

Secretary's Message

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2009 California Water Plan Update (Update 2009), which sets forth a blueprint for sustainability and forges a new direction for water management in California. Our new reality is one in which we must manage a resource characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability due to climate change and changing ecosystem needs. Our past hydrology is no longer an accurate indicator of the future.



This Water Plan follows the Update 2005 roadmap of strategies for sustainable water use but with an increased sense of urgency. Update 2009 reinforces the need to follow the principles of integrated water management – statewide and regionally – and to use water efficiently, improve water quality and reliability, and integrate environmental stewardship into every aspect of how we manage our water.

Update 2009 comes on the heels of a historic water legislation package passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger in November 2009. The landmark legislative package positions California for 21st Century water management by establishing new urban water conservation targets, requiring statewide groundwater monitoring, and creating a new framework for improved governance in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The Resource Management Strategies in Update 2009 build upon the new legislation and chart a path forward into a future characterized by risk and uncertainty. There is a new urgency with which we must embrace water use efficiency in the context of climate change and increased urban demand. Improved water conveyance is a strategy from past Water Plans, but is now presented with renewed significance given the context of a Delta ecosystem in continued decline and the threats of seismicity and sea level rise.

New to this Water Plan is an integration of water resource management and flood management throughout the state. This approach aims to increase resiliency in our systems while yielding multiple benefits like increased public safety, habitat protection, and water supply reliability. A critical strategy in Update 2009 is the development of a reliable revenue stream to fund necessary system improvements and to invest in the continued resilience and robustness of California's water resources and the ecosystem that supports them.

Climate change and increasing demand have greatly reduced the flexibility and resilience of the last century's infrastructure investments. Now is the time to recognize our changed conditions and reinvest in that infrastructure in a sustainable manner. In addition to statewide improvements, local resource strategies such as conservation, water recycling, groundwater storage and conjunctive use, urban runoff management, and more can converge in the context of Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning.

The strategies outlined in these pages provide the means to manage resources comprehensively; from snowmelt to estuary, from field to tap, and all of the uses within the watershed.

California water management cannot be changed overnight, but Update 2009 and the momentum behind it provide the plan, tools, and strategies to achieve momentous change beginning now. I hope you will agree that Update 2009 is the state's blueprint for sustainability and integrated water management and marks a significant new chapter in the way California manages its water resources.

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The Natural Resources Agency