



Frequently Asked Questions About the Water Resilience Portfolio

July 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom signed an executive order on April 29, 2019, directing three state agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy to build a climate-resilient water system and ensure healthy waterways through the 21st century. The California Natural Resources Agency, California Environmental Protection Agency, and California Department of Food and Agriculture solicited extensive public input to prepare the Water Resilience Portfolio released by the Governor on July 28, 2020.

1. What is the Water Resilience Portfolio?

The portfolio is a water policy roadmap to guide state efforts to meet the water needs of California's communities, economy and environment as the climate changes.

2. Why does the state need a water resilience portfolio?

California faces a range of water challenges, from severely depleted groundwater basins to vulnerable infrastructure to unsafe drinking water in many communities to uncertain water supplies for our cities and agriculture. Climate change magnifies the risk. There is widespread agreement that a coordinated portfolio of complementary actions is needed to build water resilience, ensure healthy waterways and meet long-term water needs. The drought of 2012-16 showed the importance of regional investments in a diverse water supply portfolio, including conservation, water recycling, groundwater storage and cleanup, and more. Pursuing a statewide portfolio of actions creates opportunities to build resilience, leverage past investments and meet multiple objectives.

3. What actions are part of the portfolio?

The portfolio contains 142 separate actions to be taken by state agencies as resources allow. Together, the actions are intended to support California's diverse regions as they work to improve their ability to withstand drought and flood and safeguard reliable water supplies for communities and natural systems. Portfolio actions are organized into four categories: maintain and diversify water supplies, protect and enhance natural systems, build connections, and be prepared.

The actions tie directly to Administration efforts to carry out landmark laws regarding safe and affordable drinking water, sustainable management of groundwater, and improved water use efficiency. They also elevate priorities to secure voluntary agreements in key watersheds to improve flows and conditions for fish, address air quality and habitat challenges around the Salton Sea and protect the long-term functionality of the State Water Project and other conveyance infrastructure.

The portfolio emphasizes the need for regional approaches and strengthened partnerships.

4. How was the portfolio developed?

The three agencies established a working group to inventory and assess many aspects of California water, including projected future water needs, anticipated climate-driven impacts on water systems, and regional challenges. The working group gathered input through more than 20 public listening sessions and dozens of one-on-one meetings with stakeholders. In January 2020, the agencies released a draft water resilience portfolio for public feedback. In revising and finalizing the document, the working group took into account the more than 200 letters of comment received from individuals and a wide variety of stakeholder groups.

5. How did the portfolio change between the draft and final versions?

Revisions to the final version include a greater emphasis on the health of the upper watersheds that are the source of most of California's developed water supply, particularly forestlands vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire. New actions in the document also focus on tribal issues and leadership and cross-border water problems. In all, 14 actions were added to the portfolio, while five were cut. Many actions were modified based on stakeholder input.

6. What does this mean for the Delta tunnels project?

The portfolio includes an action to plan, permit, and build new diversion and conveyance facilities in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for the state-led system that delivers water to 27 million Californians. The Department of Water Resources is reviewing the potential environmental impacts of a smaller capacity, strategically designed single tunnel to deliver water through the Delta, to be funded by the public water agencies that would benefit from improved supply reliability.

7. How will state agencies carry out the portfolio?

The pace of implementation will depend upon the resources available. With dramatically curtailed state budget and bond resources, the portfolio is by necessity an aspirational document, but state agencies intend to make progress on several key priorities, including implementation of the Safe and

Affordable Drinking Water Act and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, achieving voluntary agreements to increase flows and improve conditions for native fish in the Delta and its watersheds, updating regulations to expand water recycling, and expanding seasonable floodplains for fish and flood benefits. State agencies will share progress annually through a public report and stakeholder convening.