

Voluntary Agreements

Adapting Water Management for Thriving Fish, Wildlife and Communities

Early Implementation Projects in the Sacramento River Basin



Participants in the Voluntary Agreements (VA) process are already at work with early implementation projects throughout the Sacramento River Basin, making habitat enhancements and activating floodplain acreage to benefit fish and wildlife in the region and beyond.

Sacramento River Basin water suppliers, working with California's Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and Department of Water Resources (DWR), have collaboratively identified, developed and prioritized a list of "no regrets" early implementation projects. More than 85 projects in the region were included in the March 2019 CDFW/DWR submission to the State Water Board; of this total, 14 projects in the Sacramento River Basin have been identified through this process as "no regrets" early implementation projects. These projects could begin construction or otherwise be implemented within the next 12 to 18 months if allocated funding by the Natural Resources Agency from Proposition 68 funds specifically appropriated for this purpose in the 2019-20 state budget. These early implementation projects are described in the accompanying spreadsheet *Early Implementation Proposition 68 Salmon Recovery Projects*.

Importantly, early implementation projects have been identified on each of the four major rivers in the Sacramento River Basin participating in the VAs—the American, Feather, Sacramento and Yuba Rivers—along with Putah Creek and floodplain reactivation projects across the region.

Each of these projects will be additive to the December 2018 baseline established in the VA Framework and will provide contributions to various environmental targets in the VAs that include:

- Implementing a landscape scale multi-benefit floodplain feasibility study
- 189 to 689 acres of enhanced floodplain habitat
- 87 acres of rearing habitat
- 17 to 44 acres of spawning habitat and 8,000 cubic yards of new spawning gravel
- Installation of a fish screen on a high-priority diversion
- A modified weir to enhance fish passage and reduce stranding
- A program to provide food for juvenile fish as they migrate downstream
- Weir and bypass operational changes to enhance spawning habitat
- A program to enhance salmon habitat during low river flows

There are 14 additional "no regrets" early implementation projects in the Sacramento River Basin that have been identified through this process that will be acquiring funding from other sources. Collectively, these "no regrets" early implementation projects will improve habitat conditions for many species and help advance the recovery of endangered salmon as the Voluntary Agreements process continues to move forward. These projects, and the scientific monitoring effort that will accompany them, will also begin the robust science program necessary to inform decision making and adaptive management essential to successful fish and wildlife recovery.

► For questions or additional information, please contact Todd Manley at tmanley@norcalwater.org.



Voluntary Agreements

Adapting Water Management for Thriving Fish, Wildlife and Communities

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) and its members work collaboratively to deliver vital water supply and water quality for millions of Sacramento Valley residents, farms and businesses, while at the same time stewarding ecosystems to benefit endangered species. California water suppliers, farmers, cities, conservation organizations and state and federal agencies have developed an innovative approach to restore the ecosystem of the Bay-Delta watershed by balancing environmental and water supply needs through an unprecedented and promising initiative called Voluntary Agreements.

Simply providing vast flows through the Delta for the past decades has proven ineffective and futile. A different approach is necessary. Best ecological practices have shown land for habitat carefully integrated with water is critical to restore fish and other endangered species and are front and center of the Voluntary Agreements. Voluntary Agreements provide a robust and science-based portfolio of funding, strategically managed flows, habitat enhancements, floodplain utilization and close collaboration amongst stakeholders. Participants of Voluntary Agreements are already at work with early implementation projects, making habitat enhancements and activating floodplain acreage to benefit fish and wildlife in each of the region's four rivers.

Adaptively Managed Flows

Based on annual hydrology and science-based evaluations, this contemporary approach will improve habitat conditions for salmon, steelhead and hundreds of other wildlife species.

► *Water suppliers on the American, Feather, Sacramento and Yuba rivers will deliver up to 250,000 acre-feet of water for tributary flows and the Delta*

Floodplain Reactivation

Dedicated water for out-of-stream floodplain reactivation will support recovery of endangered species by producing needed food resources and suitable habitat acreage for fish and wildlife.

► *Nearly 180,000 acres of enhanced floodplain habitat identified in the Sacramento River Basin for salmon rearing, spawning and fish food production*

Habitat Enhancements

Science-driven habitat enhancement projects with expedited permitting will nurture endangered salmon and other species throughout their lifecycles and support water-dependent species along the Pacific Flyway, including ducks, geese and shorebirds.

► *More than 85 projects identified by Sacramento River Basin water suppliers*

Committed Funding

At least \$5 billion over fifteen years contributed by water suppliers across the state, state bond funds and the federal government.



Core Values of Voluntary Agreements



Collaboration and regional governance for effective decision making

- California Natural Resources Agency
- Federal, state and local agencies
- Conservation organizations



Robust and Structured Science Program to guide flows and habitat cultivation

- Field studies and data reviews
- Testable hypotheses
- Informed decision making



Integration of rivers operations

- Communication and resource sharing maximize support for fish and wildlife
- Reliable supply for cities, rural communities and farms

California must get past differences on water. Voluntary agreements are the path forward.

Governor Gavin Newsom
CalMatters, Feb 4, 2020

To learn more, visit
VoluntaryAgreements.org




voluntary agreements
A fresh approach to California's water