



**California State
Water Resources
Control Board**

2021 Strategic Work Plan

The State Water Resources Control Board's mission is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use, for the benefit of present and future generations. To this end, the State Water Resources Control Board develops statewide policy and regulations for the protection of water quality, regulates drinking water, administers California's water rights system, and supports Regional Water Quality Control Board efforts. In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board provides financial assistance in the form of grants and loans for projects that clean up and protect water quality, drinking water supplies, and that otherwise protect water resources. In all it does, the State Water Board works to advance several foundational values, including good governance, climate change resilience, and racial equity.

This strategic work plan lays out actions to advance the State Water Board's four thematic priorities and subsidiary goals, which are listed in the Table of Contents.

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1. Protect public health by ensuring reliable access to safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation.

- 1.1. Work to ensure state-regulated water systems meet drinking water standards and Californians reliant on water systems not under state regulation ("state smalls" and private wells) know the quality of their water.
- 1.2. Adopt and enforce standards for contaminants that threaten human health.
- 1.3. Ensure groundwater quality meets or exceeds objectives.

2. Protect and restore watersheds, marine waters, and ecosystems.

- 2.1. Ensure river and stream flows support fish, wildlife, recreation, and other beneficial uses.
- 2.2. Ensure surface water quality protects fish, wildlife, recreation, and other beneficial uses.
- 2.3. Assist partner agencies in transitioning cannabis cultivation to a regulated practice that is protective of ecosystems and sustainable.
- 2.4. Protect—and where feasible, restore—aquatic and marine habitats.

3. Increase statewide water resiliency in the face of climate change and other threats by expanding and integrating California's water supply portfolio.

- 3.1. Increase resilience to climate change of California's water system's functions.
- 3.2. Increase resilience of local and regional water supplies.
- 3.3. Support sustainable management of California's groundwater resources.
- 3.4. Manage natural and working lands and soils so they provide water-related benefits.
- 3.5. Use stormwater more fully and effectively to provide multiple benefits.

3.6. Manage the Bay-Delta to balance water supply reliability and a healthy ecosystem.

4. Strengthen internal capacity and systems to accomplish the Water Board's mission strategically, transparently, equitably, and efficiently.

4.1. Incorporate effective public participation into State Water Board decisions and support effective partnerships.

4.2. Track and communicate the Water Board's work.

4.3. Manage data effectively.

4.4. Support evolution of organizational structures, processes, and culture.

The State Board's highest-priority actions to work on or complete in 2021 are listed below; these are also marked with asterisks (*) in the full list on the following pages.

Highest-priority actions

COVID-19 and affordability (action 1.1.1.)

Chrome VI (action 1.2.1.)

Total Coliform Rule (action 1.2.2.)

Temperature management (action 2.2.1.)

Direct potable reuse (action 3.2.1.)

Conservation (action 3.2.4.)

SGMA (actions 3.3.1, 3.3.2)

Stormwater cost of compliance (actions 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.)

Bay-Delta (actions 3.6.1, 3.6.2, and 3.6.3.)

SAFER: communications (action 4.2.1.)

Data: management plan (action 4.3.1.)

Racial equity (action 4.4.1.)

Fi\$Cal (action 4.4.2.)

Workforce strategy (action 4.4.3.)

HR center of excellence (action 4.4.4.)

Please note: the State Water Board's priorities are subject to change based on need. Also note this workplan does not cover the State Water Board's core workload or Regional Water Board efforts.

For each action below, acronyms in brackets list the main responsible organizations within the State Water Board; acronyms are defined at the end of this document. Many actions related to Governor Newsom's [Water Resilience Portfolio](#) (WRP) include cross references.

1. Protect public health by ensuring reliable access to safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation.

1.1. *Work to ensure state-regulated water systems meet drinking water standards and Californians reliant on water systems not under state regulation (“state smalls” and private wells) know the quality of their water.*

- 1.1.1. * **COVID-19 and affordability.** Collect and analyze data on the financial impacts of COVID-19 on water systems and households and provide policy options for preventing water system financial failure and residential water service shut offs. [DDW, ORPP]
- 1.1.2. **SAFER.** Develop and implement the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Drinking Water Program Plan, including efforts, such as consolidations, to ensure systems have the needed technical, managerial, and financial capacity. Develop a public engagement plan regarding safe and affordable drinking water. Develop the Needs Analysis on the state of drinking water in California. Develop drinking water performance measures, including a suite of new measures for Human Right to Water and Safe and Affordable Drinking Water initiatives. [DDW, DFA, COMMS] (WRP 1.1, 1.2.)
- 1.1.3. **PFAS: investigations.** Determine extent of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contaminants in public drinking water systems, including through issuance of Investigatory Orders. [DDW, DWQ]
- 1.1.4. **Enforcement to support drinking water.** Prioritize enforcement of water quality violations that impact or threaten drinking water sources, with the highest priority for enforcement and compliance assistance being given to disadvantaged communities or communities with financial hardship. [OE]
- 1.1.5. **US EPA sanitary survey compliance.** Improve State Water Board compliance with the US EPA mandated sanitary survey by increasing inspections. [DDW]

1.2. *Adopt and enforce standards for contaminants that threaten human health.*

- 1.2.1. * **Chrome VI.** Adopt a Maximum Contaminant Level for hexavalent chromium. [DDW]
- 1.2.2. * **Total Coliform Rule.** Adopt the Revised Total Coliform Rule to conform with revised federal rule. [DDW]
- 1.2.3. **Lead and Copper Rule.** Develop Lead and Copper Rule conforming revisions to new federal rule issued in 2020. [DDW]
- 1.2.4. **PFAS: PHG and MCL.** Develop a public health goal and maximum contaminant level for perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and develop strategy for regulating additional per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances PFAS . [DDW]

- 1.2.5. **Source control and pretreatment for water reuse.** Support statewide source control and wastewater pretreatment programs for emerging contaminants of concern to protect recycled water uses, including direct potable reuse. [DDW, DWQ] (WRP 8.3.)
- 1.2.6. **Future drinking water regulation prioritization.** Identify constituents of emerging concern in drinking water and evaluate their risk to public health for Board prioritization of future regulations. [DDW]

1.3. Ensure groundwater quality meets or exceeds objectives.

- 1.3.1. **Stormwater: infiltration.** Develop requirements for siting, design, and monitoring criteria for stormwater capture and drywell infiltration systems. [DWQ]
- 1.3.2. **Prop. 1: groundwater.** Solicit Proposition 1 Groundwater Grant Program funds. [DFA]

2. Protect and restore watersheds, marine waters, and ecosystems.

2.1. Ensure river and stream flows support fish, wildlife, recreation, and other beneficial uses.

- 2.1.1. **401 water quality certifications.** Develop timely Clean Water Act section 401 water quality certifications. [DWR]
- 2.1.2. **California Environmental Flow Framework.** Continue ongoing collaboration with academic partners, CalEPA, and water users to develop the California Environmental Flow Framework (CEFF), which will provide faster ways to evaluate regional and site-specific instream flow needs. [DWR] (WRP 9.1, 9.2.)
- 2.1.3. **Instream flows: specific priority watersheds.** Continue the development of models, tools, and data needed to evaluate the interconnection between streamflow and other beneficial uses in watersheds identified in the California Water Action Plan. [DWR]
- 2.1.4. **Carmel River.** Continue oversight of the Cease and Desist Order related to California American Water Company (Cal-Am) and ongoing illegal diversions from the Carmel River. [DWR]
- 2.1.5. **Mono Lake licenses.** Update Mono Lake licenses to adopt new instream flows for Rush and Lee Vining creeks (tributaries to Mono Lake). [DWR]

2.2. Ensure surface water quality protects fish, wildlife, recreation, and other beneficial uses.

- 2.2.1. *** Temperature management.** Improve management of surface water temperatures to reduce fish mortality and improve watershed and ecosystem health in the Bay-Delta watershed, with a focus on the Sacramento River and Water Rights Order 90-5 compliance and emphasis on development of robust modeling and data to inform decisions, early and transparent planning, collaborative solutions, and where appropriate, consideration of additional, voluntary options that balance multiple beneficial uses. [DWR]
- 2.2.2. **Stormwater: general permit.** Adopt revised statewide construction stormwater general permit. [DWQ]

- 2.2.3. **Stormwater: enforcement.** Enforce stormwater discharge violations with the highest adverse water quality impacts, followed by violations that threaten the integrity of the regulatory program. [OE]
- 2.2.4. **Integrated Report.** Adopt the Integrated Report in a timely manner (every 2 years). [DWQ]
- 2.2.5. **Ocean acidification and hypoxia.** Participate in ongoing research on ocean acidification and hypoxia and initiate development of water quality objectives, or some other appropriate regulatory action, and a program of implementation once sufficient scientific information is available. [DWQ]
- 2.2.6. **Pesticides.** Establish a statewide urban pesticides source control program through coordinated water quality monitoring and collaboration with the Department of Pesticide Regulation. [DWQ]
- 2.2.7. **Trash.** Develop a regulatory approach to implement trash control strategies (including stormwater strategies) to address hot spots. [DWQ]
- 2.2.8. **Enforcement prioritization.** Reduce facilities in significant noncompliance and identify and elevate the enforcement priority of facilities with reoccurring mandatory minimum penalty violations when appropriate. [OE]
- 2.2.9. **Mandatory minimum penalty backlogs.** Maximize enforcement process efficiencies to address any mandatory minimum penalty backlogs. [OE]
- 2.2.10. **HABs.** Implement the mandates of AB 834 by expanding event response and ambient monitoring through the freshwater harmful algal bloom program and improving communication to tribes and the public. [OIMA] (WRP 8.1.)
- 2.2.11. **Biostimulatory substances and biological integrity.** Develop the technical foundation and policy options for a statewide water quality objective and implementation program for nutrients and other biostimulatory substances for wadeable streams and establish and implement biological condition assessment methods, scoring tools, and targets aimed at protecting biological integrity. [DWQ]
- 2.2.12. **Natural infrastructure.** Prioritize the use of natural infrastructure, such as wetlands and horizontal levees for shoreline protection. Consistent with the state's coastal resilience principles, develop guidance and permit language for these types of projects. [DWQ]

2.3. Assist partner agencies in transitioning cannabis cultivation to a regulated practice that is protective of ecosystems and sustainable.

- 2.3.1. **Cannabis Policy.** Implement the Cannabis Policy with a focus on gaining enrollment in the Cannabis Program and deterring illegal cultivation, including outreach to increase program enrollment, issuance of permits through the portal, inspections, and enforcement as necessary and to the fullest extent possible with reduced staff resources. [DWQ, DWR, OE]
- 2.3.2. **Cannabis enforcement.** Enforce water quality violations associated with illegal cannabis cultivation sites in priority watersheds to the fullest extent possible with reduced staff resources. [OE]

2.4. Protect—and where feasible, restore—aquatic and marine habitats.

- 2.4.1. **Large habitat restoration permit.** Adopt a general permit for large habitat restoration projects. [DWQ]
- 2.4.2. **Suction dredge mining.** Adopt general National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for suction dredge mining. [DWQ]
- 2.4.3. **Salton Sea Management Program.** Oversee, monitor, and assess progress on the implementation of the Salton Sea Management Program. [DWR] (WRP 17.1, 17.2, 17.3.)

3. Increase statewide water resiliency in the face of climate change and other threats by expanding and integrating California’s water supply portfolio.

3.1. Increase resilience to climate change of California’s water system’s functions.

- 3.1.1. **Water rights and drought.** Identify lessons learned and undertake legal, administrative, and technical improvements to administer the water rights system in periods of shortage. Establish a water availability and curtailment method for droughts and establish an approach for managing instream flows in priority drought-vulnerable watersheds (including voluntary local efforts, where appropriate). [DWR]
- 3.1.2. **Water rights permitting and climate resilience.** Develop recommendations to make water availability analysis more robust and to permit more resilient water right applications. Identify data needs, opportunities, and potential approaches for the Board and water right applicants to respond to climate change, including how existing information and available data can inform water rights permitting processes, and aid applicants in selecting appropriate season, rate, and quantity of proposed diversions. [DWR] (WRP 27.2.)

3.2. Increase resilience of local and regional water supplies.

- 3.2.1. *** Direct potable reuse.** Develop Direct Potable Reuse Regulations by the December 2023 statutory deadline. Research issues related to the protection of public health and direct potable reuse of recycled water and have an outside expert panel review that research and make recommendations for the direct potable reuse regulation. [DDW, DWQ] (WRP 4.2, 4.3, 4.4.)
- 3.2.2. **Fresno River adjudication.** Statutory Adjudication of the Fresno River. [DWR]
- 3.2.3. **Recycled Water Policy.** Implement the Recycled Water Policy. This includes action to: require annual reporting of wastewater and recycled water volume; coordinate with the Biolanalytical Implementation Advisory Group to develop standard operating procedures for bioanalytical screening tools; coordinate with the Division of Water Rights, WaterReuse California and the California Association of Sanitation Agencies to develop wastewater change petition checklist; and work with Regional Water Boards to update recycled water permits and enroll permittees into the statewide Water Recycling Requirements as appropriate. [DWQ, DDW]

- 3.2.4. * **Conservation.** Create new urban efficiency and water loss standards for urban retail water suppliers. These efforts implement the Make Conservation a Way of Life laws (Senate Bill 606 and Assembly Bill 1668, 2018) and Senate Bill 555 (2015). [ORPP] (WRP 2.1.)
- 3.2.5. **Water Storage Investment Program.** Implement the Board's parts of the Proposition 1 (2014) Water Storage Investment Program. Over the next ten years, Board staff have roles in permitting, petitions, hearings, and water right orders, as well as in developing and enforcing agreements to ensure water quality benefits from certain projects occur. [DWR, ORPP]

3.3. Support sustainable management of California's groundwater resources.

- 3.3.1. * **SGMA.** Implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, including supporting the Department of Water Resources' review of groundwater sustainability plans and assuring basin-wide alignment across the state's 94 SGMA basins and 260 groundwater sustainability agencies. Support local implementation and, where basin managers are unable or unwilling to meet the goals of SGMA, exercise appropriate authorities. [ORPP] (WRP 3.1.)
- 3.3.2. * **SGMA: drinking water and water quality.** Continue to provide tools, resources, and incentives to encourage long-term drinking water solutions and water quality planning in the development, refinement, and implementation of groundwater sustainability plans. Coordinate with activities of the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Drinking Water Program, the Recycled Water Policy program, CV-SALTS, and the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, where appropriate. [DWQ, DDW, ORPP]
- 3.3.3. **SGMA: recharge.** Provide technical assistance, guidance, and tools to groundwater sustainability agencies pursuing groundwater recharge projects. Prioritize permitting and seek resources necessary to make timely water right decisions on groundwater recharge projects. [DWR, ORPP] (WRP 3.4.)
- 3.3.4. **SGMA: OpenGEARS.** Support development of a common data framework or tool to help groundwater sustainability agencies and others manage groundwater extraction information for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. [ORPP, DWR]

3.4. Manage natural and working lands and soils so they provide water-related benefits.

- 3.4.1. **Forest health.** Promote sustainable forest health conditions that protect water quality and aquatic habitat, reduce fire risk, and increase water yields through coordinate forestry planning activities and the development of waste discharge requirements or waivers for private and federal lands forest management activities. [DWQ]
- 3.4.2. **Irrigated lands.** Assist Regional Water Boards as they implement the Irrigated Lands Program, including the East San Joaquin Precedential Water Quality order. [DWQ]
- 3.4.3. **Irrigated lands: enforcement.** Support newly emerging irrigated lands regulatory programs with enrollment enforcement resources to ensure substantial enrollment in those programs. In Regions with more established irrigated lands regulatory programs,

shift irrigated lands enforcement focus from enrollment to substantial compliance with current regulatory requirements. [DWQ, OE]

- 3.4.4. **Healthy soils.** Support the California Department of Food and Agriculture Healthy Soils Initiative to build and enhance healthy soils. The healthy soils initiative includes permit streamlining including compost and irrigated lands as well as biosolids issues. [DWQ]

3.5. Use stormwater more fully and effectively to provide multiple benefits.

- 3.5.1. * **Stormwater cost of compliance: Statewide Industrial General Permit.** Adopt the revised Statewide Industrial General Permit. Include evaluation of use of secondary maximum contaminant level for infiltration as part of stormwater cost of compliance. [DWQ]
- 3.5.2. * **Stormwater cost of compliance: site-specific objectives guidance for metals.** Adopt guidance for developing site-specific water quality objectives for metals (water effects ratios or modeling). [DWQ]
- 3.5.3. * **Stormwater cost of compliance: cost reporting.** Adopt guidance for standardized cost reporting for municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits as part of stormwater cost of compliance. [DWQ]
- 3.5.4. **Stormwater cost of compliance: cost evaluation.** Adopt guidance for evaluating cost reporting for consideration in municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits as part of stormwater cost of compliance. [DWQ]
- 3.5.5. **MS4: Phase II Permit.** Update the Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit. [DWQ]
- 3.5.6. **Stormwater tools.** Refine statewide modeling and tools to quantify stormwater capture and infiltration to inform stormwater resource plans, including size and type of best management practices, asset management, and water supply management decisions. [DWQ, DDW]
- 3.5.7. **MS4: low-impact development.** Enhance low-impact development requirements through municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits. [DWQ]

3.6. Manage the Bay-Delta to balance water supply reliability and a healthy ecosystem.

- 3.6.1. * **Bay-Delta: San Joaquin/Southern Delta Plan.** Implement the San Joaquin/Southern Delta Bay-Delta Plan, including consideration of biological goals and voluntary agreements. [DWR]
- 3.6.2. * **Bay-Delta: Sacramento/Delta Plan.** Complete the Sacramento/Delta update to the Bay-Delta Plan, including consideration of voluntary agreements. [DWR]
- 3.6.3. * **Bay-Delta: water rights.** Clarify, organize, and vet Delta water right claims using stakeholder-driven “crowd correction.” [ODW]
- 3.6.4. **Water use measurement and reporting.** Maintain regulatory compliance with measurement and reporting regulations in the Delta and statewide. [ODW, DWR, OE]

- 3.6.5. **OpenET.** Evaluate OpenET as the standard for determining crop evapotranspiration and consumptive water use in the Delta. [ODW] (WRP 22.9.)

4. Strengthen internal capacity and systems to accomplish the Water Board’s mission strategically, transparently, equitably, and efficiently.

4.1. *Incorporate effective public participation into State Water Board decisions and support effective partnerships.*

- 4.1.1. **Engagement: internal capacity.** Enhance internal capacity to integrate public engagement skills, strategies, and expertise (including language access) into all Water Boards programs by expanding public participation training, resources, and tools for all staff. [COMMS]
- 4.1.2. **Engagement: external capacity.** Identify internal and external options for developing and expanding the capacity of local community organizations to participate in the development of management zone implementation plans and related processes related to CV-SALTS. [COMMS, DFA]
- 4.1.3. **Remote public meetings.** Develop a framework to promote enhanced used of remote meeting opportunities, including recommending legislative changes where necessary. [OCC]

4.2. *Track and communicate the Water Board’s work.*

- 4.2.1. * **SAFER: communications.** Develop a communications plan for the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Drinking Water Program. [COMMS]
- 4.2.2. **Website.** Evaluate, upgrade, and maintain the Water Boards’ websites. [DIT, COMMS]
- 4.2.3. **Enforcement performance.** Identify future enforcement goals and track enforcement performance measures that drive meaningful enforcement to obtain those goals with a focus on programs with low compliance rates. [OE]
- 4.2.4. **US EPA ICIS-NPDES alignment.** Align State Water Board databases and Regional Water Board enforcement efforts with US EPA’s Integrated Compliance Information System National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (ICIS-NPDES) Data Quality Inventory for California by removing erroneous violations and looking for technological solutions to improve the automated transfer of data between state the and federal systems. [OE]

4.3. *Manage data effectively.*

- 4.3.1. * **Data: management plan.** Develop and implement a data management strategic plan, per State Water Board Resolution 2018-0032, which will include elements of data literacy (training and education) and data management tools that help staff perform work or inform the public on key interests. [OIMA]

- 4.3.2. **Data: new systems for water quality.** Replace a data portal—the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN)—and the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP). [OIMA, DIT]
- 4.3.3. **Modernize water rights data.** Develop a modern water rights data management system. [DWR] (WRP 22.7.)

4.4. Support evolution of organizational structures, processes, and culture.

- 4.4.1. * **Racial equity.** Maintain a cross-organizational steering committee and work group to address systemic, institutional, and individual racism at the Water Boards and adopt resolutions articulating commitment to racial equity. Develop action plans to advance racial equity, both internally and in program implementation and apply a racial equity lens to all actions in this work plan and the State Water Board’s core workload not listed here. [Executive Office, Racial Equity Steering Committee]
- 4.4.2. * **Fi\$Cal.** Implement workflow processing changes in the Accounting Branch to improve use of California’s new financial management system, Fi\$Cal. These changes are intended to improve the timeliness of payment processing and help meet external due dates for monthly and end of year reporting commitments to the Department of Finance and the State Controller’s Office. [DAS]
- 4.4.3. * **Workforce strategy.** Develop and implement a workforce vision and development strategy. This includes a workforce strategic plan (COVID-19 issues, addressing staff recruitment, hiring, retention, program and cross-programmatic training, and leadership development), a succession plan, a recruitment office, internship program expansion (track fellows and where and how they are being used), and a strategy to achieve and cultivate a diverse and inclusive workforce and advance opportunities for all. [DAS, ORPP]
- 4.4.4. * **HR Center of Excellence.** Establish a Human Resources (HR) Center of Excellence, in coordination with all CalEPA organizations, to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of HR programs and ensure the Boards put the right people, processes, and culture in place to achieve the State Board mission. [DAS]
- 4.4.5. **Water Leadership Program.** Develop and launch upper-level cohort-based leadership development efforts. [ORPP]
- 4.4.6. **Administrative Hearings Office.** Conduct hearings and prepare proposed orders in water-right and other matters. [AHO]
- 4.4.7. **Contracts and processes for laboratory and science services.** Reduce the number of contacts and improve business services and workflows by consolidating statewide contracts for analytical laboratory services and science consulting services. [OIMA]
- 4.4.8. **Research summary.** Summarize Water Board’s activities related to research and assess possible improvements. [ORPP]
- 4.4.9. **Water rights enforcement policy.** Develop and implement a water rights enforcement policy. [DWR, OE]

Acronyms of State Water Board Divisions and Offices

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| AHO | = | Administrative Hearings Office |
| COMMS | = | Communications Office* |
| DAS | = | Division of Administrative Services |
| DDW | = | Division of Drinking Water |
| DFA | = | Division of Financial Assistance |
| DIT | = | Division of Information Technology |
| DWQ | = | Division of Water Quality |
| DWR | = | Division of Water Rights |
| ODW | = | Office of the Delta Watermaster |
| OE | = | Office of Enforcement |
| OIMA | = | Office of Information Management and Analysis |
| ORPP | = | Office of Research, Planning, and Performance |

* The Communications Office includes the Office of Public Affairs and the Office of Public Participation