



August 26, 2022

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor,
State of California
1021 O Street, Ste. 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore,
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Room 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker,
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Major floods are on the horizon in California. Fund additional flood management now.

State resource agencies have projected an increase in the occurrence and severity of major floods in California as climate change progresses. A recent peer reviewed study by Huang and Swain found that climate change has doubled the likelihood of a catastrophic flooding event, and that runoff estimates from such an event could be 200% to 400% higher than historical values¹. The cost of such an event could approach \$725 Billion, which is 3 times the cost of a catastrophic earthquake with similar likelihood². These findings were picked up by the New York Times and other major news publications, increasing public awareness of this risk. However, plans to mitigate these disasters remain underfunded by the State of California. Current budgetary proposals are not enough to protect Californians from the danger or the cost of the coming extreme flood events.

With very few days remaining to finalize the State budget, the legislature has a crucial opportunity to limit the loss of life and property by allocating a portion of the budget surplus toward flood and floodplain management. If the State is going to live up to the Governor's 2020 Water Portfolio "Be Prepared" vision, floodplain management funding is needed. The legislature has an unprecedented additional opportunity to leverage these State dollars for federal funds through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's BRIC grant program (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities).

¹ Huang, X., & Swain, D. L. (2022). Climate change is increasing the risk of a California megaflood. *Science Advances*, 8(31), eabq0995.

² Porter, K., Wein, A., Alpers, C. N., Baez, A., Barnard, P. L., Carter, J., ... & Jones, L. (2011). Overview of the ARkStorm scenario (No. 2010-1312). US Geological Survey.



A mere 25 years ago the 1997 Central Valley Flood wreaked havoc on California communities. Current models predict up to a 5x increase in flood flows may occur in the future. Image courtesy of Department of Water Resources.

Adequate flood protection will require a portfolio of projects, including reservoir management, multi-benefit and nature-based solutions, urban flood control, flood mitigation, and levee setbacks. Such projects can be found in the Central Valley Flood Protection Board's Central Valley Flood Protection Plan. Although this plan has achieved wide support, it is critically underfunded and therefore can't meet its goals.

Multi-benefit flood protection projects should be prioritized for funding because they:

- Reduce flood risks and protect vulnerable communities by giving rivers more room to swell
- Improve precious water supply during dry years through groundwater recharge
- Increase populations of threatened and endangered fish species of both commercial and cultural significance
- Increase riparian habitat which hosts many sensitive species and is one of the most highly degraded habitat types in the state
- Saves money through resilient and lasting solutions and preventing catastrophic damage

The signatories of this letter strongly encourage the legislature to invest in a resilient water future for California by increasing funding for flood and floodplain management projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JD', on a light grey rectangular background.

Jann Dorman
Executive Director
Friends of the River

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Amy Merrill', on a light grey rectangular background.

Amy Merrill
California Regional Director (Interim)
American Rivers



Dierdre Des Jardins
Director
California Water Research



Aysha Massell
Program Director, Water for the Future
Sustainable Conservation



Julie Rentner
President
River Partners

CC:

Ann O'Leary, Chief of Staff, Governor Newsom
Irene Ho, Chief of Staff, Assemblymember Ting
Nick Hardeman, Chief of Staff, Senator Atkins
Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Senator Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Assemblymember Vince Fong, Vice Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
Kip Lipper, Senior Policy Advisor, Senator Atkins
Alf Brandt, General Counsel, Assemblymember Rendon
Hazel Miranda, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Newsom