

Water Blueprint

for the San Joaquin Valley

January 19, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Secretary Wade Crowfoot
California Natural Resources Agency
715 P Street, 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Karla Nemeth
California Department of Water Resources
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Resilient, Dynamic, and Balanced Approach to Management of California's Water Resources

Dear Governor Newsom, Secretary Crowfoot, and Director Nemeth:

The Newsom administration has been proactive when tackling difficult water issues in California, as evidenced by the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio and Water Supply Strategy. We commend the state's leadership for taking this initiative, and we hope to be a partner in the next steps of its implementation.

Many Californians, particularly those who reside in the San Joaquin Valley, have had their health and livelihoods impacted during the current multi-year drought. This drought exacerbates the negative impacts the Valley's residents experienced during the 2012-2016 drought. This drought has also demonstrated how the limitations of California's water conveyance system have prohibited effective utilization of the existing pumping capacity at a time when California is experiencing atmospheric river conditions and wide-spread flooding. Some estimates indicate that the recent storm event has resulted in approximately 300,000 acre-feet of water flowing out to the ocean per day, which only highlights how far we still have to go to achieve the co-equal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. Clearly, the recent storm system reinforces the need to improve California's existing water conveyance and storage

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infrastructure, particularly to meet California's needs under the changing hydrologic conditions California has experienced over the last twenty years.

The Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley has identified a set of 10 resiliency projects that we believe will advance this administration's water agenda. The projects support the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio. Many of the projects are already being promoted by the Natural Resources Agency and its various departments. However, there are a few to which we would like to draw your attention because they will resolve two of the most confounding water issues currently before us.

Reliable deliveries of surplus water, conveyed through the Delta, are paramount to the future of California's water reliability. Recent hydrology has demonstrated that not being able to convey floodwater through the Delta into surface and subsurface storage should be a thing of the past. Adapting to our new climate reality demands a focused solution to this challenge that has vexed California for so many decades – to improve conveyance and storage while operating under scientifically grounded adaptive water operations that are responsive to the intra- and interannual variances in California's hydrology. We urge your team to take every opportunity to support regulations and infrastructure that allow for adaptive management of the current water system to improve water resilience, consistent with current scientific understanding, and capture surplus water during the times it is available.

California is a leader in technological advancement and has one of the most modern and efficient agricultural systems in the world. Given this technological expertise, we can improve the way we divert water. One such improvement may be to change how water is diverted. There is technology that allows water to be diverted from under the bottom of the water column, at very slow rates. This technology has not been applied to the Delta. The Blueprint has proposed a project – Environmentally Friendly Water Diversions – to implement this technology in the Delta, and we would like the administration's support to explore its implementation. If successful, the implementation of that technology could change water management in California. No longer will there be a need to slow down the pumps when we have high Delta outflow. This technology has the capability to usher in a new era where we can fully utilize our precious water resources without impacting fish. By diverting just a small proportion of the high Delta outflows, tens of millions of people on the Central Coast, in Southern California, the South Bay, and in the San Joaquin Valley will benefit.

Once our reservoirs south of the Delta are filled, the additional water diverted with Environmentally Friendly Water Diversions will need a home. The Water Blueprint has identified a Southern San Joaquin Water Resiliency Project – a new bidirectional canal, feeding the center of the Valley, supporting rural communities and wildlife refuges, and connecting to groundwater recharge projects throughout the Valley, thereby providing sustainability to groundwater basins. But the potential for the benefits from that project does not stop there. The bidirectional canal could support potentially tens of millions of

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acre-feet of groundwater storage, some of which can be developed into groundwater banking programs – long-term resiliency to urban areas and improved water supplies to rural areas.

These projects, in conjunction with the great projects identified previously in the Governor’s Water Resilience Portfolio and Water Supply Strategy, will change California. Floods on the back of severe droughts have created great awareness of the water crisis in people’s minds. The resiliency projects offer a real, comprehensive, long-lasting solution.

We believe that together, we can implement a strategy for a resilient, dynamic, and balanced water management approach for our state and communities.

Sincerely,



Ian LeMay,
Chair of the Board
Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley

Cc:

Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture,
Nancy Vogel, Deputy Secretary for Water, California Natural Resources Agency
Antonio Villaraigosa, Infrastructure Advisor, State of California
All members of the California State Legislature

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