

Water Forum Resolution on Drought Actions



2021 Drought Response: A Resolution of the Water Forum (1/4)

1. The drought of 2020-2021 is one of the most serious statewide droughts since records have been kept. The current drought follows the recent drought of 2014-15. Most experts agree that this is a result of rapid climate change that will continue to accelerate the unpredictability and variability of conditions in California.
2. The Water Forum has coequal objectives: to provide a reliable and safe water supply for the region's economic health and planned development to the year 2030; and to preserve and protect the fishery, wildlife, recreational, and aesthetic values of the lower American River.
3. The Water Forum is currently reviewing the existing Water Forum agreement with the intention to extend the agreement beyond 2030. A major focus of the negotiation is addressing resiliency in the face of climate change.

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4. Regional water supplies for the summer of 2021 appear to be generally adequate, and the Water Forum is meeting its water supply objectives this year. However, it is unclear if we will be able to achieve our coequal objectives to preserve and protect the lower American River. Recreational flows in the river will be very low in the fall. It is expected that American River steelhead and salmon fisheries will do very poorly because the water being released from Folsom Reservoir this year has higher temperatures than ever recorded and higher temperatures are adverse to salmon and steelhead.
5. If the drought extends into 2022, regional water supplies may be threatened and may be unacceptably unreliable, with Folsom Reservoir possibly dropping to dead pool, which is below the intakes to waterpipes of some municipalities. The American River and its struggling fisheries would be significantly impacted. Recreational and aesthetic values will be impacted. The Water Forum would not be meeting its coequal objectives.
6. The Water Forum and its members are committed to working together to address this dire situation and protect this region from risk. Our top priority for this year is to protect the storage capacity of Folsom Reservoir to provide reliable water supplies and sustain the recreational, aesthetic, and ecological health of the lower American River without placing unnecessary risk on water supplies for people and long-term health of the river.

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7. The Water Forum will take the following actions and strongly encourage its members to follow suit:
 1. Promote, with a sense of urgency, the reduction of summer and fall water usage through voluntary and robust conservation at a minimum of 15% or other actions to reduce pressure on Folsom Reservoir and the lower American River. Water conserved this year provides a buffer against catastrophic impacts to Folsom Reservoir and the lower American River if the drought continues into 2022, and protects groundwater resources this year so that they are available next year and beyond.
 2. Optimize the sustainable use of groundwater to shift demand away from surface water diversions, but only to the extent that the region does not incur negative environmental impacts and is promoting groundwater sustainability.
 3. Monitor and provide regular updates on fisheries conditions on the lower American River.
 4. Implement an aggressive public outreach campaign, that is appropriate to each service area and coordinated with the Regional Water Authority and other Water Forum members to increase residential, commercial, and agricultural water conservation and efficiency.
 5. Maintain strong coordination with Reclamation to meet or exceed the 200 TAF end of September planning goal for Folsom Reservoir; and explore long-term solutions for storing or refilling the Reservoir or storing additional water in it in dry years.

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8. To achieve these actions, the Water Forum and its members are committed to working together in the following manner to maintain trust within the organization and with our partners by:

- Clearly communicating our intent and maintaining accountability for our actions;
- Addressing conflicts as they arise;
- Working to align diverse interests;
- Focusing on positive solutions that create mutual benefit and support;
- Acting with a sense of urgency to reduce risk to the region and achieve the coequal objectives.

9. The Water Forum will continue to work to address how the current conditions could impact the region in 2022 and beyond due to climate change.

As approved by the Water Forum, August 26, 2021.



Jessica Law, Executive Director