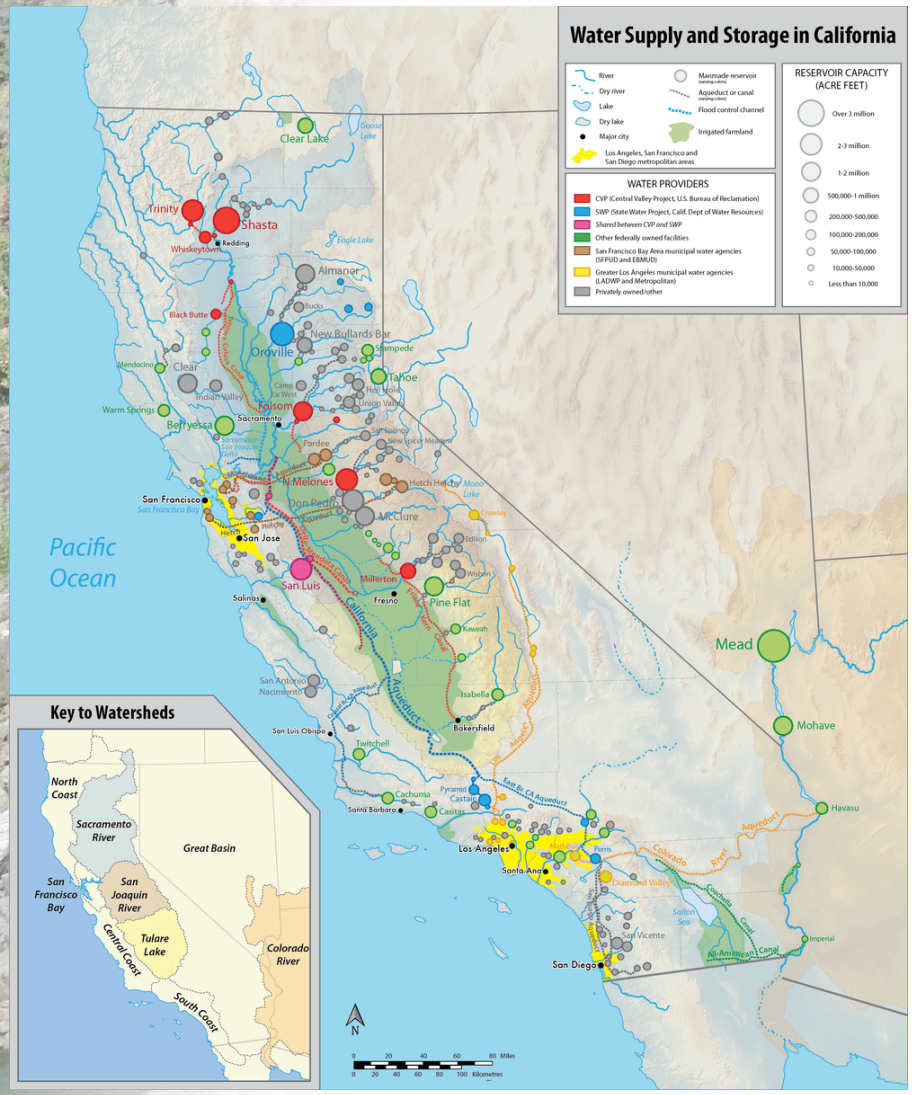
Statewide Water Resources Update:
Bay-Delta Plan and California Water Plan



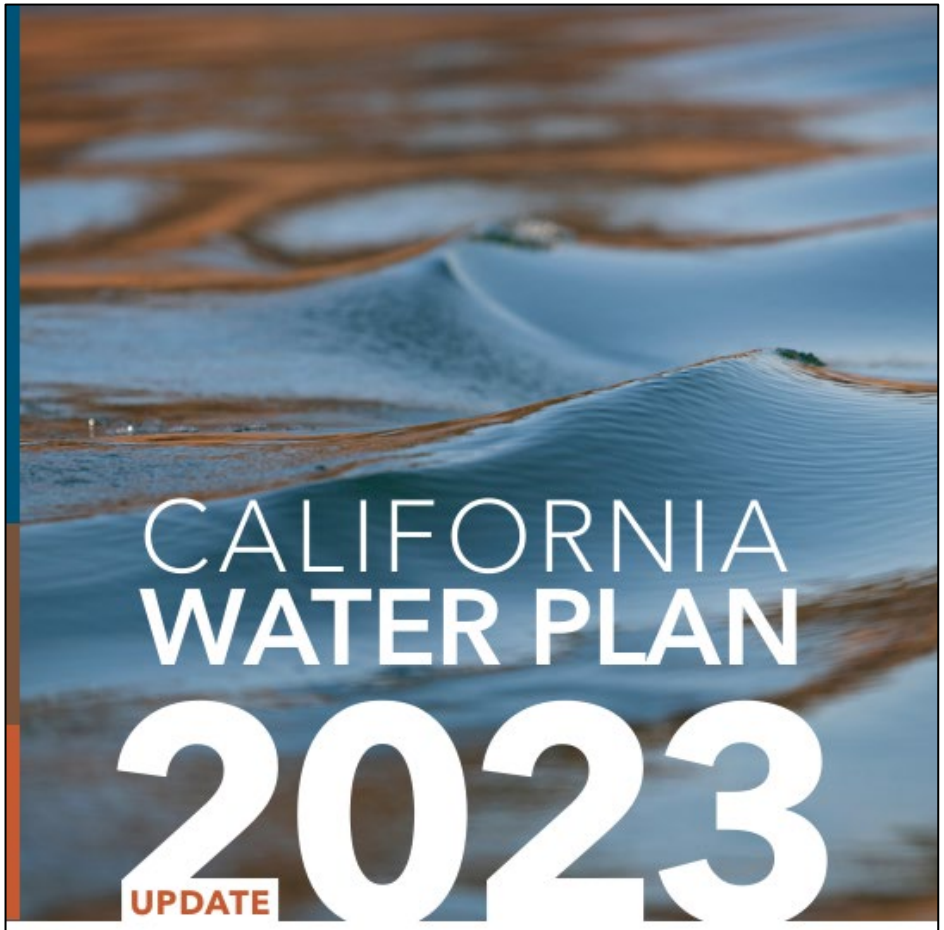
Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed

October 29, 2026



California Water Boards

State Water Resources Control Board



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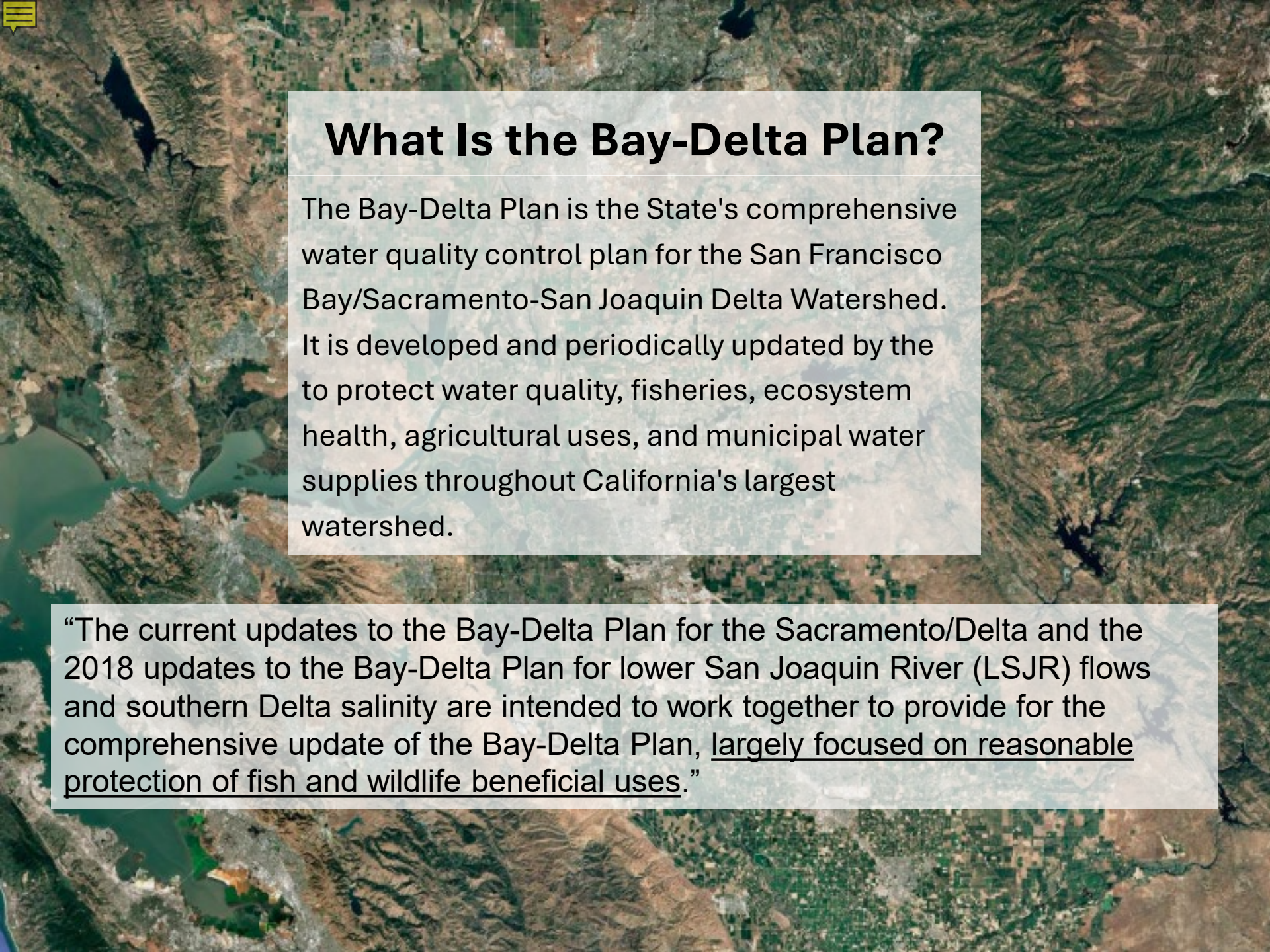
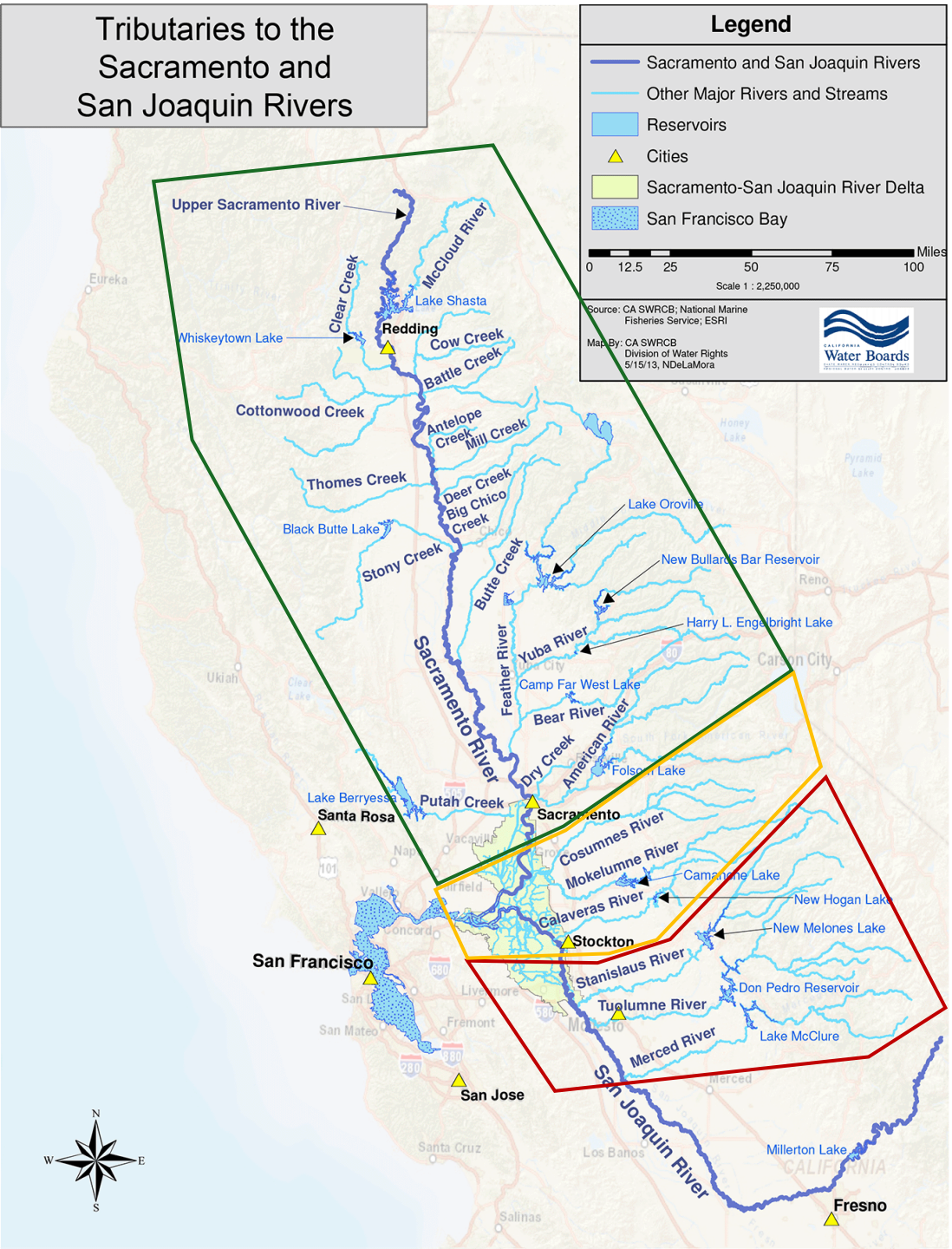


What Is the Bay-Delta Plan?

The Bay-Delta Plan is the State's comprehensive water quality control plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed. It is developed and periodically updated by the to protect water quality, fisheries, ecosystem health, agricultural uses, and municipal water supplies throughout California's largest watershed.

"The current updates to the Bay-Delta Plan for the Sacramento/Delta and the 2018 updates to the Bay-Delta Plan for lower San Joaquin River (LSJR) flows and southern Delta salinity are intended to work together to provide for the comprehensive update of the Bay-Delta Plan, largely focused on reasonable protection of fish and wildlife beneficial uses."



The Delta Watershed is Massive. 1,100 Square Miles

Lower San Joaquin River (Phase 1)

- San Joaquin River originates on the west slope of Mammoth Lakes area.
- The San Joquin River below the Merced confluence is managed by the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.
- Three primary tributaries: Merced, Tuolumne, Stanislaus
- Three primary regulating reservoirs: McClure, Don Pedro, New Melones

Sacramento River and Delta (Phase 2)

- Sacramento River originates on Mt. Shasta
- 16 creeks enter the upper Sacramento
- Four primary Sacramento tributaries: Feather, Yuba, Bear, American
- Three Eastside Delta Tributaries: Cosumnes, Mokelumne, Calaveras
- 13,374 TAF of storage, excluding Shasta.

Topic	Phase 1: Lower San Joaquin River (2018)	Phase 2: Sacramento/Delta (2026)
Primary Watersheds	Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced Rivers	Sacramento Basin tributaries and Delta
Regulatory Focus	Establish flow objectives for fishery protection in the LSJR	Create a comprehensive watershed implementation framework addressing flows, habitat, cold water, Delta outflow, and ecosystem outcomes
Planning Approach	Predominantly regulatory flow requirements based on unimpaired flow percentages	Hybrid approach combining regulatory objectives with the Voluntary Agreement pathway
Restoration Component	Limited	Extensive HRL habitat restoration commitments
Adaptive Management	Present but limited	Major component of implementation
Monitoring & Science	Supporting role	Core implementation requirement
Product Delivered	Numeric flow objectives and implementation framework	Integrated ecosystem management framework and Voluntary Agreement program

Instream Flows

Instream flow requirements are flow objectives that require a portion of the water that would naturally occur in a river system to remain in the river to support environmental functions.

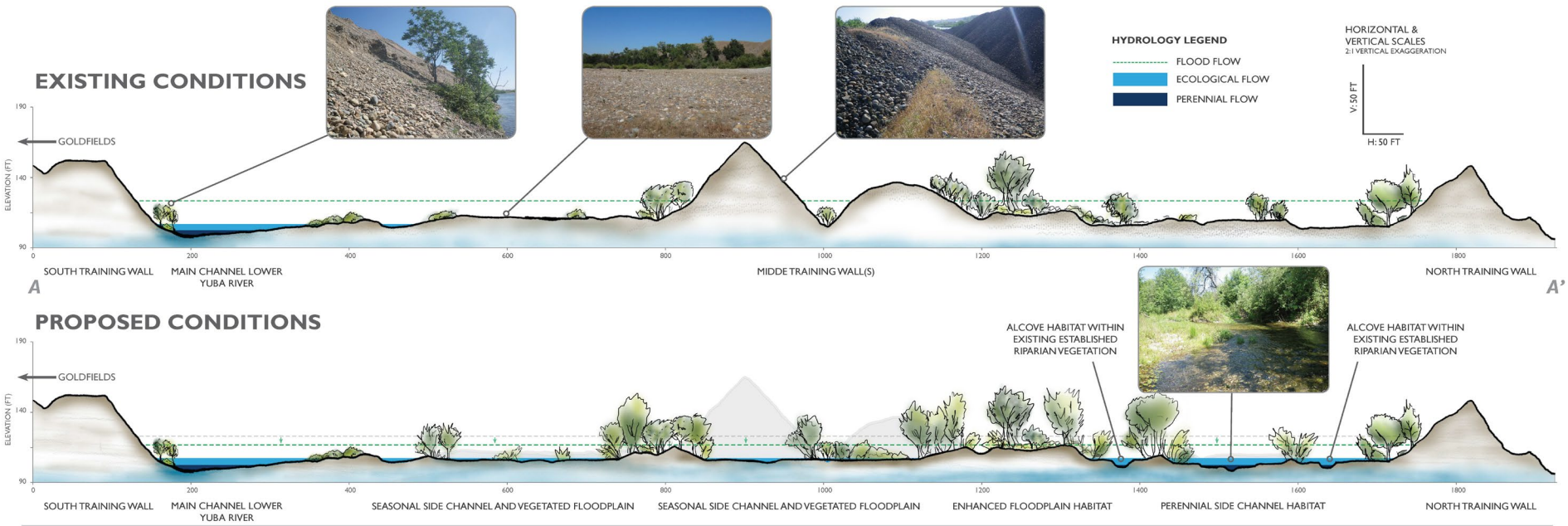
Functional Flows

Functional flows ask how available water can be managed most effectively to support ecosystem functions, rather than focusing solely on increasing the volume of instream flow.

Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program

- Ridged flow requirements alone in many tributaries are unlikely to improve and restore ecosystem conditions
- HRL provides a voluntary agreement pathway for implementing the Bay-Delta Plan.
- Participating water right holders commit to enforceable flow contributions, habitat restoration, and adaptive management, backed by a regulatory backstop.
- If the commitments achieve the ecological objectives, participants may avoid more prescriptive flow requirements or water-right restrictions under the regulatory pathway

HALLWOOD SIDE CHANNEL AND FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION PROJECT



Project Highlights:

Potential to enhance/create:



Why does the Bay-Delta Plan matter?

How does it effect CCWD?



Why does the Bay-Delta Plan matter?

Water Rights

"Much of the implementation for this Plan relies upon the combined water rights and water quality authorities of the State Water Board. This Plan establishes water quality objectives for which implementation can be accomplished in part by assigning responsibility to water right holders and water users…"



How does the Plan effect CCWD?

The Plan meets its objectives through actions on water rights: amending permits and licenses, adopting regulations, issuing orders, or approving negotiated agreements.

HRL is an alternative pathway to meeting the objectives of the Plan in certain tributaries. CCWD will need to explore participation in HRL

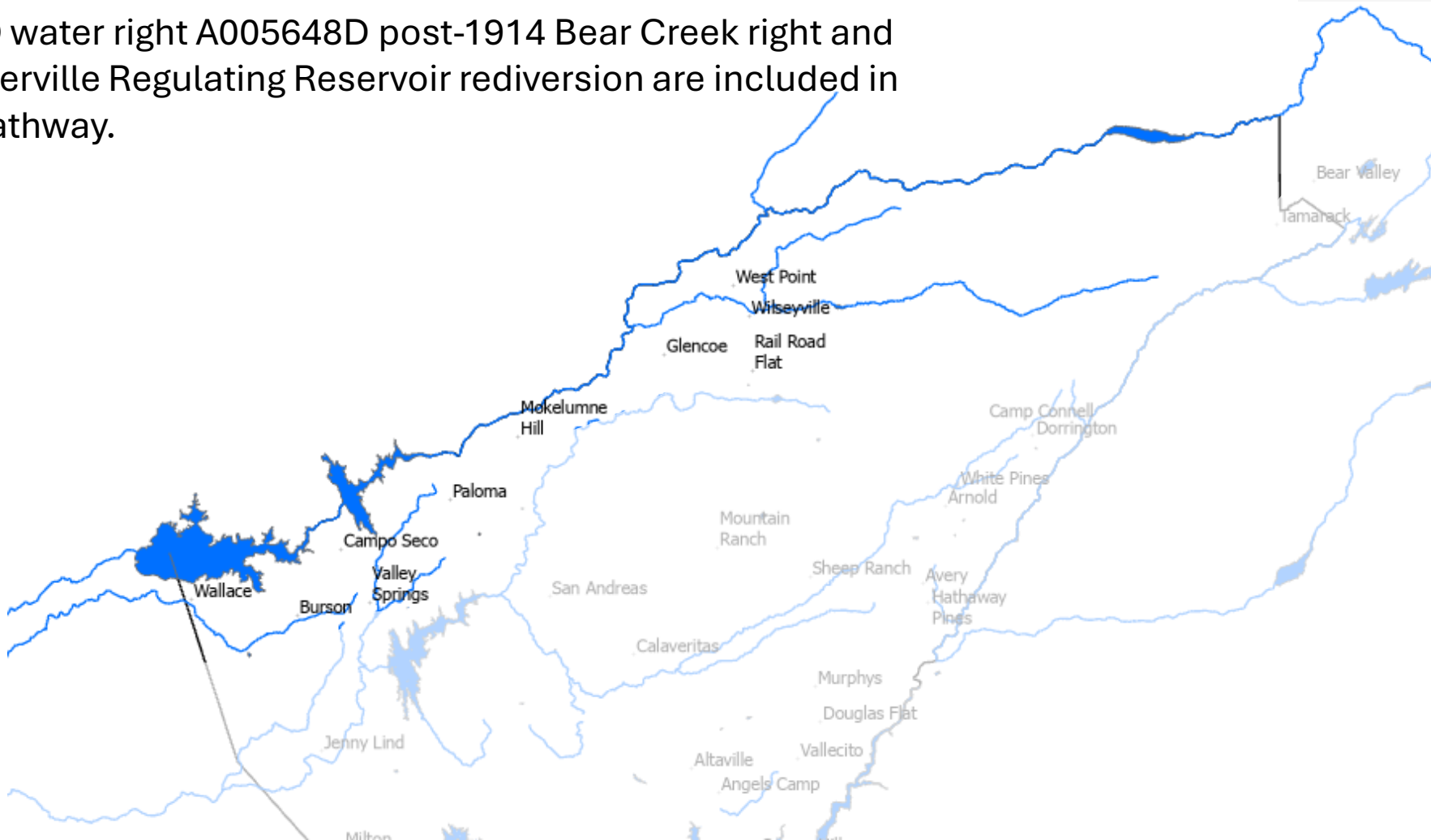
CCWD has rights in three of the affected tributaries that extend across the two Phases of the Plan and both implementation pathways

Mokelumne River

Baseline of 55% year-round unimpaired flow.

Reduced to 35% unimpaired flow if maximum allowable storage capacity drops below 0.72

CCWD water right A005648D post-1914 Bear Creek right and Bummerville Regulating Reservoir rediversion are included in HRL pathway.



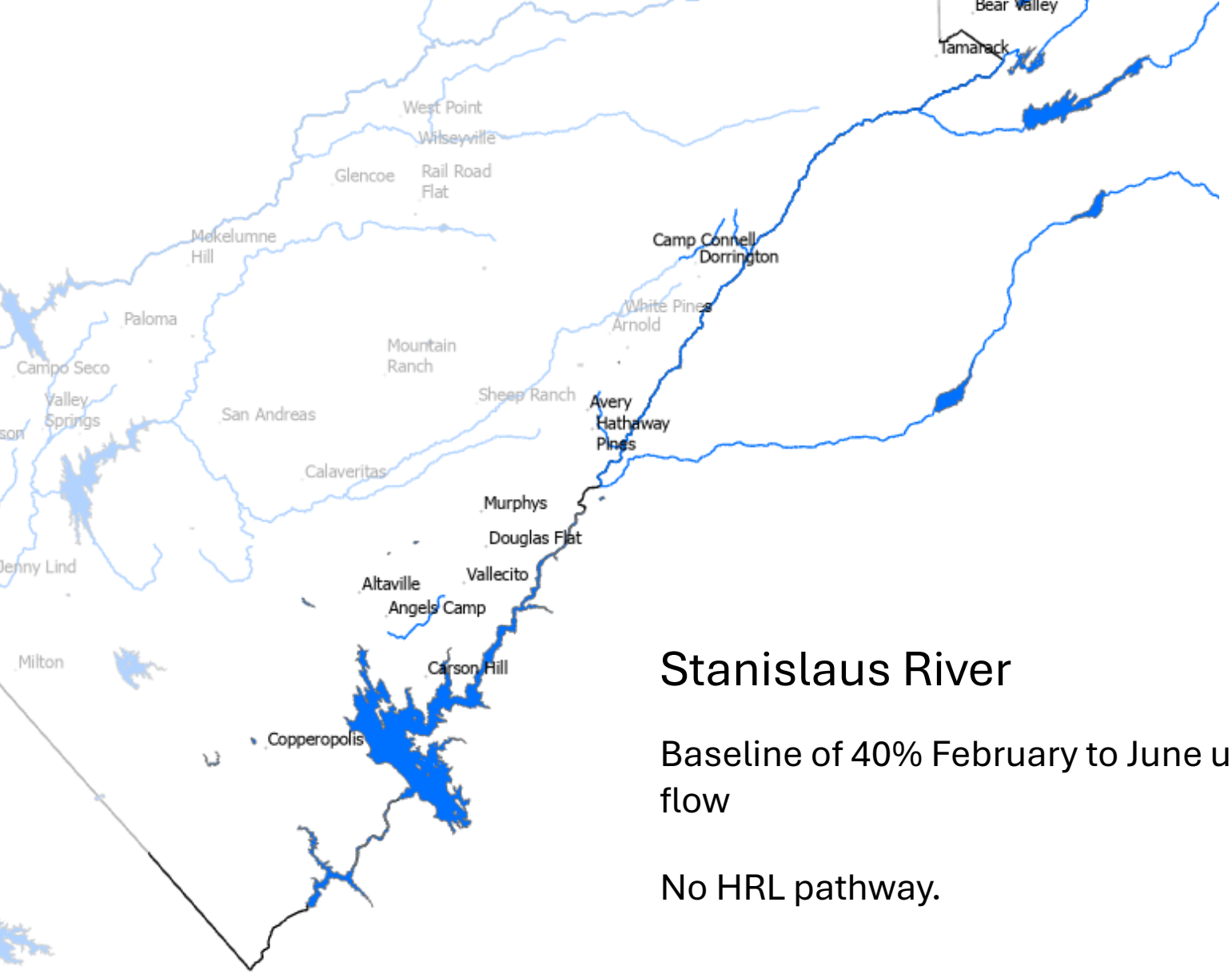


Calaveras River

Baseline of 55% year-round unimpaired flow

Reduced to 35% unimpaired flow if maximum allowable storage capacity drops below 0.72

No HRL pathway



Stanislaus River

Baseline of 40% February to June unimpaired flow

No HRL pathway.

Why does the Bay-Delta Plan matter?

- The Plan sets the rules and objectives that are achieved through water rights proceedings and – in the case of select Phase 2 tributaries through – the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

- CCWD holds numerous consumptive and non-consumptive water rights at various seniority levels across the three watersheds. This means the District's water rights are exposed to the various Bay-Delta implementation measures. CCWD needs to evaluate this exposure and assess possible strategies for engagement.

- Downstream decisions flow upstream. Even where CCWD isn't the entity directed to release water, those who are will likely look for ways to meet their obligations. For example, the new instream flow requirements may create pressure to revisit or examine upstream rights during future petition, license, or extension proceedings.

- Timing and engagement are important - positions taken now, by us or by others, shape how later proceedings treat upstream agencies.


CALIFORNIA
WATER PLAN
2023
UPDATE

Water Plan Updates

The California Water Plan, which is updated every five years, is the State's strategic plan for sustainable water management, providing a trusted source of water data, analysis, and investment guidance. In developing future updates, starting with 2028, DWR is taking a refreshed approach to address the new and worsening threats to our state's water supply.



SB 72: A Modernized California Water Plan

- **Establishes first-ever statewide water supply targets**
  - → Water Plan 2028: Sets interim target of 9 million acre-feet of additional water supply, conservation, or storage capacity by 2040
  - → Water Plan 2033: DWR to develop new, watershed-based targets for 2050
- **Develops actions to meet targets**
  - → Transforms the Water Plan from advisory guidance to an action plan
- **Expands Engagement**
  - → CA Water Commission, Advisory Committee, Statewide Regional Forums
  - → Tribes, Env. Justice, Labor, Environmental, Ag, Urban, Business

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

Advisory Committee – Who We Are



Aaron Fukuda
General Manager
Tulare Irrigation District



Alex Biering
Director of Policy
Advocacy
California Farm Bureau



Ali Chehrehsez
Chief Executive Officer
SemiVerde Energy



Anja Raudabaugh
Chief Executive Officer
Western United Dairies



Ann Willis
California Regional
Director
American Rivers



Anne Schiller
Senior Program
Manager
Environmental Defense
Fund



Brian Lockwood
General Manager
Pajaro Valley Water
Management Agency



Cannon Michael
President and Chief
Executive Officer
Bowles Farming
Company



Corrie Monohon
Director of Natural
Resources
Hoopa Valley Tribe



Charles Delgado
Legislative Advocate
California State
Association of Counties



Chris Hannan
President
California State Building
and Construction
Trades Council



Chuck Bonham
California Executive
Director
The Nature Conservancy

Clifford Chan
General Manager
East Bay Municipal
Utility District



Cora Snyder
Program Manager
Pacific Institute,
California Water
Resilience Initiative



Craig Miller
Board President, California
Municipal Utilities
Associations
General Manager, Western
Municipal Water District



David Guy
President
Northern California
Water Association



Grant Davis
General Manager
Sonoma County Water
Agency



Heather Dyer
Chief Executive Officer
and General Manager
San Bernardino Valley
Municipal Water
District



Itzel Vasquez-Rodriguez
Small Utilities Project
Manager
Rural Communities
Assistance Corporation



Jacqueline Tkao
President
California Association of
Professional Scientists



Jason Kuiken
Forest Supervisor,
Stanislaus National
Forest
United States Forest
Service



Jennifer Barrera
President and Chief
Executive Officer
California Chamber of
Commerce



Jolene Guerrero
Deputy Director, Water
Resources
Los Angeles County
Public Works



Joone Kim-Lopez
General Manager and
Chief Executive Officer
Mountain Nigual Water
District



Juan Guerreiro
Public Utilities Director
City of San Diego



Karen Gaffney
Director of Strategic
Planning and
Communications
North Coast Resource
Partnership



Levi Johnson
Operations Manager
Central Valley
Operations Office
United States Bureau of
Reclamation



Lisa Haney
Executive Director of
Planning and Natural
Resources
Orange County Water
District



Marwan Khalifa
Interim Executive
Director
Association of California
Water Agencies



Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Senior Vice President of
Government Affairs
Rural Counties
Representatives of CA



Michelle Banonis
Manager of Strategic
Affairs
Regional Water Authority



Ngodoo Atume
SGMA Tech. Assist. for
Small Farms Academic
Coordinator II
UC Agriculture and
Natural Resources



Patrick Hume
District 5 Supervisor
County of Sacramento
Chair
Delta Counties Coalition



Shivaji Deshmukh
General Manager
Metropolitan Water
District of Southern
California



Tia Flaming
Executive Director
California Water
Efficiency Partnership



Tony Firanzi
Director of Strategic
Affairs
Placer County Water
Agency

EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Erik Ekdahl
Chief Deputy Director
State Water Resources
Control Board



Fern Steiner
Chair
California Water
Commission

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
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Refined Analytical Resolution

10 Hydrologic Regions → 140 USGS Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-8 Watersheds





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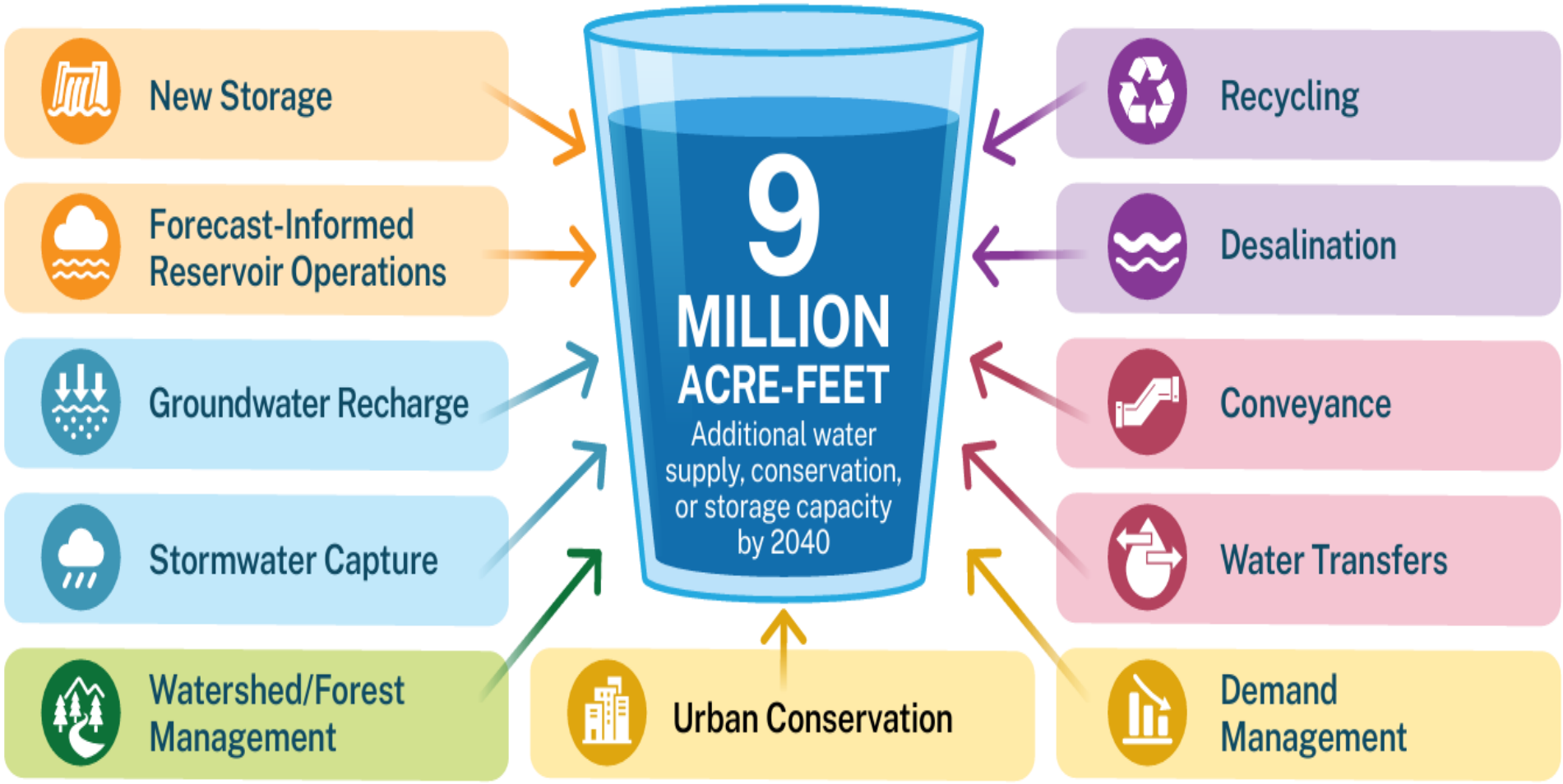
California Water Plan Strategies



Senate Bill 72 Strategy Insights

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Table 2-1. Summary Assessment of Water Management Strategies: Implementation Feasibility, Cost, and Potential Water Supply Contribution

Strategies	Ease of Strategy Implementation	Cost	Potential Magnitude of Contribution to Water Supply Goals
Groundwater Recharge	**Medium** • Infrastructure: Recharge uses GW basins as natural infrastructure. On-farm recharge increases ease of implementation. • Planning and permitting takes time. • Uncertainty around environmental water needs. • Regulations: Water rights, water quality, accounting of retained and recoverable supply, permitting challenges. Concerns about downstream 3rd-party impacts. • Data: Existing groundwater level and streamflow monitoring, along with groundwater models, support recharge planning, but determining how much water reaches the aquifer, can be recovered, and affects downstream users remains challenging.	**Medium Cost** • Permits and CEQA • Varies by method/project. • Generally requires less new infrastructure than other strategies. • Conveyance costs vary.	**High** • Potential for millions of AF of new supply. • SWRCB permitted 1,200,000 AF in a single water year (2023) • California has an estimated 1,000,000 AF of groundwater storage capacity (DWR 2025). • Compensates for loss of storage from snowpack.
Stormwater Capture	**Medium** • **Infrastructure:** Water quality challenges without true source control. • **Regulations:** Fragmented responsibilities across water supply, flood events, water quality, and land use. • **Data :** Rainfall and runoff measurements help identify opportunities to capture stormwater, but estimating how much water can be captured, stored, and reliably used is difficult because storms vary and some runoff already supports downstream uses.	**Medium Cost** • Generally higher upfront capital costs. • Stormwater generally lacks dedicated funding.	**Medium** • 580,000 AF to 3,000,000 AF physically available for capture, but potentially limited by cost, lack of infrastructure, stormwater quality, and storage space. • Highly variable benefits because of hydrologic variability.
Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO)	**High** • **Regulations:** Often need USACE deviations or water control manual updates. • Improvements in forecasting skill and integrated operational decision tools needed. • Local FIRO champions needed. • **Data:** Existing weather forecasts, streamflow monitoring, and reservoir models support FIRO, but improvements in forecast accuracy and tools that help operators decide when to store or release water are still needed at some reservoirs.	**Low Cost** • Changes in operations require little to no new infrastructure. • Costs associated with advanced forecasting tools, staffing, and training.	**Medium** • 315,000 AF average annual estimate of increased water availability from FIRO at 20 largest reservoirs. • Minor deviations (5%) on 32 CA reservoirs recommended for FIRO studies would equate to approximately 1,000,000 AF. • Potential benefits when integrated with other strategies (e.g., GW recharge).

Why does the new California Plan matter?

- The Water Plan is a planning document, so its is more about data, establishing targets, funding, and future legislation/policies, etc. There is no regulatory component.

- Helps evaluate what counts as supply and demands. The question is how does the State meet future supply deficits while maximizing current systems and addressing future demands?

- Provides a way for broad statewide and regional engagement. The Plan may shape future grant priorities and agency policies. So, being engaged in the process may provide future opportunities especially as it relates the watershed scale management efforts.

- The Plan has the goal of addressing affordability, regulations, infrastructure, and data. There is a driving need for broader integration and practicable processes and frameworks to achieve the goals.

Thank you.

Questions?