



Investing in Multiple Benefits through Nature-Based Solutions

May 2021

On behalf of the [Floodplain Forward Coalition](#), we urge the Legislature to robustly fund floodplain reactivation and priority projects that address the needs of fish and wildlife as well as water resiliency for California’s communities and economy by including in the state’s fiscal year 2021-22 budget the “Nature Based Solutions” provisions of Governor Newsom’s \$5.1 billion Water Resilience and Drought Package and the Senate’s “Budget Plan on Drought, Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply Reliability, and Ratepayer Assistance” and “Climate Resilience Package.” Our specific funding requests are detailed below.

There are unique opportunities in the Sacramento Valley to reactivate floodplains in a manner that improves habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife, enhances flood protection, expands groundwater recharge, and increases California’s resilience to climate change by preparing the state for future droughts. These nature-based solutions are highlighted in the work of leading researchers from the University of California and proven in the field through collaborative partnerships between scientists, non-governmental organizations, conservation groups, water managers, and local landowners. This important funding, if appropriated in this year’s budget, will help the state and diverse coalitions like ours to continue to work to enhance floodplains as natural infrastructure that provides multiple benefits, including improving conditions for threatened salmon, sustaining the Pacific Flyway, improving flood protection, and supporting groundwater sustainability.

In 2021, the Legislature and the Newsom Administration can advance these critical efforts of drought response, innovative wildlife and environmental habitat work, and job-creating approaches to reactivating floodplains for multiple benefits by including the following elements in the fiscal year 2021-22 budget:

- Fund the “Nature Based Solutions” provisions in Governor Newsom’s Water Resilience and Drought Package.

- Governor Newsom's proposal includes \$266 million for water resilience projects, \$230 million for ecosystems, and \$200 million for habitat restoration and multi-benefit projects. This funding will advance floodplain reactivation projects that reduce risks to public safety and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife. Eligible project types include, but are not limited to, levee setbacks, projects connecting rivers with floodplains, enhancement of floodplains and bypasses, offstream groundwater recharge, and land acquisitions, easements, and improvements necessary for these project types to achieve both flood management and environmental benefits.
- Fund the California Natural Resources Agency's Proposition 68: Habitat Improvements budget change proposal.
 - We urge approval of the California Natural Resources Agency's Proposition 68: Habitat Improvements budget change proposal, which would appropriate \$125 million to the Protecting California's Rivers, Streams and Watersheds Program for habitat improvement projects. In fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the Legislature appropriated over \$220 million in Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 bond funds for "systemwide flood improvement" projects that provide multiple benefits and \$70 million for complementary "no regrets" projects under Public Resources Code §80114 that include floodplain reactivation. There are dozens of additional projects that await funding. The Legislature should approve this important proposal to help move these projects forward.
- Fund "Immediate Drought Support" provisions in Governor Newsom's Water Resilience and Drought Package.
 - The Governor proposes \$33 million for fisheries and wildlife helping to protect and conserve our diverse ecosystem. This funding can be invaluable for the wildlife that utilize California's Central Valley (CV) as their migratory and spawning ground throughout the year. Accordingly, upwards of 7 million migratory birds visit the CV each winter and they require water for habitat and for feeding on shallow wetlands. During this extreme drought year, the \$33 million could, for example, incentivize groundwater pumping for the purpose of winter flood-up period for birds and wildlife along the [Pacific Flyway](#) and help continue [positive population increases for Butte Creek salmon](#).
- Fund "Investments to Support Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply, and Flood Resilience" provisions in Governor Newsom's Water Resilience and Drought Package.
 - The Governor proposes \$149 million for flood protection and \$300 million for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation, which can help ensure public safety and encourage groundwater recharge as part of floodplain reactivation. Funding these provisions are a proactive step toward a climate resilient future.
- Fund "Sustainable Groundwater Management" in the Senate Budget Plan on Drought, Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply Reliability, and Ratepayer Assistance.
 - \$300 million to Department of Water Resources for competitive grants that support implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.
- Fund "Protecting Fish & Wildlife from Drought Impacts" in the Senate Budget Plan on Drought, Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply Reliability, and Ratepayer Assistance.

- The Senate proposes \$100 million to Wildlife Conservation Board for grants pursuant to the Inland Wetlands Conservation Program to protect fish and wildlife from the impacts of drought including for wildlife friendly agriculture and to improve conditions on wildlife revues and wetland habitat areas to achieve full compliance with the terms of subsection (d) of Section 3406 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (Public Law 102-575) and other Central Valley managed wetlands.
- Fund “Resilient Water Infrastructure Projects” in the Senate Budget Plan on Drought, Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply Reliability, and Ratepayer Assistance.
 - The Senate proposes \$200 million to Department of Water Resources for competitive grants for projects that provide multiple benefits, including water supply reliability, ecosystem benefits, system reliability benefits, groundwater management and enhancements. Eligible projects include conjunctive use projects; groundwater recharge; well rehabilitation or other well improvements in support of groundwater banking or recharge; transfers of water for environmental purposes; restoration of upper watersheds that are a significant source of water supply for the state; and other projects that provide improved regional resilience to climate change and drought conditions.
- Fund “Multibenefit Flood Protection” in the Senate Climate Resilience Package.
 - The Senate proposes \$390 million for multibenefit flood management projects that reduce risks to public safety and provide improvement to wildlife habitat

Thank you for your support of these important funding requests and for your efforts on floodplain reactivation for multiple benefits in the Sacramento Valley.

Sincerely yours,

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