

WATER FORUM II: CAUCUS INTEREST STATEMENTS

At the beginning of the Water Forum II (WFII) negotiation process, the Environmental Caucus and the Water & Public Caucuses prepared the below initial statements of interest that were presented at the Negotiating Steering Committee (NSC) in May and June of 2020.

Environmental Caucus Statement of Interests (presented to the NSC on June 18, 2020).

CO-EQUAL OBJECTIVES

The Environmental Caucus supports the dual, co-equal objectives specified in the Year 2000 Water Forum Agreement.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Work with water agencies within the region to ensure they integrate the most current climate change* science and impacts including long range forecasts into water planning and resource management decisions; and coordinate the use of consistent methodologies and analytical tools throughout the region.

*Climate change will increase variability, uncertainty, and complexity of flows in the American River and groundwater levels. The Water Forum needs to fully understand ongoing climate change over time and the implications for the Water Forum's dual objectives.

SURFACE WATER DIVERSIONS

- The Environmental Caucus is concerned that there is too much reliance on the modest-sized American River and that a better connection to the Sacramento River could help address this concern.
- Ensure that surface water diversions from the American River watershed uphold the co-equal goal of protecting the river. If surface water diversions are adverse to the protection of the river* and its environs, ensure that any damage caused from those diversions is fully mitigated, including flows and temperature.

**River protection defined:* The Environmental Caucus wants the American River and the American River Parkway to be protected, preserved, and enhanced, including river flows, temperatures needed for fisheries, riparian habitats, recreation, and aesthetics of the Parkway; and for salmonid and other adopted restoration goals to be in accordance with California and federal laws.

FLOW STANDARD

- Support the existing Flow Management Standard (which includes flow, temperature, and storage protections) and its long-term implementation.
- Acknowledge that the minimum flows included in the Flow Standard are just that: minimums, and that a variety of higher flows are needed at certain times and locations to protect the river and fisheries. Those higher flows need to be determined under both historical flows and projected flows under climate change.
- Utilize adaptive management to optimize ecosystem health and support healthy fish populations, as needed.
- Uphold the recommendation consistent with the Year 2000 Water Forum Agreement which specified that all signatories agree they will, “recommend to the State Water Resources Control Board an updated flow standard and an updated Declaration of Full Appropriation to protect the fishery, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic values of the American River.”

DRY YEAR PRINCIPLES

In dry and critically dry years, ensure that water purveyors make appropriate cutbacks in surface water diversions and take other flow augmentation actions to protect the river and to manage both surface and groundwater systems to assure adequate water supplies for all beneficial uses.

WATER CONSERVATION

- Design water conservation programs and practices for the benefit of river ecosystem health that promote lower landscape water usage, have a regional focus, and draw upon best practices in water-use efficiency, water recycling, water loss control, and water conservation.
- Water conservation state minimums may not sufficiently achieve the desired conditions described above. As a result, regional water conservation programs may need to exceed minimum requirements specified in state laws in order to reduce the need and cost for increased surface water diversions and groundwater extractions.

GROUNDWATER: FOCAL AREA

The Environmental Caucus would like to focus on integrative surface water and groundwater management as an interconnected system to improve regional sustainability and achieve ecosystem goals. This focus will require a deep dive to fully understand the relationship and interdependence of groundwater and surface water systems.

GROUNDWATER: WATER BANK

Coordinate with the Region's water agencies to ensure their water banking agreements achieve positive benefits to any affected aquifer(s)* including increased basin storage, increased subbasin operating flexibility, increased flows and decreased temperatures for regional rivers, and improved conditions for groundwater dependent ecosystems.

*The Environmental Caucus recognizes that the three regional groundwater subbasins are interconnected and that actions in any one subbasin could affect the other.

GROUNDWATER: INTER-BASIN COORDINATION

The Water Forum plays a leadership role in facilitating collaboration and resolving cross-boundary groundwater issues to foster effective regional implementation of SGMA.

Note: The Environmental Caucus acknowledges that under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), each Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) has the primary responsibility to develop plans to correct imbalances in supply and demand for its groundwater basin.

WATER FORUM II: GROUNDWATER & SGMA

The evolution of groundwater management in SGMA has created the authority to address regional groundwater-dependent ecosystem health, including the Cosumnes River and its environs, in water management decision-making — as well to improve aquifer conditions for water-supply reliability. The Environmental Caucus proposes that the Water Forum acknowledge regional ecosystems in addition to the American River, and promote a multi-benefit approach to sustainable water management that includes those ecosystems*.

* Acknowledgment of regional ecosystem importance (including the American, Cosumnes, and Sacramento Rivers, Pacific Flyway wetlands, groundwater dependent riparian forest, etc.) could be included in the Water Forum website and Regional Water Bank public outreach materials, for example. A multi-benefit approach to sustainable water management could include making certain areas near key groundwater/surface water ecosystems off limits for production wells for the Regional Water Bank — or it could mean reconnecting floodplains to high river flows to increase recharge to the S. American and Cosumnes sub-basins and so on.

INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT

Facilitate the region's water agencies efforts to ensure that groundwater and surface water are jointly managed to achieve the co-equal objectives of the Water Forum, and to protect the river and ecosystems of regional waterways.

HABITAT

Maintain and build upon the Water Forum's existing Habitat Management Element to enhance recreation, fish spawning and rearing habitat including floodplains, side channels, and riparian vegetation. Foster and participate in similar programs for the other river systems in the region when funding and partnerships are available.

LANDUSE/GROWTH

- Ensure that land use decision-makers have a clear, complete and objective assessment of current and future water availability when considering new growth and land-use designation changes with significant water-use implications; and for water availability assessments to sufficiently protect the health of regional rivers and groundwater sub-basins in a way that accounts for increased drought intensities and uncertainties introduced by climate change.
- Ensure that new growth is contingent upon— among other requirements— substantial guarantees for water conservation in new and existing developments, especially during droughts.

OVERARCHING ISSUES

Address additional issues that affect water supply and rivers: homeless impacts, water quality, public right to water, adjacent habitats along rivers, and flood management.

Water Caucus and Public Caucus Statement of Interests (presented to the NSC on May 21, 2020).

INTRODUCTION

The members of the Water Caucus and Public Caucus desire to maintain the effectiveness, credibility, transparency and value of the Water Forum as a voice of and advocate for its regional environmental, business, public and water management stakeholders in furtherance of the two co-equal objectives of ensuring sufficient and reliable long-term water supplies while promoting, enhancing, and preserving the fishery, wildlife, recreational, and aesthetic values of the lower American River. There have been many successes with the Water Forum, Successor Effort and Habitat Management Element. We should strive to build on those successes.

PARTNERSHIP

Continue to partner with the Environmental Caucus as environmental stewards of the lower American River. Our long-term water supply reliability is interdependent with being environmental stewards through the Water Forum.

SERVING CUSTOMERS

- Maintain sufficient water supply and supply reliability for existing and future customers.
- Ensure customer access to high quality water at a reasonable cost.

WATER USE EFFICIENCY

Promote efficient use of water by our customers and others.

STRETCHING LIMITED RESOURCES

Make the best use of limited resources by recognizing regulatory drivers and how they impact existing and future actions and priorities.

Although we are open to other caucus' concerns related to elements of the Water Forum Agreement that are now governed by policies, programs, and mandates established by State law, the interests of the Water and Public Caucuses are: (1) to not engage in time consuming discussions and debates over such elements; (2) not expend limited resources duplicating them; and (3) maintaining the value and progress of investments already made in compliance with them.

RELATIONSHIP WITH RECLAMATION

In order to enhance Water Forum effectiveness in influencing Folsom operations and habitat restoration/management of the lower American River, maintain and enhance our collaborative relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE

Protect the health, safety and welfare of our residents.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Increase water supply resiliency and prepare for the variable hydrologic conditions and droughts that are expected to be exacerbated by climate change.

Groundwater bank is an example of a project to help achieve this

PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

Protect groundwater and surface water quality.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Recognizing that the region's water supply reliability benefits from the State having a reliable water supply, consider participating in solutions to assist the State to solve its water challenges.