years and replenish aquifers.

Blueprint's strategic priorities for 2022-2025: Advocacy, Groundwater Quality and Disadvantaged Communities, Land Use Changes & Environmental Planning, Outreach & Communications, SGMA Implementation, Water Supply Goals, Governance, Operations & Finance.

Mission Statement: "Unifying the San Joaquin Valley's voice to advance an accessible, reliable solution for a balanced water future for all."

¹⁰ Attached



Strategic Planning

September 16, 2026, is the tentative date for board strategic planning process following completion of the Unified Water Plan, noting that the current plan runs through 2026. The planning session will focus on the importance of defining the scope of future organizational activities—including legislative advocacy, policy, communications—and engaging the board early to help shape direction for 2026 and beyond.

San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit

The summit brought together state leaders, regional water agencies, policymakers, water district executives, flood management leaders, agricultural organizations, environmental stakeholders, and community advocates to review recent California Department of Water Resources (DWR) studies and the Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley, event's focus was on resilience—aligning water management strategies to address long-term challenges and build adaptive capacity.

- Translated findings from major DWR studies into coordinated action.
- Identified a shared 2025–2030 resilience roadmap for the Valley.
- Addressed interconnected water system challenges such as climate variability, groundwater sustainability requirements, infrastructure subsidence, land-use changes, and flood management pressures

The agenda centered on:

- Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley.
- State Water Project adaptation strategy.
- San Joaquin Valley conveyance study.
- San Joaquin Valley Watershed (Flood-MAR) studies.

A recording of the Summit can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUyY5oqSpYE>

SB72 Implementation

Senate Bill 72 (Caballero) directs DWR to consult with the Water Commission on the establishment of an advisory committee to inform the development of the 2028 update to the Water Plan. The 2028 update will usher in a new emphasis on setting and meeting quantifiable water supply goals. This builds on California's [Water Supply Strategy \(2022\)](#), which outlined necessary actions for the state to adapt to a hotter, drier future where the changing climate leaves less water to meet California's needs. Blueprint as an interested party in the State's water supply strategy, has been provided with the opportunity to present and provide public comment.

Unified Water Plan

The purpose of the Unified Valley Plan for the San Joaquin Valley is to identify and present possible solutions for long-term water needs in the San Joaquin Valley by bringing together existing water plans, strategies, and knowledge from across the San Joaquin Valley into one coordinated, valley-wide planning framework. The San Joaquin Valley has a massive water supply gap at 2.5-3 million acre-feet by 2040, incorporating SGMA compliance needs, climate change impacts, and environmental flow requirements. A full administrative draft is now available.



The Unified Valley Water Plan Shows a Massive Water Supply Gap —Even under the most optimistic scenario — combining restored canal capacity, local recharge projects, and increased Delta access — the gap cannot be fully closed. Best-case projections still leave ~0.5–0.9 million acre-feet unmet and 200,000– 400,000 acres needing to be repurposed, at a total infrastructure cost of \$13–20 billion.

Water Blueprint SJV & CWI – Unified Water Plan

The purpose of the Unified Valley Plan for the San Joaquin Valley is to identify and present possible solutions for long-term water needs in the San Joaquin Valley by bringing together existing water plans, strategies, and knowledge from across the San Joaquin Valley into one coordinated, valley-wide planning framework.

Bureau of Reclamation Report to Congress:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Overview of the water resource needs and opportunities in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Chapter 3 Overview of flood risks and management in the San Joaquin Valley and opportunities for improving flood management.
- Chapter 4 Illustration of an environmental vision for the San Joaquin Valley and estimates of the water supplies needed to implement that vision.
- Chapter 5 Evaluation of a range of potential solutions.
- Chapter 6 Recommendations for a path forward and a roadmap for implementation. Includes policy recommendations.

San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (SJV CAP)

Background

The CAP Plenary Group adopted work groups to implement the CAP Term Sheet¹¹, adopted on November 22, 2022. During Phase II, Work Groups are continuing to meet and discuss priorities and drafting various documents for their respective areas: Safe Drinking Water; Sustainable Water Supplies; Ecosystem Health; Land Use, Demand Reduction and Land Repurposing; Implementation.

The Bureau of Reclamation is currently funding the CAP. This funding supports its management and facilitation of the overall CAP process and the development of a prioritization tool. The tool is envisioned to be used by CAP participants, federal and state agencies, other stakeholders, and the public to evaluate policy recommendations, programmatic changes, and projects to achieve sustainable water management in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Steering Committee created a subgroup and will review several prioritization tools developed by other organizations and use those examples to craft a work plan and initial set of criteria for consideration.

¹¹ Request from Authority staff



Updates

On Friday, May 29, the CAP released its “Vision for the San Joaquin Valley”¹², detailing desired outcomes, investment strategies, and policy reforms needed to transition the region toward sustainable water management for people, agriculture, and the environment.

¹² Request from Authority staff