



Drought Strategies: Public Workshop 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. In support of Action 26.3, the California Water Commission is gaining a wide perspective about potential strategies for managing drought. The Commission developed preliminary strategies and sought feedback from interested parties via three virtual public workshops held on July 19th, July 25th, and July 27th. The workshops attracted 114, 85, and 70 participants, respectively. The goals of the workshops were to:

1. Review the Commission's process for developing strategies and introduce preliminary strategies;
2. Collect feedback for refinement of preliminary strategies; and
3. Identify areas of regional interest/concern and additional considerations.

The Commission staff held public conversations via public workshops and solicited input about drought impacts and responses via an online survey to help refine its preliminary drought strategies. By facilitating a robust and inclusive public discussion on drought strategies to protect species and communities, the Commission will support Water Resilience Portfolio Action 26.3. Commission staff will develop a white paper for Commission approval that draws on public discussions and will include a set of suggested drought strategies. This paper will inform State decision-makers.

At the August Commission meeting, the Commission will hear a recap of the workshops.

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

Agenda Item: 10

Meeting Date: August 16, 2023

Page 2

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 that the Commission assist with this action by educating itself about potential strategies for managing drought and delivering a proposed set of investments and policies that would better position the state to manage severely constrained water supplies. The Commission is accomplishing 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 without disrupting immediate drought response efforts. 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 drought that agency decision makers can draw on when considering future policies and financial investments.

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

Meeting Overview

Commissioners will hear a presentation from Atley Keller, Public Affairs Specialist with Stantec, then take comments from the public and have the opportunity to discuss the presentation and, where relevant, share what they learned by attending the workshops. This is an informational item.

Contact

Laura Jensen

Assistant Executive Officer

California Water Commission

916-820-5897