

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 30, 2026

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Water Managers Highlight Early Successes of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Projects at State Water Board Hearings

58 habitat projects and statewide collaboration demonstrate growing momentum as the Bay-Delta Plan update moves forward.

Sacramento, CA — January 30, 2026 — During three days of hearings this week, January 28–30, the California State Water Resources Control Board heard testimony from state, regional and local water managers, local elected officials, state natural resource agency leaders, scientists, and community members from across the state expressing support for the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program as a balanced and science-based path forward in the update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. Opening remarks from state natural resource leadership on the first day of hearings can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/xc1Jp-vdRPw?t=1513>

The Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program is designed to balance protection of all beneficial uses of water in the Bay-Delta watershed while making measurable progress toward the recovery of Chinook salmon and other native species. This statewide collaborative effort pairs strategically timed river flows with habitat restoration, supported by ongoing monitoring and science-based adaptive management. Together, these actions are advancing solutions that benefit ecosystems, local economies, and California's long-term water security.

"The Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) program combines two priorities that Californians care deeply about: environmental health and a reliable, affordable water supply," **said Jennifer Pierre, General Manager of the State Water Contractors.** "HRL benefits are already being seen from 58 early implementation projects that have been completed along the American, Feather, Mokelumne, Sacramento, and Yuba rivers. These projects prove that when water managers, state and federal agencies, and communities work together – collaboratively – the needs of fish and people can be effectively balanced. The State Water Contractors stand with the Newsom Administration and a broad coalition of leaders from across the state to urge the Water Board to move the HRL program forward."

On the first day of hearings, the Board heard from a panel of experts focused on early HRL implementation projects and lessons learned through monitoring habitat work and river flows. Panel participants included representatives from the Northern California Water Association, the California Department of Water Resources, East Bay Municipal

Utility District, the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee, and the Solano County Water Agency. The discussion highlighted progress already underway: **35 early implementation projects completed, seven in progress, and 16 ready to enter construction later this year** across the Bay Delta watershed. For more information, read [Creating Essential Habitat Across the Bay-Delta Watershed](#).

Panelists emphasized that collaboration among water agencies, landowners, conservation partners, and fishermen combined with data collection and adaptive management are central to prioritizing resources and improving outcomes. Early project monitoring shows improvements in juvenile salmon habitat conditions, and increased access to spawning and rearing areas.

Two early implementation success stories underscored these findings:

Mokelumne River Habitat and Flow Improvements

Targeted habitat restoration and carefully timed flow releases have contributed to improved spawning carrying capacity, higher numbers of returning adult salmon, and increased contributions to the ocean salmon fishery. Scientific modeling continues to guide habitat design, and collaboration among agencies and landowners has accelerated implementation. Additional lower-river restoration sites are planned through 2026, with growing landowner participation signaling continued momentum.

Putah Creek Record Salmon Returns

Putah Creek saw a record return of **2,150 spawning Chinook salmon in 2025**, according to reporting from the Solano County Water Agency and biologists at the University of California, Davis. The milestone reflects the addition of targeted habitat restoration, gravel placement to improve spawning beds, adaptive water management, and regional collaboration to existing dedicated flows. Importantly, this success is not from any single action alone. For more information, read [Building a Salmon Run in Putah Creek](#).

“The Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program offers a new way forward for California to manage our water resources in concert with our landscape,” **said David Guy, President of the Northern California Water Association.** “With our statewide commitment to more strategic flows, accelerated habitat restoration on our landscapes, and accountability, we can work together to meet the needs of our environment, farms, and local communities throughout California.”

Advancing the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program means investing in strategically timed flows integrated with on-the-ground habitat projects to create multi-benefit water management strategies that unite cities, communities, agriculture, and conservation partners. Representing 32 million Californians, this diverse coalition is working to improve conditions for fish and wildlife that rely on healthy rivers and landscapes and

help build a more resilient Bay-Delta where rivers, farms, refuges, and communities can thrive.

The following water agencies are MOU signatories and actively participating in the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program:



The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively, the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 27 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural land. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit www.swc.org.

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) represents water agencies, irrigation districts, and communities across the Sacramento Valley committed to promoting reliable water supplies, healthy rivers and landscapes, and sustainable working lands that support local economies, fish and wildlife, and California's food system. For more information about NCWA, please visit www.norcalwater.org.