



The Pillars

for Sustainable Water Management in the Sacramento River Basin

The following pillars embrace our culture and ethos in the Sacramento River Basin and are anchored to the strong foundation in the region to support our priorities and actions:



Foster a regional approach among the water suppliers and local governments in the region. The NCWA leadership will work with water suppliers, local governments, landowners, and conservationists to implement these priorities aggressively and strategically and the NCWA vision to advance the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the Sacramento River Basin by safeguarding its high-quality water supplies for the rich mosaic of farmlands, cities and rural communities (including housing), refuges and managed wetlands, and meandering rivers that support fisheries, wildlife, and recreation. This regional approach helps advance sustainable water management for all beneficial uses and users of water in the Sacramento River Basin for today and future generations.



Focus on population health and wellness and the importance of enhancing our world so people can live healthier and more fulfilling lives. This moment in time provides an opportunity for introspection, a time to think about our families and friends, what is essential in our lives, and how we can contribute to population health and wellness. In the Sacramento River Basin, our team is working hard to envision the role that water suppliers and local governments can serve to help people live healthier and more fulfilling lives. We have learned and increasingly believe that population health is inextricably tied to climate resiliency and ecological health: our rivers, soils, air, trees, watersheds, and floodplains—and the way they function together.



Sacramento River Basin leaders are committed to fixing problems rather than fighting over them. In this spirit, we believe a collaborative approach is central to water resources management in the region and is highly preferred to acrimony and litigation. As an example, an adversarial, regulatory approach to updating the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan will only delay and misdirect valuable resources away from the collaborative and innovative water management described in this roadmap. Instead, we are advancing the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes program as a catalyst for all the creative and innovative actions described in this document, including priority habitat and flow actions that will advance species recovery and continue the momentum and collaboration necessary to successfully implement a resilience portfolio.



Advance multi-benefit water management approaches that meet multiple needs at once, which include cities, farms, fish, birds, other wildlife, recreation, and hydropower. Multi-benefit water management is the hallmark of the Sacramento River Basin. See [Managing Water in the Sacramento Valley for Multiple Benefits](#) and the [related video](#).



Support nature-based solutions that use our natural and working lands to sustain our economy, support our unique biodiversity and contribute to the global food supply. These working landscapes, which provide essential benefits for our economy, health, and quality of life—including clean water, nutritious food, outdoor recreation—and contribute to the state’s climate goals and protecting our communities from wildfire, floods, droughts, and extreme heat. These programs will “advance multi-benefit, voluntary and cooperative approaches that protect and restore biodiversity while stewarding natural and working lands, building climate resilience, and supporting economic sustainability” as called for by the Governor.



Prepare for dry years. Every element of this portfolio is designed to provide improved resilience during dry years. NCWA has convened a Dry Year Task Force to improve communication, help implement the water rights priority system and ensure water for all beneficial uses. The Task Force works with state and federal agencies and conservation partners to work together and better prepare for these drier years.



Prepare for a changing climate. Recent studies have shown that California’s winters are likely to be warmer and the hydrology is likely to be more concentrated in fewer months of runoff. Slowing water down as it moves through the Sacramento River Basin, more effectively utilizing floodplains, groundwater and surface storage reservoirs will help adapt working landscapes and ecosystems to climate variability.



A new culture of partnerships building on the model for success that has emerged over the past decade, with state and federal agencies encouraging, facilitating, and supporting regional and local agencies with the capability, expertise and local knowledge to design and implement the essential elements of a water portfolio. Every policy priority described here would benefit from an approach where state and federal agencies support local agencies or joint powers authorities.



Build trust and credibility across the different communities engaged in water through honest discourse and mutual respect, while working with various technical experts to develop and make decisions based on credible information and data.



We are an inclusive organization that values the perspectives, contributions, and experiences of all Californians. These values are reflected in our work. We have an active water leaders’ program where we seek diverse participation from leaders with a both a passion and interest in Northern California water issues and making the Sacramento River Basin a better place. We will continue to find solutions to ensure safe, reliable, and affordable water for all communities through our Drinking Water Solutions Network. As we move forward, we will continue to listen to, engage with, and learn from our fellow Californians.



Our strategic goal is to inspire thoughtful public discourse and collaboration that points positive and brings people together—working towards a re-imagined water system that will assure reliable, affordable, and high-quality water supplies will be available to serve multiple benefits in the Sacramento River Basin now and for future generations.



Although our priorities are set in the Sacramento River Basin where we devote our time and energy, these ideas hold promise to help address statewide needs and we will integrate our priorities with other regions as part of statewide solutions for one California.



We appreciate the efforts of both the state and federal governments to advance water management approaches that create resilience and will help us meet the needs of California's communities, economy, and environment through the 21st century. We look forward to working with the Administrations, the Legislature and Congress, and our various partners to advance these efforts.



NCWA
Northern California Water Association

Copies of this plan are available at www.norcalwater.org.
We would welcome any additional ideas or thoughts by email at info@norcalwater.org.

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