

There is a future where drought isn't an emergency.

Together we can plan for it.

California Climate Resilience Plan | Drought

California has committed unprecedented funding for natural resources and climate resilience over the next three years. This is an incredible opportunity to invest in California's natural infrastructure and pivot our focus to where it is needed most: protecting biodiversity and adapting our water system to a changed climate.

The rain and snow patterns upon which our current system was built no longer exist. But water demand has increased dramatically and it's stretching those systems to the limit. Today, our aquifers are running dry, and our snowpack is critically depleted. In the competition for water, nature loses first. If we stay on this track, in our children's lifetimes, over half of California's freshwater species will face extinction due to drought and man-made water shortages.

If we restore the natural systems that allow for our state's water supplies, we can protect both people and nature in the long term. But if we allow freshwater ecosystems to dry up, there won't be water for anyone.

TNC has identified these top funding and policy priorities to put California on the path to Climate & Drought Resilience:

1. Closing science and data gaps that prevent us from knowing how much water we have;
2. Building capacity to prepare for and respond to frequent and extreme droughts;
3. Restoring North Coast watersheds to advance salmon recovery; and
4. Prioritizing long term and multi-benefit projects in the Central Valley.

1. Close science and data gaps

- **Rapid Stream Gage Deployment:** Direct the Department of Water Resources to rapidly deploy additional gages to create a full picture of drought and streamflow conditions. Nearly 90% of significant streams in California are poorly gaged and priority should be given to streams that have established minimum instream flows but lack functional gages required in the Department stream gage deployment plan (Senate Bill 19, 2020).
- **Further Develop Monitoring Tools:** Continue the development and upkeep of tools that state and local agencies use to understand when and where water is needed for nature. Dedicate \$15 million to updating and implementing next-generation flow science tools such as the Natural Flows Database and the California Environmental Flows Framework (CEFF).
- **Expand Wildlife Monitoring:** Expand the capacity of the Department of Fish and Wildlife to monitor and adapt management on their lands to improve population health and resilience. Support \$15 million to the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Coastal Monitoring Program.

2. Build capacity to prepare for and respond to frequent and extreme droughts.

- AB2451 (Wood): This bill would build capacity at the State Water Board to improve drought response including new full-time positions dedicated to creating and implementing actionable plans to effectively respond to drought in real time. Secure \$25 million to establish a formal Drought Section at the State Water Resource Control Board.
- Flow Criteria follow through: Ensure the Department of Fish and Wildlife develops flows criteria for California's rivers and streams that broadly protect native freshwater species and ecology, and to guide flows management during drought.
- Establish environmental water leave-behinds for maintaining river flows and winter flooded agricultural lands as part of drought year water transfer programs.

3. Invest in the North Coast watersheds to advance Salmon recovery.

- WCB Salmon Recovery Prioritization: The Wildlife Conservation Board Streamflow Enhancement Program should prioritize projects that advance salmon recovery on the North Coast, including for short-term transactions. Providing water where and when fish need it most, protects endangered salmon runs even during extreme drought conditions. The \$150 million in 2022-23 for the Streamflow Enhancement Program should be prioritized for coastal watersheds.
- Capacity grants for watershed restoration: Build local capacity to increase the pace and scale of watershed restoration projects. Native American tribes, resource conservation districts, conservation organizations, local communities, and others are poised to accelerate water resilience projects California. Secure \$50 million for the Department of Conservation to establish a capacity building program.

4. Prioritize long-term and multi-benefit projects in the Central Valley.

- Migratory Birds: Invest \$50 million from the Department of Fish and Wildlife to expand state programs designed to enhance management of private wetlands and farmlands for wildlife and/or fund a long-term program to be implemented by private partners (e.g., BirdReturns) that complements existing state programs.
- Wildlife Refuges: Central Valley wildlife refuges are all that is left to support millions of migratory birds. State cost share funding is needed for the acquisition and delivery of water for refuges pursuant to the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA). Through the Wildlife Conservation Board's Inland Wetlands Conservation Program, dedicate \$100 million to secure water for the state's refuges and \$25 million for targeted infrastructure investments that improve delivery and water management for refuges.
- Multi-Benefit Flood Management: Fund multi-benefit flood management projects that reduce risks to public safety, significantly increase groundwater recharge, and provide wildlife habitat. Preference should be for natural infrastructure projects, like floodplains and managed wetlands, that improve climate resilience.
- Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing: Invest in strategic repurposing of agricultural lands to reduce overall water demand, while creating other environmental, community and economic benefits. Funding should prioritize projects that are multi-benefit, like areas suitable for groundwater recharge or upland restoration for recovery of endangered species and public recreational access. Support \$50 million for the Department of Conservation for the Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program.
- SGMA: Dedicate SGMA funding to provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs representing and/or advancing projects on behalf of under-represented beneficial users, especially disadvantaged communities, small farmers, and the environment. Dedicate \$30 million from SGMA Grant Program at Department of Water Resources for technical capacity and community outreach from non-GSA entities.