



FAQ on the Water Storage Investment Program Initial Public Benefit Ratio Reviews

1. Q: What are public benefits and why is the initial technical review focused on them?

A: Proposition 1 allows the state to fund specific public benefits associated with storage projects to help make them financially viable for local project proponents. Specific public benefits defined in Proposition 1 are ecosystem improvements, water quality improvements, flood control, recreation and emergency response.

2. Q: What is a Public Benefit Ratio?

A: It's a metric used to describe the return on investment the state would receive in the form of public benefits if the project were funded at the requested amount. More specifically, it is the ratio of the monetized public benefits to the funding requested. The Public Benefit Ratio is one of four component scores that will be used to determine eligibility for Proposition 1 funding. The other components, which include Relative Environmental Value, Resiliency and Implementation Risk, will be determined once the Public Benefit Ratio is finalized by the Commission in May.

3. Q: What are the Initial Public Benefit Ratio Reviews?

A: These initial reviews were completed by technical review teams consistent with program regulations. The reviews are the first step in the very complicated task of quantifying the public benefits associated with the proposed projects. They do not represent a funding decision by the Commission.

4. Q: Are any projects eliminated as a result of the initial Public Benefit Ratio Reviews?

A: No. Despite what you may have heard, public benefits ratios are one part of the total component score. No funding decisions have been made by the Commission, and all projects remain active and viable in the review process.

5. Q: What is the appeal process for the Public Benefits Ratios?

A: Applicants have the opportunity over the next three weeks to submit additional supporting information and address specific comments from the initial review process. It is anticipated that some public benefit ratios will change based on that additional information.

6. Q: Some applicants have received lower Public Benefit Ratios than they anticipated, can they do anything to strengthen their applications?

A: Yes. In many cases, technical reviewers found that additional supporting information is needed from applicants to properly verify the Public Benefit Ratio associated with their projects. That information can be provided through the appeals process. It is anticipated that many adjustments from the technical staff review will change once the additional information is received and evaluated.

7. Q: What if applicants have questions about what they received from the Commission regarding the initial Public Benefit Ratios reviews?

A: Commission staff will hold optional individual one-hour meetings with applicants on February 7 and 8 to answer clarifying questions related to the initial technical review. This step has been added in response to feedback received from many applicants and engaged stakeholders. These meetings will be open to the public.

8. Q. You mentioned that a technical team has reviewed the applications to determine the Public Benefit Ratios – who is part of that team?

A: Review teams consisted of subject matter experts from the Commission, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board. Each agency's review focused on specific subject matter, such as a type of physical benefit or water operations.

9. Q: When will updated Public Benefit Ratios be available?

A: Reviewers will evaluate any additional information submitted during the appeal process and release updated recommendations on April 20. The Commission will consider the updated information at its May 1-3 meeting and has discretion to accept the staff recommendation, accept applicants' appeals, or send the recommendation back to staff for re-evaluation.

10. Q: Are staff intentionally making it harder for water storage projects to receive funding?

A: Absolutely not. The Commission and state agency partners are committed to investing in the public benefits associated with new water storage.

11. Q: Are the regulations overly burdensome?

A: No. The regulations provide details on the implementation of Proposition 1, Chapter 8. To make public investments the Commission must follow the voter approved water bond language. The regulations provide more detail, but the structure of how the state is permitted to fund projects was determined by the Legislature and approved by voters.

12. Q: Is the Commission adding new hurdles for the applicants?

A: No. The Commission developed the program with extensive input from stakeholders over a two-year period. The Commission has been very open with applicants about what information they will be required to submit to meet the statutory requirements and be eligible for funding. To allow applicants to ask additional clarifying questions, optional meetings with applicants will be held February 7 and 8.

13. Q: Is this program unfairly favoring some projects over others?

A: No. The Commission is committed to a fair, competitive and transparent process.

14. Q: How can I stay up to date with decisions being made by the Commission?

A: Please visit the website at www.cwc.ca.gov or sign up for the listserv by emailing cwc@water.ca.gov.