



AquAlliance
Butte Environmental Council
California Coastkeeper Alliance
California Save Our Streams Council
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
California Striped Bass Association
California Water Impact Network
Clean Water Action
Citizens Water Watch
Desal Response Group
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Environmental Protection Information Center
Earth Law Center
Fish Sniffer Magazine
Foothill Conservancy
Friends of the River
Food & Water Watch
Granite Bay Flycasters
Institute for Fisheries Resources
The Karuk Tribe
North Coast Environmental Center
Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Planning & Conservation League
Restore the Delta
Sacramento River Preservation Trust
Sierra Club California
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Southern California Watershed Alliance
Winnemem Wintu Tribe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A REAL-TIME DROUGHT RESPONSE

While opportunistic politicians are using the current drought as an excuse to build more dams at unjustified taxpayer expense, environmental organizations point to ways that permanently use less water and better manage the hundreds of dams and reservoirs that already exist. With a history of recurring drought in California- 40% of recent years have been drought level years -California ought to be well prepared for these conditions. Instead we have another of the usual “emergency drought proclamations” from the Governor.

Here are the kinds of actions that are really needed to get us out of this recurring cycle, as recommended by the member organizations of the Environmental Water Caucus:

- Provide funding of mandatory programs for urban and agricultural efficiencies and conservation. This would include measures such as incentives to purchase high efficiency toilets, clothes washers and dishwashers, storm water capture, urban landscape replacement, groundwater cleanup, waste water treatment and recycling, green water infrastructure, and higher technology farm irrigation practices and equipment. All of these actions have proven successful in the recent past, especially compared to the costs of water from new dams.
- Develop water pricing guidelines to incentivize reduced use of urban and agricultural water with local baselines and steep upward price escalation for usage above the baselines.
- Develop enforceable regional per capita water usage targets based on the efficiency and conservation measures adopted.
- Report and monitor groundwater usage in order to minimize groundwater overdraft. California is the only major state that does not monitor or control its groundwater.
- Retire impaired farmlands in the San Joaquin Valley which now pollute our groundwater and rivers and use excessive amounts of irrigation water; these lands could be repurposed as solar farms.
- Develop water pricing incentives for planting crops which directly contribute to the nation’s food supply. As we reach the limits of our water supply, we need to question the use of that valuable resource in order to ensure the best use of our water.
- Reduce exports from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta to a sustainable level aimed at protecting our water supplies as well as fish and habitat.
- Operate major dams with a larger reserve held back for the 40% of low water years that can be anticipated. The major orientation of dam operations should be to protect water quality, drinking water, fisheries, and habitats.
- Reduce water district contract amounts to a more reasonable level in keeping with future reduced water supplies and to eliminate the current “paper water.”
- Restrict the use of water for fracking oil and natural gas. The limitations of our water supply require that we not use that resource for a completely new water polluting industry.
- Assure that adequate water supplies are provided to disadvantaged communities and that the water quality for poorer communities meets healthy standards.

These are the kinds of actions that will be a real and permanent drought response.

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