



## MEDIA STATEMENT

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## **Newsom Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio Report Underscores Benefits of Regional Collaboration and Need for Investments in Multi-Benefit Solutions**

**Sacramento, Calif.** – Regional organizations that provide water supply, flood protection, groundwater management and ecosystem restoration in the American River watershed today applauded the findings and recommended actions presented in Governor Gavin Newsom's draft [Water Resilience Portfolio](#), the state's first-ever comprehensive and long-term plan on how to manage the state's water resources in the face of climate change. The report recommends developing inclusive solutions that protect the natural and human environment and provide water for our communities. The greater Sacramento region has been at the forefront of this approach for decades.

The Regional Water Authority, Sacramento Groundwater Authority, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and Water Forum are committed to continuing to collaborate with each other and its state and federal government partners to advance long-term, regional planning and projects to maintain and diversify supplies, protect and enhance natural systems, and build more connected, adaptive water management infrastructure to be prepared for more extreme weather and less predictable precipitation patterns.

"Our region has long been preparing to address the impacts from climate change on our water resources at a watershed scale. We believe the water resilience portfolio findings are fully aligned with the solutions we have been developing," said Jim Peifer, executive director for the Regional Water Authority and Sacramento Groundwater Authority. "The region's climate adaptation portfolio re-imagines how water should be managed in the face of a less reliable water supply and a greater flood threat that is expected from reduced snowpack and flashier rainstorms in a narrower wet season. While these challenges are real and daunting, we know our holistic approach will solve them."

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“Through the Water Forum, our region has a 20-year track record of applying science and innovative management practices to balance water supply reliability with ecosystem health on the lower American River,” said Tom Gohring, executive director of the Water Forum. “The governor’s report underscores that our region can take this same, collaborative approach to building climate resiliency through new projects and practices that make our water management more adaptive and nimble in the face of changing weather conditions.”

“Climate change is posing a serious challenge to the sustainability of the water management system that we currently rely on to control flooding, meet our water demands and protect the American River,” said Rick Johnson, executive director for the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. “SAFCA brings a unique perspective and years of experience in addressing this challenge and looks forward to working with the Newsom Administration and our federal and regional partners in taking the bold steps that are needed to make our system more climate-resilient.”

Over the past two decades, more than \$4 billion has been invested in our region in partnership with state, federal, private and other local partners to restore habitat, increase our water use efficiency, expand conjunctive use, reduce our flood risk, and expand the flexibility of the system to adapt to periods of increased drought and serious flood threat.

The regional agencies pointed to the following initiatives that will further build climate resiliency in the American River watershed by enhancing flood protection, diversifying water supplies, allowing for adaptive management practices and promoting species health on the lower American River. All of them will require significant investment from state, federal and regional agencies.

**Sacramento Regional Water Bank:** The Water Bank is an innovative groundwater storage program that will improve water supply reliability and environmental conditions for the Sacramento region. It utilizes a groundwater reservoir that would have about two times the amount of storage space as Folsom Lake. The bank could enable the region to cut groundwater use in half during wet years through capture of excess surface water and provide an additional groundwater supply during dry years, benefiting the environment and downstream communities beyond the region.

**Sacramento River Arc:** This project will transform regional water supply by shifting of portion of the municipal supplies away from the American River and toward the Sacramento River. It will better connect the region’s conveyance, treatment and groundwater storage to an existing diversion point on the Sacramento River. Doing so will continue a long-standing regional commitment to protect the aquatic habitat of the lower American River, while at the same time providing needed water supply reliability. It will increase opportunities for groundwater banking and allow for changed Folsom Reservoir operations to accommodate a changing climate. More flexibility in Folsom Reservoir operations will give state and federal water managers another tool for managing Delta water quality.

**Ecosystem Restoration:** The investments and collaborative work undertaken by the Water Forum have provided new models and approaches to balancing co-equal goals for water management, including optimal reservoir operations, monitoring biological conditions and constructing improved habitat. This work can be enhanced with additional state investments in planning and development of habitat and cold-water infrastructure.

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**Sacramento Area Flood Risk Reduction and Managed Aquifer Recharge:** SAFCA is working to increase flood storage capacity in non-federal reservoirs upstream from Folsom Reservoir by using advances in weather and runoff forecasting and modifying the outlet works of these upstream facilities. The increase of atmospheric river events and reduction in snowmelt runoff throughout the winter and spring provides opportunities to leverage system capacity, thereby reducing pressure on Folsom Reservoir and downstream levees, enhancing habitat flows on the American and Cosumnes rivers and redirecting flood flows for groundwater recharge in the south American and Cosumnes basins.

**Yolo Bypass Integrated Multi-Benefit Program:** This SAFCA-sponsored project is designed to improve ecosystem and flood management system resiliency in the lower Sacramento River by enlarging the Yolo Bypass through levee setbacks and using the floodplain to improve fish passage, expanding fish rearing habitat by inundating the floodplain, and improving terrestrial habitat in the floodplain.

**Upper Watershed and Forestry Management:** Climate change adaptation must include ensuring healthy headwaters. California faces the overwhelming challenge of overstocked and unhealthy forests, where the consequences are unnecessary evapotranspiration, ecosystems being out of balance, and catastrophic fire, resulting in long-term harm to our environment and water supply. Through projects implemented under multi-stakeholder collaboration, selective thinning of small and medium sized trees, burn treatments and targeted reforestation of climate resilient trees will ensure a healthy future in California headwaters. The targeted outcome is forests that are naturally resilient and better for water supply and natural habitat.

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***The Regional Water Authority (RWA)*** is a joint powers authority representing 21 water providers serving 2 million people in the greater Sacramento region. Formed in 2001, its primary mission is to help its members protect and enhance the reliability, availability, affordability and quality of water resources. Learn more at [rwah2o.org](http://rwah2o.org).

***The Sacramento Groundwater Authority (SGA)*** is a joint powers authority formed in 1998 to manage the Sacramento County's north area groundwater basin. Recognized as essential to implementing the groundwater management element of the historic Water Forum Agreement, SGA coordinates the regional program to manage and conjunctively use groundwater and surface water to meet water needs through 2030 while reducing diversions from the lower American River to benefit the environment. Learn more at [sgah2o.org](http://sgah2o.org).

***The Sacramento Water Forum*** is a diverse group of business and agricultural leaders, citizen groups, environmentalists, water managers and local governments working together to balance two co-equal objectives: to provide a reliable and safe water supply for the Sacramento region's long-term growth and economic health; and to preserve the fishery, wildlife, recreational, and aesthetic values of the lower American River. Learn more at [waterforum.org](http://waterforum.org).

***The Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA)*** is a joint powers authority that was formed in 1989 to provide the Sacramento region with increased flood protection along the American and Sacramento rivers. Its members include the City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, Sutter County, Reclamation District No. 1000 and the American River Flood Control District. Learn more at [safca.org](http://safca.org).