



## Drought Strategies: Expert Panel Recap

### 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 has hosted six expert panels on the topics below:

1. California Droughts of the Past, Present, and Future
2. Protecting Communities and Species
3. Overview of State Drought Actions
4. Drought Preparedness and Response Strategies
5. Wildfire and Forest Management
6. Desalination

By hosting expert panels at its public meetings, the Commission provides an opportunity to share information with public and to hear from both experts on the topic of drought and other interested parties that wish to comment on the panels.

Commission staff will synthesize the information that the Commission has heard at its drought expert panels to provide an opportunity for discussion in advance of staff's preparation of a white paper on strategies to protect communities and species in the event of drought.

### 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 that the Commission assist with this action by educating itself about potential strategies for managing drought and delivering a proposed set

Agenda Item: 9

Meeting Date: August 16, 2023

Page 2

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 staff, take comments from the public, and then have an opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts on strategies to protect communities and species in the event of drought. This is an informational item.

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