



July 2, 2019

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your leadership in tackling California's water issues. We strongly agree that California needs a comprehensive and progressive statewide plan for sustainable water use, as your April 29 Executive Order (N-10-19) makes clear.

In most years, California uses more water than its aquifers and rivers can sustain. As a result, public health and environmental conditions have declined to unacceptable levels and continue to deteriorate. Contaminated drinking water wells, endangered fish species, collapsing fisheries, toxic algae blooms, and land subsidence all evidence the unsustainability of California's water systems. They are harbingers of even greater consequences with the likely effects of climate change. This is not the legacy to leave for future generations. Instead, we must leave our children a culture, policies, and infrastructure for sustainable water use.

The "water resilience portfolio" (Water Portfolio) described in your April 29 Order offers the State the opportunity to set us on the course towards sustainable water resources management that would ensure fishable, swimmable, and drinkable waters for all Californians. Many of our organizations plan to engage with your administration to offer specific proposals for projects that will deploy limited water resources more efficiently.

However, the Water Portfolio must be more than a list of ideas and projects to improve water use efficiency, storage, and transport.

Preparing California for climate change will require transforming our economy into a model of sustainability. The Water Portfolio can be a cornerstone of this transformation. To start, we recommend that the Water Portfolio support two pillars of sustainability:

- 1) Guaranteeing safe and affordable clean drinking water for all Californians; and
- 2) Protecting and restoring healthy rivers and the Bay-Delta estuary, and the public benefits that they provide.

To this end, we suggest the Portfolio include:

- A framework that screens and prioritizes projects by their ability to achieve sustainability rapidly and cost-effectively. Precedence should be given to projects and funding that increases equity in access to reliable clean drinking water, that diversify water supply sources and reduce reliance on water from the Bay-Delta, and that improve water use efficiency and reduce demand for water in both the agricultural and urban sectors.

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- Linkages between the Water Portfolio and actions to significantly increase instream flows and habitat restoration to restore and protect California's rivers and Bay-Delta estuary while protecting the economy and reducing the impact of reduced water diversions in many years.
- Investments in science and technology to improve water quality monitoring, storm forecasting, river flow measurement, water use tracking and reporting, and auditing of water use efficiency.
- A reliable and ample funding stream for all aspects of the State Water Resources Control Board and the regional water boards: a functional water system needs strong regulators.

The old models of California water policy are failing to serve the public interest, even if they serve private interests. The Water Portfolio should establish a new model for managing California's water, grounded in the public interest and long-term sustainability.

We look forward to working with your administration to help create a statewide Water Portfolio that establishes a new culture of water use in California built on sustainable policies and infrastructure.

Sincerely,

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cc:

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Secretary Wade Crowfoot

Secretary Karen Ross

State Water Resources Control Board Chair, Joaquin Esquivel

Water Portfolio Program Director, Nancy Vogel

Deputy Secretary and Special Counsel for Water, Tom Gibson

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