

Water Storage Investment Program Public Engagement Options

Public engagement falls along a continuum from more to less participation in a convening agency’s efforts to collect input. Many complex or controversial policy efforts include aspects of several types of engagement to create a robust and comprehensive administrative record that illustrates the depth of discussion used to inform the agency’s final decision. Designing public engagement requires the convening agency to articulate goals for the process. Usually, the earlier and more in depth the public engagement, the fewer resources the agency spends later in controversy or litigation. In general, public engagement encompasses the following categories (and can include one or more simultaneously):

- Inform the general public
- Engage the general public
- Engage specialized stakeholders

The following presents a range of options for how the California Water Commission (Commission) can convene a stakeholder process to support the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP). Each of the following options includes a brief description of the basic approach and presents benefits and drawbacks. Table 1 summarizes the options.

Table 1. Summary of Public/Stakeholder Engagement Options

Public/Stakeholder Approach	Option		
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Website Information	X	X	X
Public Comment during Commission Meetings	X	X	X
Public Meetings		X	X
Workshops During Commission Meetings		X	
Stakeholder Advisory Committee			X

Option One

Website Information

The Commission has engaged public relations consultants to develop information for its website. All materials as well as Webcasts of the Commission meetings are available on the website. Stakeholders can review draft products on the website and provide comments through the online comment form, phone, mail, or email. Staff would summarize all comments received and the Commission would respond to them at regularly scheduled meetings.

Commission Public Comment

To listen to the broader public, the Commission would hold public input sessions at regularly scheduled Commission meetings. DWR would bring draft documents (as informed by internal staff, other agency partners, and/or consultants) to each Commission meeting for feedback from the Commission and the public.

Benefits	Drawbacks
Flexibility of working with relatively small group.	Narrow range of expertise into comprehensive technical discussion. Limited to State Agency input and their consultants with broader input only happening during public comment periods at Commission meetings
Less labor and time intensive .Lower public engagement costs.	Requires DWR and Commission staff to translate technical approach to policy with less focused, comprehensive input from key stakeholders
	Less public input could mean greater volume of public

	comment through various methods (in-person comments during Commission meetings, website entries, email, etc. later in the process). The volume will be harder to track and to extract substantive input from by Commission members and staff.
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Option Two

Website Information – Same as Option 1

Commission Public Comment - Same as Option 1

Public Meetings

Public meetings present information and solicit input. To inform the full range of stakeholders and receive suggestions, the Commission would hold several public meetings. The Commission would hold public meetings in several areas in the State to solicit ideas from regional stakeholders with storage interests. At each meeting, staff from DWR, the Commission, and their consultants would present information on a variety of topics, which could include the implementation plan, project eligibility criteria, public benefit assessment methods, modeling assumptions, application evaluation criteria, monitoring and management of public benefits, and the draft regulations package. Staff would collect and use feedback to support preparation of the regulation and guidelines.

Commission Public Workshops

Public workshops provide information and time for participants to provide suggestions to improve decisions. The Commission would hold three public workshops in coordination with regularly scheduled Commission meetings. The first workshop would present the Implementation plan, project eligibility criteria, public benefit assessment methods, and modeling assumptions. The second workshop would present proposed language on application evaluation criteria, and monitoring and management of public benefits. Each workshop would begin with presentations to explain the proposed approach. Stakeholders would have a chance to ask questions and provide suggestions after each presentation. Commission members would also ask questions and provide feedback.

Benefits	Drawbacks
Logistics may be less time consuming option three.	Commission will hear wide range of opinions, not common themes, or areas of agreement.
More public input than first option.	Narrow range of expertise into technical issues
	Requires Commission and DWR staff to translate technical approach to policy with less focused, comprehensive input from key stakeholders

Option Three

Website Information – Same as Options 1 and 2

Commission Public Comment – Same as Options 1 and 2

Public Meetings- Same as Option 2

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The Commission would convene a representative but not exhaustively sized (no more than 30 members) Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to discuss options and provide advice to the Commission on a variety of topics. Topics could include the Implementation Plan, project eligibility criteria, public benefits assessment methods, modeling assumptions, application evaluation criteria, monitoring and management of public benefits, and draft regulations package. The SAC would be subject to Bagley-Keene Act requirements having been convened by the Commission. The SAC would identify

commonalities, narrow the range of disagreement about approaches, and identify technical considerations not identified by the agency staff and consultants, and highlight important differences. The SAC would be an advisory body, not a decision-making body, and would not be responsible for reaching consensus. The SAC would include representatives from interested stakeholders.

The Commission would organize each SAC meeting around a particular topic with presentations on that topic from the Commission or DWR staff. Academics, other agencies, and non-governmental organizations would also present information on proposed approaches to ensure comprehensive technical and policy input on how to conduct the WSIP. Each meeting would include ample time for SAC members, and the public to ask questions and suggest improvements.

Benefits	Drawbacks
Diverse stakeholders provide deeper expertise into technical issues and DWR assumptions, and provide more comprehensive recommendations to the Commission.	More time and labor intensive as discussions require regular availability of materials for SAC meetings and require time for diverse stakeholders to discuss said materials and diverse interests
Broader and more in-depth discussions creates higher chance of developing commonality on technical and policy issues and creates more comprehensive administrative record of the process.	Requires consistent messaging that the effort is not a decision-making process and that the SAC holds no decision authority.