



Six-Year Drought: Workplan (Action Item)

Introduction

At the request of the Secretaries of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, and Food and Agriculture, Commission staff has developed a proposed workplan to initiate Water Resilience Portfolio Action 26.3: “Develop strategies to protect communities and fish and wildlife in the event of drought lasting at least six years.” The state agencies that must inform development of such strategies include the State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Department of Food and Agriculture. These agencies currently manage the impacts of two years of severe drought and are preparing for a third. While other state agencies manage immediate drought response, the Commission has been asked to gain a wide perspective and begin to educate itself about potential long-term strategies for managing sustained drought. With this workplan, the Commission will start to investigate potential strategies for managing long-term drought, while coordinating with state agencies to develop a framework to advance this 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 lasting at least six years.

Because the Commission has been asked to work on long-term drought strategies in the midst of ongoing drought, the Commission’s drought-related work will be coordinated with current drought efforts so as not to confuse messaging or dilute resources related to the immediate drought response. The proposed workplan is intentionally high-level, focusing on the three main steps that the Commission must take to fulfill the Secretaries’ request: conduct research, conduct outreach, and draft a white paper. The workplan, as written, will help keep the Commission’s process fluid, allowing the Commission to adapt and respond to what it learns along the way as well as to activities and messaging surrounding the current drought. As staff embarks upon each step in the workplan, they will provide interim timelines and more detailed next steps to the Commission and the public.

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

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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 that 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 for at least six consecutive years. 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'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

At this meeting, the Commission's Assistant Executive Officer, Laura Jensen, will present the proposed workplan for Commission discussion and approval, providing additional detail on how staff plans to implement the first step of the workplan. The Commission may approve the workplan as written, approve the workplan with modifications, or ask staff to modify the workplan and present it again at a later meeting. If the Commission approves the workplan, staff will move forward immediately with this work.

This is an action item.

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