



# Association of California Water Agencies

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To: Statewide Water Action Plan Principals Group  
Statewide Water Action Plan Drafting Team

Copies: Tim Quinn, Cindy Tuck

From: Danielle Blacet

Re: Final California Water Action Plan

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The California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture on January 27 released the final [California Water Action Plan](#), laying out goals and a vision for the next five years. According to the press release, “The plan will guide state efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems, and improve the resilience of our infrastructure.”

This memo provides a snapshot of the key additions/changes between the October 31, 2013 draft and final versions of the Action Plan. In addition, we provide details on whether elements of ACWA’s November 21, 2013 comment letter were incorporated into the final Action Plan.

Overall, the final Action Plan retains the same structure and goals including the same ten action “elements,” although the wording in several of them has been revised or expanded. One example is *Expand Water Storage Capacity* has been revised to *Expand Water Storage Capacity and Improve Groundwater Management* (page 13). The final Action Plan also includes Governor Brown’s statement regarding the Action Plan from his State of the State Speech as the preface to the document.

## KEY ADDITIONS/CHANGES

### Increased Focus on Collaboration

The introduction features a new section titled *Working Together and Continued Collaboration is Essential* (page 4). While it mainly incorporates language from different sections of the draft document, it does call out that the Action Plan was not created to replace local efforts but to complement and leverage them. Additionally, in many sections of the document there is new text referencing the State’s plans to collaborate and/or partner with local, regional and federal entities. This is consistent with ACWA’s recommendations.

### New Action on Headwaters Investments

Also consistent with comments on the initial draft, the final Action Plan includes a new action on Managing Headwaters for Multiple Benefits in the *Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems* section

(page 9). The action includes three main objectives: restore forest health through ecologically sound forest management, protect and restore meadow ecosystems and support and expand funding for protecting strategically important lands within watersheds. Within this section there is also a new action item regarding the continuation of restoration efforts in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

### **New Storage Actions**

The final Action Plan includes a new reference to working with local partners on feasibility studies for storage projects (page 13). The Sites Project Joint Powers Agreement is provided as an example of a potential emerging partnership to determine the feasibility of building Sites Reservoir.

In addition, the storage section contains two new actions, both of which are related to groundwater (page 13-14):

- The Administration will expand and fund the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Program (CASGEM)
- The Administration will work with the Legislature to provide incentives for actions that increase groundwater recharge and discourage actions that cause groundwater basin overdraft. This action item also includes a reference to aligning land use planning with groundwater recharge, which was a recommendation in the Groundwater Framework.

### **Increased Focus on Energy and Climate Change**

The final Action Plan includes new text and actions throughout the document addressing the impacts of climate change and the water-energy nexus. Some of the highlights are:

- The Administration will continue to work with water/wastewater agencies and energy utilities on water-energy nexus education programs (page 5)
- The Administration will work with the Legislature to eliminate barriers to co-funding and expand/prioritize funding projects with water and energy benefits (page 5)
- The final Action Plan calls out the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) and the role of water conservation and efficiency in reducing energy needed to pump, transport, treat and deliver water (page 5)
- The Administration's financing strategy will identify all potential funding sources for water-related projects including cap and trade auction revenue under AB 32 and energy efficiency funds (page 19)

### **Revised Flood Protection Actions**

The final Action Plan includes a new action encouraging flood projects that plan for climate change and achieve multiple benefits. (page 16) In addition, the final Action Plan does not include the bullet indicating that the Administration would review Proposition 218 to exempt certain flood management agencies as public safety utilities.

### **Water Transfers**

The Streamline Water Transfers action is not in the final Action Plan (it was previously in the *Manage and Prepare for Dry Periods* section). Staff is working to determine the reason for this change.

### **Operational and Regulatory Efficiency**

The final Action Plan includes a new action indicating that the Administration will direct relevant agencies and departments to work with the Delta Science Program, Interagency Ecological Program and others conducting science in the Delta to implement the Delta Science Plan and ensure the State uses integrated, collaborative and transparent science to inform water and natural resource policy and management decisions (page 18). This is consistent with the third principle in ACWA's Statewide Water Action Plan (page 2).

## **ACWA COMMENT LETTER**

ACWA submitted comments on the draft Action Plan on November 21, 2013. We requested that additional language be included on water supply assurances, headwaters, state and federal agency collaboration and the water bond. We also asked the State to develop an aggressive implementation plan once the Administration finalized the Action Plan.

As noted above, the final Action Plan includes additional language on headwaters and increased collaboration. The 2014 water bond is not mentioned in the final plan, and there was no additional text included on water supply assurances.

## **NEXT STEPS**

We will continue to provide information and updates regarding ACWA's efforts to work with the Administration on the implementation of the California Water Action Plan consistent with ACWA's Statewide Water Action Plan. As noted in our November 21 comment letter, we plan to actively engage and partner with the State on the development of specific actions related to storage (both for large and distributed surface and groundwater projects), water transfers, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans, operational concerns including those related to the "dead pool" challenge, groundwater management and consolidation of the water quality programs.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.