DRIP Meeting #8

July 18, 2025

California DRIP Collaborative

We received written worksheet comments from 12 of the DRIP Collaborative members, as shown in the 11 rows below.
Each of the "x" comments below indicates a comment from a DRIP Collaborative member. There were a total of 65 comments.

Item/Idea

	Drought Early Warning System	Eco1 In-Stream Flows	Eco2 Grant & Contracting	Eco3 O&M	Communication Program	Land1 Ag Land Transitions	Land2 Housing-Water Supply Nexus	Land3 Integrated Water Planning	Intra1 Viln & SWS Infra Needs	Infra2 Sys & Reg Flexibility	Intra3 Groundwater Recharge Program
1	x	x	x						x	x	x
2		x	x	x	x	x		x			
3	x	x					x				
4	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
5		x	x	x		x		x	x		
6	x				x	x			x		x
7		x									
8	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	
9	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
10		x	x	x						x	x
11	x	x									

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Presentation: Piloting a Modern Approach to Drought Early Warning

Interest in effort: What would motivate you to participate in this effort? In what aspects do you find value? How can we provide additional value to what is already available? What else should we be considering?

Identify vulnerabilities in the various systems: such as natural systems, communities, and agriculture.
Run comparatives of early versus end of season warnings

I'm not sure if I would have any scientific expertise to benefit/participate in the effort. Value for ag would be in the expected river flow rate/water rights availability/state and federal water delivery estimates earlier. The value comes from more accurate or sooner predictions. consider drought effects for ag in regions/counties and potential effects in annual vs perennial crops.
Just knowing more about the program would be helpful. Also, understanding what kind of data needs to be shared. Some customer data and data that might leave an agency open to futher regulations might prohibit participation.
I notice the vision is drought resilience for Nation's "economic sectors" (later include public health, ag, and water utilities) - does environmental water fit into this anywhere? Flows? Is natural resources considered a water user?
I would like to see collaboration with water sector organizations in future development of the effort.

Content and Information: What drought scenarios would be helpful to you? What sector-specific monitoring and forecasting information do you currently use? Are there drought indicators you want to learn more about?

Reservoir levels and ability to provide irrigation season water supplies for agriculture (from current or carry over storage)
Mapping of small water system shortage hotspots

As a representative for counties, most industries/sectors are relevant t ous as there are many factors impacting counties prosperity, especially as it relates to water. In this presentation, there was discussion of seeing "no indication of substanstial replenioshment" despite above-average precipitation. I think more detail regarding this, not just comparing to averages, but the gap between what was predicted (based on the above average precipitation) versus what actually occured to better understand how planning efforts should be adjusted.
I mentioned a bit before, but river flow estimates, surface, and state/federal water availability would be helpful. Coordinating with GSAs/basins on combined surface and groundwater availability (by crop too if possible)
Since a lot of water is imported or moved across basins, drought information based on precipitation is only partially useful. A more complete picture would factor in additional info on water in storage, transfer, and exchange agreements. Legal and regulatory restrictions or other barriers to flexibility in addressing shortages.

Context: How early is an early warning for you? How and when would you like to receive this information?

We can do some impact assessment if we know water supply prospects from feb-april
I would say Feb/march. It is a bigger deal for annual crop plantings. As just a perennial (tree) crop grower, I do not have as much experience with this unfortunately.
6 months
It would be great if this could provide enough certainty to inform earlier annoucement of state water project./central valley project allocations. The sooner the better, so that contractors can plan ahead and implement shortage actions (e.g., conservation, secure transfer water) if needed.
I'm not sure what's technically feasible, so asap?
There should be a phased, ramp-up of warning like: 5-year outlook, 2-year outlook, 1-year conditions, monthly updates during more extreme dry conditions.

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Eco1. In-Stream Flow Requirements

Written Comments

Studies to determine functional flows, is that a gap as well? Does this inventory of functional flows for all streams exist? How to prioritize these?

Maybe have some kind of functional flows repository with targets

Technical assistance needs and downstream effects to support water users

Work with Tribes to ID data gaps and affects to Tribal lands and cultural areas. Also ID critical areas to support data collection. Surface water affects to groundwater - tribal community can be dependent soley on groundwater impacted from surface water diversions.

Tribal communities also depend on wetlands and meadows fed by surface water and springs, currently going dry. Winter how looks like what summer used to look like.

I think that, especially having hears about Scott-Shasta rivers, it would be really helpful to hear more about the lessons-learned from the strategies being used to help avoid curtailment. Knowing what is/isn't working in these areas will, I think, be very helpful to direct/inform brainstorming and recommendations
Establish a mandatory dafety net for small to medium diverters who would suffer the most from curtailments. Also, perhaps a voluntary state program to purchase water rights?

Interconnected surface water-sgma requirement: how do landowner cooperative solutions intersect with these requirements

Question: concerning large ag-res communities located on flood plains, is recharge value of recharge on 2-10 acre parcel balanced against groundwater use relative to interconnected/disconnected streams? Is high density development on these small parcels part of consideration?

Great presentation from Caitrin Chappelle at TNC, it seems we could complement this work vs leading a separate pilot.

Helping fund water efficiency measures for small farms

I think there is a lot we could do here - recommendating flexible water rights exemptions where in-stream flow requirements are set

Let's lead! All presentations today touched on the need for proactive action/planning

Check out AB 717 - a bill we tried this year.

Bill Text - AB-717 Water rights: appropriation: small restoration use.
Create a new water right mechanism that allows riparian users in coastal watershed to store a small amount of wet season water for season use in exchange for forebearing dry season

We need faster permitting for water rights changes that improve streamflow

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Eco2. Streamlining Grant and Contract Processes for Habitat Restoration Projects

Communication and technical assistance if it doesn't exist would increase participation

Compliment: Cutting the Green Tape

Vulnerable communities includes Tribes

Groundwater recharge projects for wetlands, ponds, and intermittent streams not covered by Clean Water Act

Ensure Tribal consultation is not bypassed through streamlining

Include levels/have restrictions so funds are evenly distributed throughout the state and to different sized organizations

What does Cutting the Green Tape entail?

It seems this is already being addressed through Cutting the green Tape. I agree it may help to have an SME present on this initative, to inform whether there's any value-add that DRIP can provide or if we are being duplicative.

One idea is whether we can replicate the success of Cutting the Green Tape and apply these principles to streamline permitting for other types of drought resilience projects (e.g., GW recharge)

Suggest we drop this

I'd like to hear more about Cutting the Green Tape and how it relates to all permitting vs just CDFW. For example: local, state water board, regional water board

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Eco3. O&M Considerations for Habitat Restoration Projects

Make sure it stays in grant application. It will be interesting to identify the revenue stream that will support O&M beyond the grant process.

Technical support for small rural community capacity building resources - including Tribes

Perhaps a new state agency that manages all of these. I am not as familiar with how these habitat restoration projects are managed long-term.

Support DRIP looking more into this. We need to ensure that habitat restoration projects, which especially benefit communities, continue to have O&M funding to continue operations. Some programs that come to mind include projects conducted with funds from the multibenefit land repurposing program

Inform on CDFW ideas

Can't completely separate with grants because O&M is a requirement of grants

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Communication Program

Consideration of Tribal Perspectives and approaches to drought and how drought is defined, observed, experienced, and managed

I understand this is a very broad issue that is difficult to address at a State level. that being said, water agencies throughout the state all spend significant resouces surrounding water conservation, drought, etc. A broad overarching media campaign regarding "water" in California would be of benefit to all

I would suggest we pursue this as a "complement" idea to build upon existing efforts. E.g., could we leverage save our water campaign to communicate results of the drought early warning system? One challenge is the lack of funding for Save our Water - we would need this campaign to continue whther or not we are in a drought emergency.

Split this between (1) a "meta" level, framing problem (so we stop thinking of drought as an occassional emergency); and (2) the communication during times of shortage, which have several great examples and resources to guide state and local agencies.

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Land1. Land Use Repurposing: Elevate regional approaches to plan for ag land transitions

Written Comments

Need further analyse to ID appropriate approach (e.g., not all ag areas are appropriate for restoration, also depends on what you're trying to restore to - what is the baseline?)

Restoration to drought tolerant plants does not mean its best for the land depending on water availability, soil suitability, conditions, etc.

Consider native/cultural plants to support Tribal cultural practices

Consider cultural practices such as cultural fire to support long-term O&M and land management

Recommendations for better communication to water districts that MLRP can be used to purchase farm ground for recharge basins - and be able to count that recharge water. Perhaps even a subsection of MLRP for matching grants to water/irrigation districts to expand funding capacity

Idea can highlight new projects can ensure that projects are creating equitable opportunities for communities to develop projects like funding set aside for disadvantaged communities for planning and implementation funds, equitable timelines for application submittals. often disadvantaged communities don't have the capacity to quickly submit proposals.

Great idea - the challenge is funding. Consider if there are creative ways to supplement or stretch existing grant funds - I liked Jason's idea of matching funds/cost share.

INFORM

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Land2. Housing-Supply Nexus: Planning for housing needs and water supply

Written Comments

Need more folks in the housing space understanding water supply/timelines for providing weater to new housing developments. Especially pertanent with CEQA streamlining and exemptions

Incorporate GSP into decision making, allow moratoriums for development if critically overdrafting. Streamlined and/or CEQA exemption for new municipal water supply projects (seems this is already done! Learned in the next session)

Could we require the metropolitan planning orgs to coordinate with GSAs, LAFCos, and local water districts in development of their plans, so that new housing is located around where water is available/reliable (in addition to transit hubs)

LEAD

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Land3. Integrated Water Planning: Assess how plans interact and offer recommendations

Written Comments

Consider landscape-scale changes and impacts to watersheds

Mitigation does not support destruction/impacts to wetlands, meadows, or other critical plant habitats, consider preservation of existing habitats and expansion

Consider including domestic wells within this

Very supportive of complementing these efforts!

COM

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Infra1. Enhance Support and Collaboration for Vulnerable and Small Water Systems Infrastructure Needs

Written Comments

Identify or classify by frequency of shortage maybe? Have some ways of creating tiers for support during droughts.

Would this be appropriate to work with ACWA on? Ties in well with LAFCos and expanding their authority. Include domestic wells

Consider including domestic wells in this strategy/idea. Especially funding opportunities for domestic well projects. SAFER mostly focuses on small water systems. Propose moving forward with recommendations for regional forums. For example, the link of state and regional websites to assist small system operators in gaining information and training more locally

It might help to start by reviewing existing groups/forums and whther they could/should serve this role. E.g., county drought task forces, IRWM, LAFCos

Not sure if should be I C or L

CalMutuals has several ideas for improving support for small water system infrastructure and we offer to lead this idea, working in partnership with LA County Public Works. Improvements could be made to mandatory consolidation assessments (e.g., prioritizing those desiring to do so with better, more complete support). Other barriers to address include reimbursement delays, federal requirements, etc.

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Infra2. Improve System and Regulatory Flexibility for Water Infrastructure Resilience

Written Comments

COMPLEMENT. Understand process and rules. Address some of the accounting matters.

Include water banking plus transfer projects. Streamlining water rights change applications (recommend to add staff?)
I like the idea of including water rights permitting process improvements (for water transfers/exchanges) as part of this rec.I would be interested to hear if the Division of Water Rights has best practices or suggestions for improvement on both the regulation and project proponent side. How can we more efficiently move through the process?

Inform

I think there is a lot of potential here but I also could use some specifics here

Requirements for data to be submitted to regulators, specifically SWRCB, have become a major time sink that small systems struggle with: water demands, lead & copper rule, cross-connection plans, etc. All new drinking water regulations should have a 4-6 year compliance period (realistic). Economic feasibility of new regulations need to go to household affordability using census tract info, combining household burden with poverty prevalence indicators.

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Infra3. Establish groundwater recharge infrastructure program for local drought resilience

Written Comments

The regulatory component of this and permitting idea is a big share of the effort.

The US Army Corp has examples of large scale recharge including recharge

The Safe Clean Water Program in LA county [safecleanwaterla.org] already has examples of smaller scale projects that have been implemented or are approved/funded for implementation

Inform

Unclear exactly what our role could be - maybe exploring barriers/incentives

Take a bottom-up approach to get buy-in and leadership from water districts. A top-down, regulatory "hammer" will be resisted and less effective in its results.