

Department of Water Resources Policy Paper
Environmental Stewardship

DWR Mission:

To manage the water resources of California in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the State's people, and to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments.

Environmental stewardship is a concept and commitment of responsibility to manage and protect natural resources (water, air, land, plants and animals) and ecosystems in a sustainable manner that ensures they are available for future generations.

The value of the State's natural resources including plants, animals and ecosystems is reflected in State codes and law. DWR has a role and responsibility to protect and restore the environment, as reflected in its mission statement. Environmental stewardship is an ethic that DWR embraces as it makes and carries out decisions that deal with future demands on water resources and flood protection throughout California. DWR shall work towards the sustainability of public trust resources related to water resources projects and the environment.

The goal of an environmental stewardship ethic is to create human systems consistent with natural systems, where each is ultimately sustainable. Systems of water supply and flood protection are more successful when they accommodate and sustain ecosystem functions. Sustainable systems are also more economical over time.

DWR fosters the environmental stewardship ethic by embracing broad concepts of impact avoidance and protection of natural resources, minimization, mitigation and restoration and enhancement of natural functions and values. DWR will incorporate ecosystem restoration as an objective in water and flood management projects, including partnering with restoration efforts of others, to achieve net environmental benefit. Ecosystem restoration is the process of reestablishing, to the extent possible, the structure, function and composition of the natural environment.

DWR will use science to understand the functions of natural biological and physical systems, so as to help plan and design water supply storage and conveyance systems and flood control systems that also benefit native plants, and fish and wildlife resources.

DWR managers will embrace environmental stewardship as part of their responsibilities. As managers develop and deliver reliable water supplies and provide for flood protection for the State's residents, they can incorporate environmental stewardship in several ways:

- Integrate ecosystem protection and restoration into water storage and conveyance and flood control/management planning
- Include environmental stewardship and ecosystem protection and restoration as a criteria in project funding decisions for all DWR programs
- Plan for conservation, restoration and maintenance of the biological diversity and natural physical processes of aquatic and related terrestrial ecosystems

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- Plan and implement projects that contribute to the recovery of aquatic and riparian species listed under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts and other laws, as well as other at-risk species.