



Assessing a State Role in Financing Conveyance Projects

Introduction

At the August meeting, the Commission discussed a four-phase workplan for implementing its efforts to assess a state role in financing conveyance projects to meet the needs of a changing climate. The Commission's work will result in a succinct paper describing key issues and mechanisms, including recommendations for state policymakers to consider as they weigh the financing of water conveyance infrastructure. The paper will describe characteristics of resilient water conveyance projects that support adaptation to climate change, the potential public benefits of such projects, and the implications of various financing options.

Staff will present the results of the first phase of work on this project, which included staff research and preparation of a background policy brief. During this phase, staff interviewed several dozen thought leaders and stakeholders representing the water industry, agriculture, environmental groups, disadvantaged communities, and other interests. This information informed and complements the background policy brief prepared by staff.

This meeting is the inception of the second phase of the Commission's conveyance work, during which the Commission will gather public input and hear from expert panels to shape its recommendations. The Commission will hear from speakers who will help frame how the Commission considers resilient conveyance, public benefits, and financing options. Phase two will conclude in the spring of 2021, and will be followed by phases three and four, which include drafting and finalizing the Commission's recommendations.

Background

On July 28, 2020, the California Natural Resources Agency, California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture issued the final [Water Resilience Portfolio](#) (portfolio) in response to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-10-19, which calls for a "set of actions to meet California water needs through the 21st century." The portfolio outlines a broad suite of actions designed to move the state toward water resilience. The portfolio calls on the Commission to fulfill Action 19.4: assess a state role in financing conveyance projects that could help meet needs in a changing climate. Action 19.4 is embedded in a section of the portfolio that is focused on building connections, which includes actions designed to help increase physical connections and coordination between and among the decentralized elements of California's water system.

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The Commission's work on conveyance implements Goal One of the Strategic Plan, which calls on the Commission to "serve as a primary public forum for the discussion of improving water management policy to assist regions in achieving climate resiliency ... including those actions of the Water Resilience Portfolio assigned to the Commission."

Meeting Overview

The Commission will hear from experts on topics related to resilient conveyance and will consider a background policy brief, a synopsis of initial stakeholder interviews, and next steps for how to proceed with its assessment. In addition, staff from Department of Water Resources (DWR) will provide a brief update on their related work.

- Laura Jensen, the Commission's Assistant Executive Officer, will review the policy brief and provide foundational information and guiding questions for the Commission to consider as it moves forward.
- Lisa Beutler, Executive Facilitator with Stantec, will recap what was learned in the initial stakeholder interviews.
- Ellen Hanak, Vice President of the Public Policy Institute of California, will address some of the overarching questions regarding financing climate-resilient conveyance.
- John Andrew, DWR Assistant Deputy Director, will speak to the intersection of resilience and conveyance.
- Kamyar Guivetchi, manager of DWR's Division of Planning, will give an update on portfolio Action 19.3, which directs DWR to "conduct a feasibility analysis for improved and expanded capacity of federal, state, and local conveyance facilities to enhance water transfers and water markets" that incorporates climate change projections of hydrologic conditions.
- Joe Yun, the Commission's Executive Officer, will share final words to prepare the Commission to move forward with this work.

This is an informational item.

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