

California's Water Challenge

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PLAN
2012

California Water Commission

The need to effectively manage California's water is more important today than at any time in history. The state's population continues to grow and urbanize, placing new demands on existing water and flood protection infrastructure. Protection of threatened fish species and their ecosystems, together with climate change impacts to hydrology and sea level conditions will increasingly affect the future reliability of the state's water supplies. It is imperative that California consider and utilize a broad range of strategies and resources to address the needs of the state's people, environment, farms, and economy for clean and reliable water. The California Water Commission is committed to promoting policies that encourage the sustainable management of water and a healthy environment, and serving as a primary agency for public discussion of water issues.

This document outlines California's water challenges and the California Water Commission's goals to address and provide leadership on those challenges.

Critical Issues in California Water Management



California faces growing water management challenges—including growth in demand, climate change, and instability in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Potential solutions will involve difficult and sometimes costly tradeoffs. The comprehensive package of water legislation enacted in late 2009 is a good beginning in policy reform but increased momentum—coupled with new investments—is essential to the state’s future.



—Public Policy Institute of California, February 2012

Water Supply Reliability

Many factors threaten water supply reliability in California. Significant investments are needed to expand and upgrade aging infrastructure, including the State Water Project, Delta conveyance, and regional projects to better address local water needs—including urban, agricultural, and environmental uses—for all California regions. Water supply reliability for many communities served by the State Water Project and other water systems is threatened by declining environmental conditions in the Delta, seismic events, a deteriorating levee system, water quality impacts, and sea level rise.

Changing Climate

Water supply in California is inherently variable because precipitation, the primary source of the state’s water supplies, varies from place to place, season to season, and year to year. As a result, many parts of California already face significant threats from floods and drought. Climate change will increase this variability, causing longer dry periods, more intense storms, and less snowpack which serves as a

natural form of water storage. State, federal and regional agencies are looking at ways to effectively respond to this variability such as Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM), a collaborative effort to manage all water resources in a region. IRWM strategies can include water supply, water quality, water use efficiency, operational flexibility, and stewardship of land and natural resources, often resulting in multi-benefit projects.

Declining Natural Systems

Problems with watershed health, lack of suitable habitat, competition with invasive species, toxicity, and water operations have contributed to ecosystem declines in the Delta and many areas of the state. Additionally, both surface water and groundwater quality varies greatly across the state. In many places water quality is impaired by urban runoff, agricultural discharge, and stormwater runoff which can carry chemicals, salts, pathogens, or other harmful pollutants. Addressing these serious problems is vital to the long term sustainability and reliability of California’s water supplies and the environment for fish, wildlife and people.

Establishment of the Commission

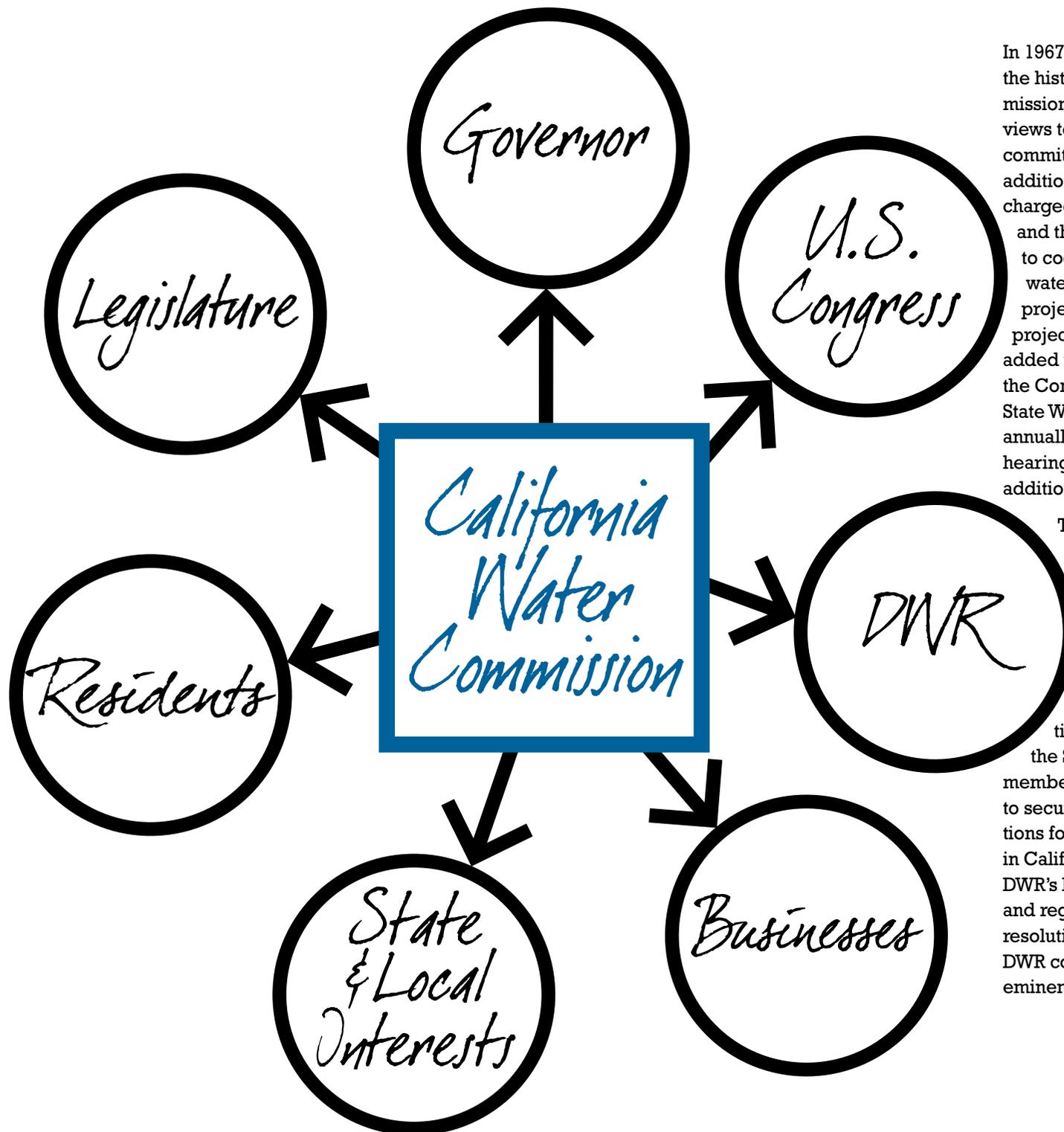


California
Water
Commission

The predecessor of the modern California Water Commission, the State Water Resources Board, was established by the California Legislature in 1945. The Board was charged with investigating and recommending projects for flood control and beneficial uses of water, representing state and local interests to the federal government, and making recommendations for needed water development projects to the Legislature. Governor Earl Warren appointed the first member of the board on November 1, 1945.

In 1956, the legislation that created the Department of Water Resources (DWR) also transferred many functions of the State Water Resources Board to the new DWR. However, the Board continued to exist within DWR. Soon after, the Legislature changed the name of the State Water Board to the California Water Commission and codified the Commission's powers in the Water Code much as they exist today.

Historical Roles and Duties

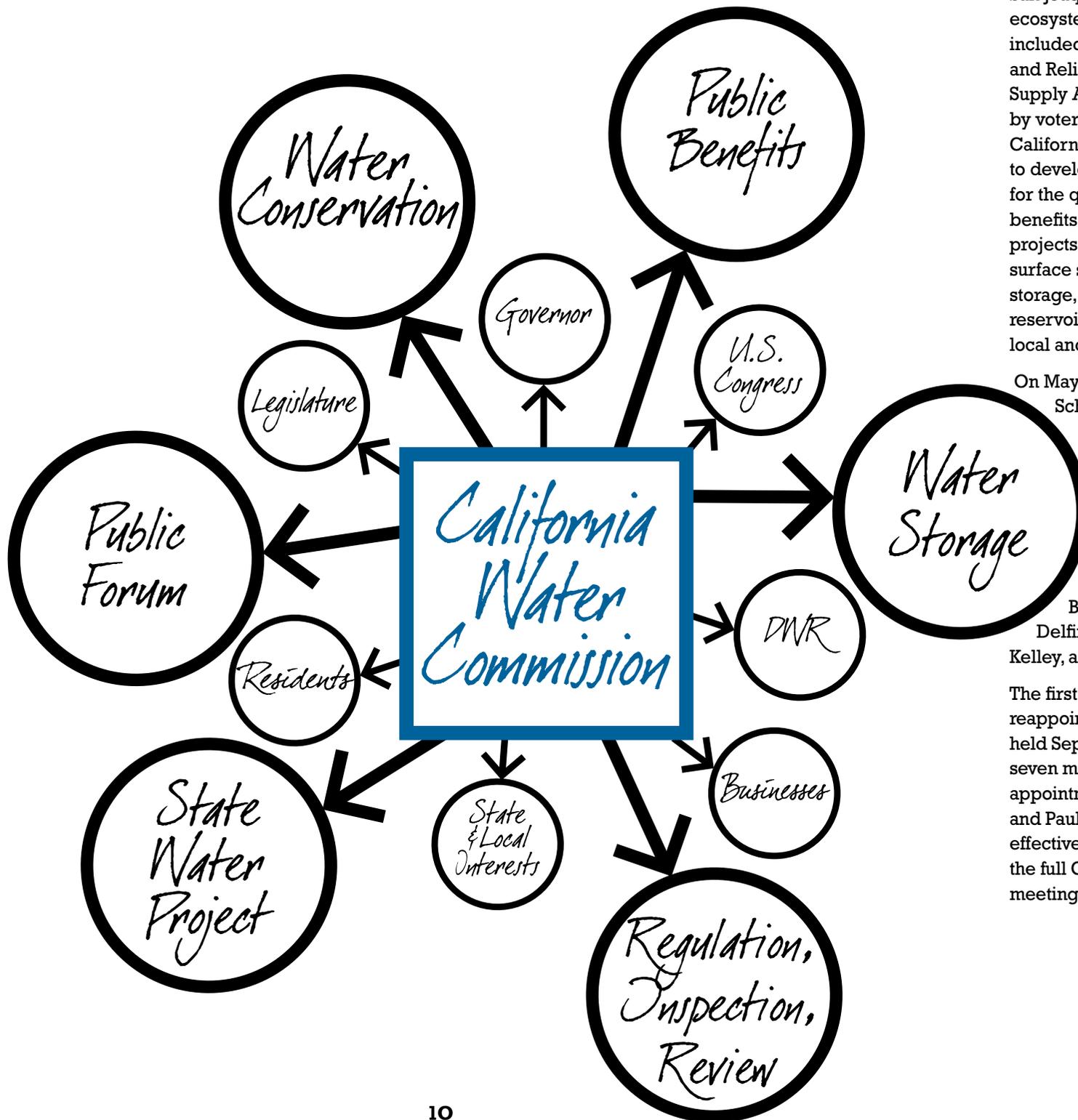


In 1967, the Legislature codified the historical role of the Commission to present California's views to the appropriations committees of Congress. In addition, the Commission was charged with advising DWR and the Governor with respect to coordination of federal water and flood control projects with state and local projects. The legislation also added the requirement that the Commission inspect the State Water Project (SWP) annually and conduct public hearings concerning proposed additions to the SWP.

The Commission met monthly at locations across the state. Major duties of the Commission included the annual inspection of, and report on the construction and operation of, the SWP and meeting with members of the U.S. Congress to secure federal appropriations for flood control projects in California. They also advised DWR's Director, approved rules and regulations, and considered resolutions of necessity before DWR could enter into any eminent domain proceedings.

During the late 1990s, terms expired and without new appointments there was no longer a quorum of Commission members. Unable to take any official actions, the Commission stopped meeting regularly and many of the official duties were performed by DWR staff. The Commission held several emergency meetings in the early 2000s but never resumed meeting regularly. Eventually, all Commission appointments expired and the Commission was left vacant until 2010.

The Modern Commission



In November 2009, California enacted a comprehensive water package to improve the state's water supply reliability and restore the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta ecosystem. The package included the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act which, if approved by voters, will direct the California Water Commission to develop tools and methods for the quantification of public benefits of water storage projects including CALFED surface storage, groundwater storage, conjunctive use and reservoir reoperation, and local and regional storage.

On May 14, 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger announced nine appointments to the long-vacant Commission: Andrew Ball, Joseph Byrne, Dave Cogdill, Daniel Curtin, Joe Del Bosque, Kimberley Delfino, Luther Hintz, Paul Kelley, and Anthony Saracino.

The first meeting of the newly reappointed Commission was held September 28, 2010 with seven members. Two of the appointments, Dave Cogdill and Paul Kelley, became effective in January 2011, and the full Commission held its first meeting on January 16, 2011.

Since then, the Commission has resumed its statutory duties and tackled policy and operations issues including approving Industrial Process Water and Agricultural Water Measurement regulations for water use efficiency, reviewing the State Water Project and federal appropriations for water supply and flood projects in California, and providing a public forum to evaluate and better understand the needs, options, and outlook for water storage in California.

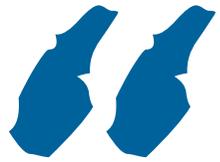
This strategic plan is intended to serve as the Commission's guiding document during this challenging and exciting time for California water. This plan will be formally reviewed and updated by the Commission with public input every five years to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Commission's activities and to ensure that the Commission maintains its focus on current and important California water issues.

Mission Statement

The California Water Commission provides a public forum for discussing water issues, advises the Department of Water Resources, and takes appropriate statutory actions to further the development of policies that support integrated and sustainable water resource management and a healthy environment.

To accomplish its mission, the California Water Commission has defined three overarching goals and a number of key strategies designed to achieve those goals:

Goal 1:



Serve as a primary public forum for the dissemination of information and discussion of statewide water issues and solutions.



A. Inform and engage the public on water issues

The Commission will inform and engage the public on water issues by considering public testimony at all Commission meetings, participating in the exchange of ideas at water conferences and events, publishing informative articles and reports, and responding to all public inquiries in a timely and efficient manner. The Commission will engage the public through the use of public hearings on various water issues and specifically to seek public input on all additional facilities proposed to be added to the State Water Project and when naming facilities of the SWP.

B. Promote public discourse on the future of water storage in California

The Commission will become the primary forum for public discourse on the future of *water storage* in California and support the development of the state's policies and priorities for water storage. This will be accomplished by hosting

public meetings and workshops to engage stakeholders and other interested parties in discussion and consideration of water storage and related issues. The Commission will also identify and create opportunities for members to participate in conferences and workshops, publish articles, and inform the legislature and other policy makers about the Commission's findings.

C. Provide transparent access to information

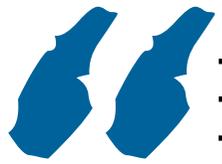
The Commission will maximize the use of technology to provide easy and transparent access to information to ensure that the public has the opportunity to observe and participate in the Commission's activities. These activities will include webcasting its meetings, publishing a written summary of meeting results following Commission meetings, publishing an annual report summarizing the key activities and accomplishments of the Commission, and continually updating the Commission website.

Water storage projects* may include:

- a) Surface storage projects identified in the CALFED Record of Decision
- b) Groundwater storage projects and groundwater contamination prevention or remediation projects that provide water storage benefits
- c) Conjunctive use and reservoir reoperation projects
- d) Local and regional surface storage projects that improve the operation of water systems in the state and provide public benefits

*As defined in SBX7-2, the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2012

Goal 2:



Ensure DWR decisions on key programs and activities are sound and sustainable by providing strategic advice, recommendations and oversight.



A. Ensure DWR rules and regulations are clear, fair, useful, and necessary

The Commission will review, consider, and approve, as appropriate, all regulations of the Department of Water Resources and provide for enhanced public participation in the rulemaking process to ensure rules and regulations created by DWR are clear, fair, useful, and necessary.

B. Approve priority areas for the Delta Special Projects Program

The Commission will ensure the priority areas for DWR's Delta Special Projects Program for flood control funding reflect the most pressing flood control needs in the Delta by reviewing and approving the Program's priority areas for investment as needed.

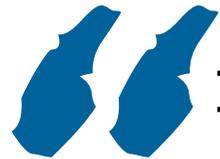
C. Review and inspect the State Water Project

The Commission will review and inspect SWP construction and operation annually, and make recommendations to the Legislature on the status of the operation and construction of the SWP.

D. Ensure eminent domain proceedings initiated by DWR meet legal requirements

The Commission will ensure that any eminent domain proceedings initiated by DWR are necessary and meet the required findings in the Code of Civil Procedure 1245.230. These actions will include a public forum and review process that meets and exceeds that required by law in accordance with the Commission's written and approved procedures for eminent domain actions.

Goal 3:



Develop and support integrated water management policies that result in sustainable water resources and a healthy environment statewide.



A. Establish the Commission's role as a policy leader

The Commission will establish itself as a policy leader on statewide water issues by advising and conferring with the Director of the Department of Water Resources on policy issues, and promoting sound, sustainable decision making on issues including but not limited to flood management, integrated regional water management, the State Water Project, and the California Water Plan. (WC §161)

B. Develop strategies for effectively investing in the public benefits of water projects in California

The Commission will help identify and develop strategies for investing in the public benefits of water projects. Work in this emerging, science-based policy area is necessary to ensure public investments in water projects provide the highest benefits to the people of California. If passed by voters in November 2014, the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act will authorize the Commission to approve regulations and establish a competitive process to fund public benefits associated with water storage projects that improve the state water system, are cost effective, and improve ecosystem and water quality conditions.

C. Improve coordination between federal, state, tribal and local public agencies and stakeholders

The Commission will engage other agencies and non-governmental organizations on key water issues to improve coordination between federal, state, tribal and local public agencies and other stakeholders regarding the construction and operation of water development and flood projects. (WC §1204.3)

D. Develop and support policies that advance Integrated Resource Management

The California Water Commission recognizes that no single agency has sufficient responsibility, authority, expertise, or resources to ensure natural resources stewardship throughout California. Multi-agency collaboratives have structural and functional characteristics that make them more effective in furthering the mandates and missions of each participating agency and in employing Integrated Resource Management (IRM) to achieve more effective natural resource stewardship. The Commission will engage in multi-agency collaboratives, including but not limited to, the California Water Plan State Agency Steering Committee and the Delta Plan Interagency

(continued)

Implementation Committee, and support policies that encourage and advance IRM.

E. Support actions and research to mitigate and adapt to climate change to facilitate more sustainable water management policies

Climate change impacts, including changes to precipitation and runoff patterns, reduced snowpack, and sea level rise, will significantly affect public safety, water quality and public health, water supply reliability for farms, businesses, and residences, and ecosystem health. The Commission will actively support policies to help state and local water resources managers mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. The Commission will specifically support the adaptation strategies for water management outlined in California's Climate Adaptation Strategy 2009, including Integrated Regional Water Management, water use efficiency, improved monitoring, integrated flood management, ecosystem stewardship, operational flexibility, and water storage.

F. Contribute to the public discourse and body of knowledge on key water policy issues

The Commission will contribute to the public discourse and body of knowledge on key water policy issues by identifying a list of water policy subject areas for further research and discussion, and developing white papers in support of the Commission's activities.

G. Advocate to the Congressional appropriations committees for federal funding

The Commission will advocate to the Congressional appropriations committees for federal funding for flood control or reclamation projects being planned or constructed in California by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other federal agencies. These activities will be coordinated to the extent necessary with other public agencies and stakeholders to identify projects in need of funding. The Commission will write letters of support to Congress, and if necessary, testify and meet with Administration and Congressional officials. (WC §12602)

Nothing in this strategic plan is intended to limit the activities of the Commission on other matters within their jurisdiction.

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