

# The California Water Action Plan in Your Community

“We’re standing on dry grass. We should be standing on five feet of snow. It’s a different world... We have to act differently.” – Governor Jerry Brown

## What is the California Water Action Plan?

The shifting demands from dry summers to extremely wet winters are placing an additional burden on California’s already fragile water infrastructure system. More intense droughts and reduced snowpack limit surface water flows, causing greater reliance on groundwater pumping. Extreme winter storms fall too fast to recharge aquifers, overfill our reservoirs, and cause structural damage.

We must adapt our water management system to these changing conditions, and ensure a safe, reliable supply of water for our communities and ecosystems. In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown released the California Water Action

Plan to respond to the state’s growing water challenges. The plan provides a collaborative planning framework to develop findings and recommendations to inform decision-making about California’s water future. State agencies and local governments are called upon to help implement the ambitious plan through three overarching goals and ten action-items.

The California Water Action Plan sets three overarching goals for the state’s water future: 1) develop resilient water resource systems, 2) restore critical species and habitat, and 3) create reliable water supplies. Local governments are critical partners in achieving these goals. Local governments are critical partners in achieving these goals.

## California Water Action Plan Goals

### Water Resource System **Resilience**



### Critical Species & Habitat **Restoration**

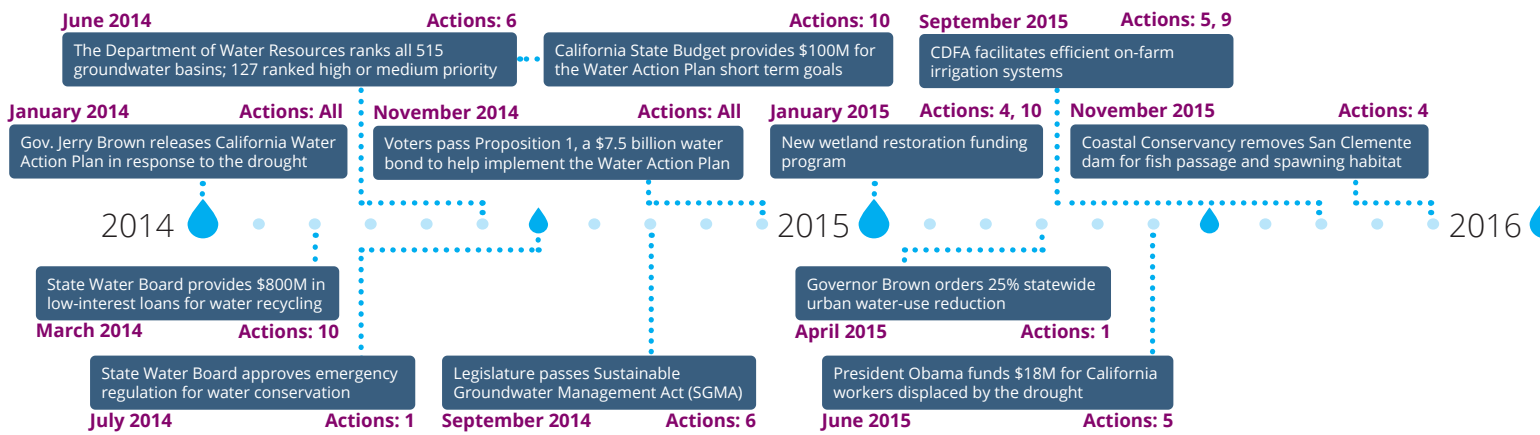


### Water Supply **Reliability**



## Actions

1. Increase Regional Self-Reliance and Integrated Water Management
2. Make Water Conservation a California Way of Life
3. Achieve the Co-Equal Goals of water supply and ecosystem health for the Delta
4. Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems
5. Manage and Prepare for Dry Periods
6. Expand Water Storage Capacity and Improve Groundwater Management
7. Provide Safe Water for All Communities
8. Increase Flood Protection
9. Increase Operational and Regulatory Efficiency
10. Identify Sustainable and Integrated Financing Opportunities



## Local Governments Can Help Achieve the Three California Water Action Plan Goals

### Resilience

The California Water Action Plan seeks to establish a “more sustainably-managed water resources system” in order to withstand climate change impacts. This is a difficult task considering our state’s fragile natural resource system. Over 90% of California wetlands, which naturally absorb floodwaters and filter out pollution, have been lost to development. 127 of the state’s 515 groundwater basins – the state’s water savings account for dry periods – are currently overdrafted. We’re pumping water out faster than we can replenish it.

Local, regional, and state agencies are called to achieve resilience in the face of decreased snowpack, increased flood risks, and a growing population. This requires upgrading infrastructure and modifying management practices while also protecting natural ecosystems.

#### City of Malibu Case Study

The city of Malibu is encouraging developers and homeowners to reduce their water use through graywater reuse. [Learn more: www.lgc.org/cwap#malibu](http://www.lgc.org/cwap#malibu)

### Restoration

California’s natural resources – our “green infrastructure” – have been depleted as a result of human development. Many of our state’s rivers lack sufficient flow to keep important wildlife species alive and flush out pollutants. Our overgrown forests are more susceptible to disease and wildfire, posing a significant environmental and public safety threat, while also reducing absorption potential therefore limiting water supply downstream. We must restore our natural ecosystem functions in order to ensure a safe, reliable drinking water supply and a flourishing environment for future generations.

Local governments can protect and restore impacted habitat and waterways in their jurisdiction. Enacting policies to protect existing lands and implementing local restoration projects will help ensure future resilience.

#### Irvine Ranch Water District Case Study

The San Diego Creek Watershed Natural Treatment System is a watershed-based approach to regional water quality problems. [Learn more: www.lgc.org/cwap#nts](http://www.lgc.org/cwap#nts)

### Reliability

The California Water Action Plan seeks to establish a reliable water supply for all water users. Our natural cycle of wet winters and dry summers will become more challenging in the face of climate change, as dry periods become longer and more severe, and rainfall comes in fewer but heavier storms. The natural snowpack storage that feeds the rivers our water system relies on will be significantly diminished in coming years. Desalination is a costly option and only feasible in some areas. An over reliance on groundwater is unsustainable. To increase reliability, we must take advantage of all available options: a) diversifying our statewide water supply portfolio, b) improving local self-reliance, and c) reducing overall water demand through conservation and efficiency.

Local governments play an instrumental role in improving statewide water supply reliability. Acting as a bridge between State and Regional officials and the general public, cities and counties can reduce water demand in their communities and develop local water supplies.

#### WE CAN Case Study

The Local Government Commission’s WE CAN (Water-Energy Community Action Network) reduces local water use and greenhouse gas emissions through landscape upgrades. [Learn more: www.lgc.org/cwap#wecan](http://www.lgc.org/cwap#wecan)

January 2016

Actions: 9

State Water Board adopts regulations for surface water rights and diverters

February 2016

Actions: 7

State Water Board affirms the human right to water and cultural water use for tribes

January 2017

Actions: 8

Central Valley Flood Protection Board and DWR adopt new flood plan

2017

The Department of Water Resources adopts regulations to implement SGMA

June 2016

Actions: 6, 9

Governor Brown strengthens climate and drought resistance with EO B-37-16

May 2016

Actions: 5

## Progress to Date: California Water Action Plan Timeline

Much has been accomplished since the California Water Action Plan's release in 2014.

2018

SB 252 requires well data to be publicly available, increasing transparency in SGMA implementation

August 2017

Actions: 6, 9

Legislation proposed to fund safe drinking water

2018

Actions: 7, 10

## The Ahwahnee Water Principles

Your Guide to Implementing the California Water Action Plan

### California Water Action Plan Actions

		Increase Self-Reliance & Integration	Make Conservation a CA Way of Life	Achieve Co-Equal Goals for Delta	Protect & Restore Ecosystems	Manage & Prepare for Dry Periods	Expand Storage & Improve Groundwater	Provide Safe Water for All Communities	Increase Flood Protection	Increase Operational & Regulatory Efficiency	Identify Sustainable & Integrated Financing
Ahwahnee Water Principles	Community Principles	Compact, mixed use community design	✓		✓						
		Preserve and restore natural areas			✓	✓	✓		✓		
		Incorporate water holding areas				✓	✓		✓		
		Incorporate water efficient landscaping	✓	✓			✓			✓	
		Incorporate permeable surfaces for hardscape		✓			✓			✓	
		Dual plumbing for water reuse	✓	✓							
		Maximize the use of recycled water	✓	✓							
		Use urban water conservation technologies	✓	✓			✓		✓		
		Maximize locally available, drought-proof water supplies	✓				✓	✓	✓		
	Implementation Principles	Consult water agencies early in land use development		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Stakeholders should collaborate in water resource planning		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
		Implement the best integrated strategies first		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
		Projects & programs should involve the public	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
		Monitor and evaluate projects, programs, & policies			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

The Local Government Commission (LGC) published the **Ahwahnee Water Principles** in 2005, establishing guidelines for sustainable land-use that improves water resource reliability. The Principles have since been adopted or endorsed by the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Governor's Office, and many individual local public agencies. The Ahwahnee Water Principles can guide local government efforts to achieve the ambitious goals of the California Water Action Plan.

Local governments play an important role in encouraging water-wise practices and operations through their political, financial, and educational influence. Municipalities can pass water use ordinances and ensure local codes are water-wise. Industrial and commercial businesses can implement water efficient technologies in their operations, using on-site treatment and reuse wherever possible. Public agencies can promote water conservation campaigns. Individual citizens can reduce their water use through simple home upgrades and behavior change.

For more information about the Ahwahnee Water Principles, visit: [www.lgc.org/h2o-principles/](http://www.lgc.org/h2o-principles/)

# Local Governments Can Achieve California Water Sustainability!

A safe, reliable water supply and a healthy environment are equally important to every community's prosperity and quality of life.

California's ecosystem has a finite amount of water. But demand for that water has steadily increased as our state's population and economy has grown. Every Californian has a responsibility to use water wisely and to protect the ecosystems on which our water supply depends. Local governments play a critical role in achieving the goals of the California Water Action Plan and ensuring a sustainable water future for all.



## Act Now

**Develop, implement, and enforce policies** to promote sustainable water use across all levels of government.

**Collaborate with other agencies and organizations** in integrated regional water management efforts.

**Engage and educate the public** about sustainable water practices.

### Local Actions to Support a Resilient Water Future

- Include a Water Element in the General Plan and/or integrate sustainable water use concepts into relevant General Plan elements
- Update codes and ordinances to support water sustainability.
- Choose water and energy efficient options for capital improvements
- Adopt a water waste ordinance and penalties.
- Provide incentives for water conservation and water use efficiency.
- Provide financial support for low-income residents to reduce water use.

### Local Actions to Support Watershed Restoration

- Protect existing open space.
- Adopt an urban habitat ordinance to protect important areas.
- Use natural "green infrastructure" systems for stormwater and wastewater treatment.
- Incentivize habitat-friendly landscapes.
- Penalizing stormwater polluters.
- Restore lost habitat in public spaces.

### Local Actions to Support Water Supply Reliability

- Capture and treat stormwater for use.
- Reuse graywater.
- Recycle wastewater for purple pipe or direct potable reuse.
- Pass local water conservation ordinances to penalize water wasters.
- Construct desalination plants where appropriate.
- Actively recharge groundwater aquifers.