

Regional Water Quality Control Board  
North Coast Region

## Executive Officer's Summary Report

Thursday, August 15, 2019  
Regional Water Board Office  
Santa Rosa, California

### ITEM: 6

**SUBJECT:** Update on Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-10-19 to prepare a water resilience portfolio to meet California's water needs through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *(Dorene D'Adamo, State Water Board)*

**BOARD ACTION:** This is an information item only; No action will be taken by the Board

**BACKGROUND:** California's growth and prosperity are enabled by communities' reliable access to water and protection from flooding, and our natural places rely on healthy waterways. The Initiative is a focused 2019 effort led by three California agencies—the Natural Resources Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Food and Agriculture—to recommend a package of priorities and actions to Governor Newsom that would put California on a path toward resilience even as the climate becomes increasingly variable and extreme. The state agencies will work through the summer and fall of 2019 to inventory and assess California's approach towards managing its water. The inventory and assessment will review ongoing efforts by state and local agencies, drinking water systems, and the integrated infrastructure needed to safely and reliably provide water to all of California's residents, environments, and economic interests. As part of that inventory and assessment, the state agencies will consider the latest climate science, gather public and stakeholder input, and draft recommendations for how to improve our existing management tools, governance, data, and infrastructure. The Governor's April 29 Executive Order N-10-19 provides more detail.

### **DISCUSSION: What is the scope of the Water Resilience Portfolio**

**Initiative?** While local and regional water agencies are responsible for the bulk of water management in California, the Governor, Legislature and state agencies are important policy makers and partners with a statewide perspective. In recent decades, California voters have approved billions of dollars in general obligation bonds that have allowed local agencies to invest in strategies ranging from conservation to recycling to groundwater recharge through state-run grant programs. For example, voters approved a \$7.5 billion water bond in 2014 and a \$4.1 billion parks and water bond in 2018. One of the Water Resilience Portfolio's outcomes is to identify how the management efforts funded through these initiatives are coordinated at regional and watershed scales, and to recommend actions (new or revised state law, policies, or regulations) to help achieve statewide goals. The Governor and Legislature can build on efforts launched during the 2012-16 drought to solve immediate problems, such as dry and contaminated drinking water wells, and develop longer-term actions to reduce the consequences of

climate change. Recognizing California's great regional variation as well as the interconnected nature of state water supplies, the Water Resilience Portfolio will focus on state agency actions that bolster and complement local water management, protect and restore fish and wildlife populations, and achieve a sustainable water supply for the next generation.

**How does the Water Resilience Portfolio Initiative relate to the proposed Delta tunnel?** Though local and regional agencies have made significant investments to protect the reliability of their water supplies, snow and rain that drain off the Sierra Nevada into the Sacramento and San Joaquin river systems and through the Delta generate a water supply critical to California's economic and environmental future. To safeguard that supply in the face of climate change, earthquake risk and other vulnerabilities, the Newsom Administration is working to modernize Delta water conveyance. The California Department of Water Resources will undertake a planning and environmental review process to pursue construction of a tunnel to carry water to existing federal and state pumping plants in the south Delta. The Portfolio Initiative will inventory and assess current planning to modernize conveyance through the Delta with a new single tunnel project.

**How does the Water Portfolio Initiative relate to the state's "voluntary agreement" discussions with Sacramento and San Joaquin river water users over environmental flows and habitat?** The State is in the process of updating its Bay-Delta Plan, the regulatory framework for protecting fish and wildlife, water quality and other beneficial uses of water in the Delta and its key watersheds. The State has a legal responsibility to update the Bay-Delta Plan in a manner that balances and protects the many uses of Delta waters. Finding this balance has long been a challenge, often marked by conflict over how much water should be dedicated to the environment versus how much can safely be diverted for human use. State water management agencies are now working with water districts, conservation groups, cities, farmers, and other stakeholders on a new path forward to establish voluntary agreements to protect fish and wildlife while maintaining water supply reliability. If successful, these agreements will be integrated with the Bay-Delta Plan to provide a combination strategic water flows and habitat enhancements designed to protect native fish and wildlife. A healthy ecosystem is integral to maintaining a reliable water supply, and thus voluntary agreements are a key strategy for advancing water resilience. The effort has made significant progress since an initial framework was presented to the State Water Board on December 12, 2018. More information is available [CA Resources - Voluntary Agreement](#).

**How will the Water Resilience Portfolio Initiative integrate the state's Human Right to Water work?** The state's goal is to ensure that all Californians have safe, clean, accessible, and affordable water. However, there are currently over 1 million Californians without access to safe drinking water. In addition, during the 2012-16 drought, tens of thousands of people lost access to a reliable water supply due to changes in groundwater levels, low reservoir conditions, or depleted stream flows. Moreover, California's affordability crisis includes water, with critical infrastructure investments driving rate increases that fall hard on the state's 13 million low-income residents. The Water Resilience Portfolio Initiative will inventory and assessment existing tools to provide safe, accessible, and affordable water, such as local or regional

consolidations, technical assistance, infrastructure funding, and efficiency measures. State agencies must also consider how future hydrology will affect supply reliability, and whether current approaches to extend local supplies such as conservation, recycling, or stormwater capture are sufficient for future population growth and environmental conditions. Ecosystem needs also will be included as part of the state agency review.

### **Why is climate change a component of the Water Resilience Portfolio**

**Initiative?** Climate change projections indicate a future characterized by both longer, more intense droughts and stronger, wetter precipitation events. Resiliency planning must incorporate a changing hydrology so that California can manage its water when plentiful and adapt to drought conditions that will inevitably return. Adaptive water management may require new investments in underground storage, stormwater capture, reevaluation of reservoir flood operations, better climate forecasting tools, and an integrated understanding of watershed health. The tools that California develops now will help prepare for a more variable water future.

**Who is making decisions about the Water Portfolio Initiative, and when will the recommendations be made public?** The Initiative is led by Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot, CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld and Secretary of Department of Food and Agriculture Karen Ross. Nancy Vogel at the Natural Resources Agency directs and coordinates the work among state agencies. The State hopes to release a draft set of recommendations for public review this fall and submit final recommendations to the Governor for his consideration before 2020.

**How can I share my ideas?** The State agencies will hold a series of in-person meetings through the summer, at locations across the state, to directly solicit stakeholder input and feedback. You can also submit ideas, comments, and suggestions directly to the state agency team via email. Please visit [www.waterresilience.ca.gov](http://www.waterresilience.ca.gov) to submit your suggestions or to learn about upcoming opportunities to provide input at public meetings. Additional information will be available soon. Substantive comments will be posted to the website.

**How will my input be used?** Input submitted in writing will be posted to [www.waterresilience.ca.gov](http://www.waterresilience.ca.gov). A team of people working at the Natural Resources Agency, CalEPA, and the Department of Food and Agriculture will review the input and consider the suggestions as they craft recommendations to be delivered to the Governor in fulfillment of the Executive Order. A set of draft recommendations should be available for public review in late fall.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** This is an information item; no action will be taken by the Board.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** Executive Order N-10-19 attached.