

CALIFORNIA WATER SOLUTIONS NOW



***A Report
From Member Organizations of the
ENVIRONMENTAL WATER CAUCUS
August 2009***

***This report is dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Green
(1929-2008), a tireless advocate for common-sense
management of California's water supply.***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California is in the grip of a water crisis of our own making. Like all problems that humans create, we have the potential to use the crisis as an opportunity to make positive and long-lasting changes in water management. The crisis is not a water shortage – California has already developed sufficient water supplies to take us well into this century – the real crisis is that this supply is not used efficiently or equitably for all Californians nor is it used wisely to sustain the ecosystems that support us.

The opportunity – and the basis for our positive vision – is that economically and technologically feasible measures are readily available to provide the water needed for our future. Our vision includes providing clean water for families to drink, providing water to improve the environmental health of our once-magnificent rivers, recovering our fisheries from the edges of extinction, fostering healthy commercial fisheries and a thriving agricultural industry, ensuring that all California communities have access to safe and affordable drinking water, and contributing significantly to the state's largest industries: recreation and tourism.^{1 2}

This report makes the case that California has already developed enough water supplies to satisfy our needs into the foreseeable future by utilizing existing infrastructure and existing cost effective technologies. The report documents numerous analyses of water efficient technologies and approaches that can save or reduce water consumption in urban areas by as much as 5 million acre feet a year by 2030 compared with current trends – enough water to support a population growth of 29,000,000 people. According to the California Water Plan Update 2009, the state's population can be expected to increase by 28,000,000 over the next 40 years if current population trends hold. Clearly, a well-managed future water supply to take us to 2050 is within reach with the current supplies and with an aggressive water conservation program. In addition, still larger savings can be expected from agricultural water efficiencies, and some of this saved water could be available for urban consumption. All of the water conservation strategies discussed in this report are much less expensive than the new surface storage and conveyance projects being contemplated by state and federal agencies.

We need to make significant changes in our water management practices in order to provide the favorable outcomes that we describe in this report. These changes are based on the following Principles for a Comprehensive California Water Policy, developed by the Planning and Conservation League and the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water to guide California water policy reform.³ They instruct that:

1. California must respect and adjust to meet the natural limits of its waters and waterways, including the limits imposed by climate change.
2. Every Californian has a right to safe, sufficient, affordable and accessible drinking water.
3. California's ecosystems and the life they support have a right to clean water and to exist and thrive, for their own benefit and the benefit of future generations.

¹ California's Rivers A Public Trust Report. Prepared for the State Lands Commission. 1993. P. 47.

http://www.slc.ca.gov/Reports/CA_Rivers_Rpt.html

² California Travel and Tourism Commission. California Travel Impacts by County. 2008 Preliminary State Estimates. Total direct travel spending alone was \$96.7 billion in 2008. ES-2.

<http://tourism.visitcalifornia.com/media/uploads/files/editor/Research/CAImp08pfinal.pdf>.

³ Aquaformia: the California Water News Blog of the Water Education Foundation. <http://aquaformia.com/archives/8374>.

4. California must maximize environmentally sustainable local water self-sufficiency in all areas of the State, especially in the face of climate change.
5. The quality and health of California's water must be protected and enhanced through full implementation and enforcement of existing water quality, environmental, and land use regulations and other actions and through new or more rigorous regulations and actions as needed.
6. All Californians must have immediate and ready access to information and the decision-making processes for water.
7. California must institute sustainable and equitable funding to ensure cost-effective water reliability and water quality solutions for the state where "cost-effective" includes environmental and social costs.
8. Groundwater and surface water management must be integrated, and water health and protection must be addressed on a watershed basis.
9. California's actions on water must respect the needs and interests of California Tribes, including those unrecognized Tribes in the State.
10. California must overhaul its existing, piecemeal water rights policies, which already over-allocate existing water and distribute rights without regard to equity.

There are many competing solutions being put forward by various interest groups to deal with these issues. The environmental community is frequently asked: "***What does the environment really need?***" Our responses to that question are the subjects of this report.

The Strategic Goals and Recommended Actions described in this report are advocated by individual member organizations of the Environmental Water Caucus (EWC), which are listed at the end of the report. These are the strategic and on-the-ground actions that we recommend to all Californians to assure an adequate and reliable water supply for the future and to simultaneously recover the health of our fisheries and aquatic systems.

The report is organized by our high priority Strategic Goals with a discussion of each Strategic Goal and its' supporting data, followed by a set of Recommended Actions associated with each Strategic Goal. The Strategic Goals are:

1. Implement ecologically sustainable and cost effective water supply efficiency targets that reduce demand or increase supply.
2. Reduce exports from the delta, minimize reverse flows in the Delta, and increase Delta outflow.
3. Restore instream flows, volumes and patterns for aquatic ecosystems.
4. Provide fish passage above and below dams for all at-risk salmonid species.
5. Retain cold water for fish in reservoirs for later downstream release.
6. Integrate floodplains with rivers and streams.
7. Eliminate State and Federal water deliveries to irrigate drainage-impaired lands in the western San Joaquin Valley.
8. Restore surface and groundwater quality.
9. Maximize regional water self-sufficiency to include water for the environment.
10. Fund sustainable environmental agencies, watershed restoration and science with end-user fees.

A sampling of the report's 65 recommendations include: aggressive state-wide water conservation targets that provide adequate water for all Californians and preclude the need for major new surface storage projects, a reduction of exports from the Bay Delta in order to protect this valuable resource and its fishes – including strong concerns about the potential for a Peripheral Canal around the Bay Delta to increase exports instead, significant improvements to our valuable river habitats, elimination of water supplies to irrigate impaired farmlands, improvements in water quality, regional self-sufficiency, and improved funding for environmental agencies.

The two recent federal Biological Opinions on Delta operations strongly reinforce the recommendations of this report, which point out the need to reduce Delta exports, to provide fish passage above dams, to provide increased stream flows and colder waters in order to protect the health of the Delta. These actions will provide safeguards against the extinction of iconic fish species and give them a better chance of surviving the increased severity of the droughts and floods that are expected to accompany climate change.

The Recommended Actions that we propose will provide many benefits, in addition to the environmental improvements. They will reduce the financial burden on taxpayers and ratepayers, reduce impacts on the state budget, provide for greater ratepayer equity by reducing subsidies for water and require all businesses, especially agriculture, to pay for the true cost of the public resources they utilize. In addition, the proposed actions will bring state and federal agencies into compliance with environmental laws that they now routinely violate; they will force hard questions and hard decisions. In the end, these actions promote a positive, higher-quality legacy for our children and grandchildren while providing for a thriving economic future.



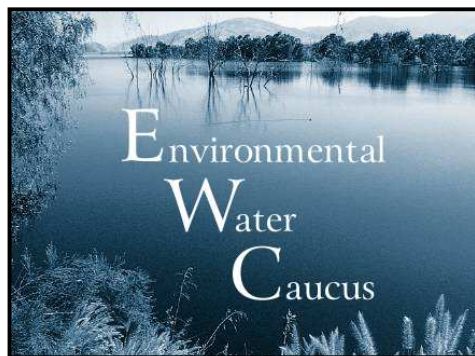
ENVIRONMENTAL WATER CAUCUS (EWC)

The mission of the Environmental Water Caucus is to facilitate the involvement of environmental, civic, recreational, and commercial fishing organizations in the restoration of the Bay-Delta ecosystem and its fisheries and in the implementation of environmentally and economically sound water policies throughout California.

These listed EWC organizations support the concepts and directions recommended in this report.

Butte Environmental Council
California Coastkeeper Alliance
California Save Our Streams Council
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
California Striped Bass Association
California Trout
California Water Impact Network (C-WIN)
Clean Water Action
Desal Response Group
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Foothill Conservancy
Friends of the River
Friends of Trinity River

Northern California Council Federation of
Fly Fishers
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's
Associations
Planning and Conservation League
Restore the Delta
Sacramento River Preservation Trust
Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition
Sierra Club California
Southern California Watershed Alliance
The Bay Institute
Winnemem Wintu Tribe



David Nesmith, Facilitator
ewcdavidnesmith.com
<http://ewccalifornia.org>

