



## Proposal for Public Benefits Workshop

### **Background**

In 2011, the Water Commission directed DWR staff to prepare work products on quantification and management of public benefits. The purpose was to assist the Commission in meeting the statutory requirement that existed at that time to adopt regulations by December 15, 2012 following passage of the water bond act.

DWR staff prepared a survey of economic tools and existing methods to quantify the public benefits of water projects, as well as working drafts of potential language for inclusion in regulations and guidelines. The Commission has also heard from public agencies and other organizations on additional activities related to public benefits and ecosystem services. As part of this discussion, staff identified a list of additional policy issues and questions for which clarifications or additional information was needed. The Commission has continued discussion of three of these definitional issues -- water quality (November 2012 meeting), ecosystem benefits (December 2012 meeting), and recreation benefits (January 2013 meeting). Commission staff will prepare concept papers on each topic area that reflect Commission direction and discussion on these topics.

### **Workshop Proposal**

The Commission plans to hold a public workshop in March 2013 to hear public comment and feedback to inform future activities to define and quantify public benefits of water projects. At the January meeting, Commission staff will seek direction, including but not limited to, the following questions:

- What is the goal of the workshop and the desired outcome?
- What topic areas or information would be most beneficial?
- Does the Commission have recommendations for workshop format?
- Does the Commission have recommendations for speakers and other invitees?

Possible options for the workshop format are:

Option 1: Focused presentations by DWR staff and consultant on the three discussion topics – water quality, ecosystem benefits, and recreation. The purpose of this format would be to provide the Commission with more detailed information and responses to questions, and to summarize earlier Commission discussions and decisions. The workshop would provide an opportunity to solicit public input and questions at the meeting and online during the webcast.

Option 2: Three panels – one on each of the discussion topics which have been presented to the Commission in November, December, and January.

Panel 1: Water Quality

Panel 2: Ecosystem Benefits and Activities

Panel 3: Recreation

Panelists would be asked to address questions in each of these subject areas and provide feedback or additional information related to the Commission's earlier discussions on these issues. Following the panel presentations, the public would be invited to provide input, additional information, and ask questions.

Option 3: Case studies of types of existing and/or proposed water storage projects – Representatives of existing and proposed water storage projects would provide the Commission with information about the public benefits of their projects and how decisions about the methods for quantifying public benefits that are currently being considered by the Commission would impact their projects. Presentations could include case studies on any or all of the water storage projects identified in Water Code §79741: surface storage projects (CALFED), groundwater storage projects, conjunctive use and reoperation, and local and regional surface storage projects. Following the panel presentations, the public would be invited to provide input, additional information, and ask questions.

## **Contact**

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