

# Climate Resilient Water Agenda for California

The climate crisis has arrived. Our communities and environment face a growing risk as the warming climate causes more severe droughts and floods.

**The time for bold action is now.**

California needs a new and sustainable approach to water in the face of climate change that emphasizes innovative and appropriate water technologies and policies; one that restores the environment on which we all depend, protects public health and safe drinking water, and creates green jobs and a stronger economy. **We can protect these natural riches and provide sufficient water for California, but we must act now.**

**We urge Governor Gavin Newsom and state leaders to take the following actions:**

- 1. Resist Federal Rollbacks on Water and the Environment.** *Direct state agencies to implement new programs and work with the state legislature to pass legislation that protects California's aquatic resources and the state's ability to manage its own water from attacks by the Trump Administration and Congress.*
- 2. Create a New Climate Change-Driven Water Program:** *California must do for water what we have done for clean energy by addressing the water management challenges created by climate change.* A new comprehensive California water program should set quantifiable goals and deadlines for: protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems; accelerating progress in achieving sustainable groundwater management; reducing reliance on aquatic ecosystems and aquifers by investing in urban and agricultural conservation and efficiency and alternative water supplies; and invest in multi-benefit natural infrastructure.
- 3. Develop a Water Technology Strategy:** *Develop a water technology strategy to bring the same technological innovation to the water community that California has brought to finding energy solutions.* Focus on new water technologies that can help optimize water

supplies, increase understanding of water use, monitor water quality, reduce reliance on aquatic ecosystems, and make water supplies more resistant to climate change.

**4. Establish New Water Quality Standards to Protect the San Francisco Bay Estuary:**

*Direct the State Water Board to complete the adoption and implementation of science-based standards for the Bay-Delta by mid-2020.* Current standards for the estuary, which were adopted in 1995, fail to prevent the collapse of the Bay-Delta ecosystem, and exhaustive scientific reviews have shown that much stronger flow standards are needed.

**5. Reevaluate New Water Infrastructure:** *After the State Water Board adopts new Bay-Delta flow standards, major water infrastructure proposals must be reevaluated to determine if they would be effective in the warming climate.* The Delta tunnels and large dams are antiquated 20<sup>th</sup> century solutions to 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. Projects such as the Delta Tunnels, Sites Reservoir, Temperance Flat Dam, and others should be reevaluated with independent peer review, to determine if they are viable from a water supply, economic, and environmental perspective, or if they should be redesigned or dropped. This reevaluation should include examining natural infrastructure options, including: restoring floodplains and wetlands, improving soil health, stewarding headwater regions better, expanding urban stormwater capture infrastructure, recharging overtapped groundwater aquifers, and improving habitat for wildlife on agricultural land.

**6. Ensure the Human Right to Water:**

- 1. Develop a reliable funding mechanism and plan for reducing surface and groundwater contamination to ensure safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water supplies and sanitation for disadvantaged California communities, including people experiencing homelessness.*
- 2. Develop a state strategy to implement the water-related provisions of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure fishing rights and physical access to state waters for cultural purposes.*

**7. Protect the Public Trust with a More Rational Water Allocation System:** *Direct the State Water Board to implement a program to ensure comprehensive and effective protection of public trust resources by creating a Blue Ribbon Commission to ascertain how California can ensure equitable allocation of water, once public trust resources are protected and the impacts of climate change are fully considered.*

**8. Enforce Existing Laws and Regulations:** *Direct the State and Regional Water Boards and DWR to quickly and effectively enforce existing laws and regulations to ensure compliance with legal requirements for both water quality and water efficiency.*

**9. Restore Signature Aquatic Ecosystems:** *Direct state agencies to plan and aggressively implement signature aquatic ecosystem restoration programs, including, but not limited to the Salton Sea, The San Francisco Bay Estuary, Feather River and Salmon, and completing the state commitment to remove four dams on the Klamath River.*