



Long-term Drought: Drought Working Group Report-out

Introduction

Water Resilience Portfolio Action 26.3 tasks the State with developing strategies to protect communities and fish and wildlife in the event of drought lasting at least six years. As part of its exploration of Action 26.3, the California Water Commission convened a drought Working Group, as described in the drought [framework](#) shared with the Commission at the October 2022 meeting. The Working Group consisted of invited representatives from a broad suite of interested parties: Tribes, community leaders, non-profit groups, water districts, local, State, and federal government, agricultural industry. Working Group members held four half-day meetings facilitated by Commission staff and consultants.

This agenda item will provide an overview of potential drought strategies informed by the drought Working Group. These strategies will be refined and expanded during further outreach to interested parties and the public, and with Commission input.

Background

On July 28, 2020, the California Natural Resources Agency, California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture issued the final [Water Resilience Portfolio](#) (portfolio) in response to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-10-19, which calls for a "set of actions to meet California water needs through the 21st century." The portfolio outlines a broad suite of actions designed to move the state toward water resilience. The portfolio includes Action 26.3: Develop strategies to protect communities and fish and wildlife in the event of drought lasting at least six years. Action 26.3 is assigned to the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency; the State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Department of Food and Agriculture represent these agencies. Action 26.3 is embedded in a section of the portfolio that is focused on preparation for a changing climate, which includes actions designed to help regions prepare for inevitable drought.

In a letter dated December 14, 2021, the Secretaries for Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, and Food and Agriculture requested the Commission assist with this action by educating itself about potential long-term strategies for managing sustained drought and delivering a proposed set of investments and policies that would better position the state to manage severely constrained water supplies. The Commission proposes to accomplish this work by leading a thorough and inclusive public dialog, similar to the Commission's recent efforts to assess a state role in financing climate-resilient conveyance and in supporting locally driven, in-basin groundwater trading programs that protect natural resources, small- and medium-sized farms, and disadvantaged communities. The Commission has coordinated with other agencies and developed a [framework](#) to advance its work. At the end of this process, the Commission will produce a paper that describes a set of strategies to protect communities and fish and wildlife in the event of long-term drought that agency policy makers can draw on when considering future policy and financial investment.

The Commission's work on long-term drought will implement Goal One of the Strategic Plan, which calls on the Commission to "serve as a primary public forum for the discussion of improving water

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management policy to assist regions in achieving climate resiliency ... including those actions of the Water Resilience Portfolio assigned to the Commission.”

Meeting Overview

Assistant Executive Officer Laura Jensen will update Commissioners on the outcome of the Drought Working Group.

This is an informational item.

Contact

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