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Commission briefings address activities underway to help prepare State Water Project for climate extremes

The California Water Commission will host the third 2022 State Water Project (SWP) briefing at the [redacted] of preparing for climate extremes and ensuring a reliable State Water Project to meet the challenges of drought, flood, and wildfire.

The Commission will receive two presentations: the first on the drought actions taken in 2022 and the outlook for 2023, and a second on the SWP's ongoing climate resilience efforts and wildfire response planning, which include improved forecasting, watershed assessments, and planning for future conditions.

Planned, constructed, and operated by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the SWP is the largest state-built water and power generator and delivery infrastructure in the nation, providing a water supply for more than 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland, as well as flood control, power generation, fish and wildlife protection, and recreational opportunities. The role of the SWP is more critical than ever and will continue to be hugely important for supplying water for urban areas, agriculture, and ecosystems. It is generally accepted that in a changing climate, California will experience bigger floods and more extreme droughts. At almost 60 years old, the SWP requires innovative solutions to meet the challenges of the 21st century, especially how it operates in these more extreme heat and precipitation scenarios.

"To mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on the State Water Project, DWR is taking proactive approaches to improve the resiliency of its infrastructure during fires, floods, and droughts," said John Yarbrough, Assistant State Water Project Deputy Director. "Along with working with SWP contractors and federal partners to balance and protect a limited water supply, DWR is expanding airborne snow surveys to provide better water supply forecast information and making significant improvements to projections of future SWP delivery capability that will help water agencies better prepare for more extreme future conditions."

Pursuant to Water Code section 165, the Commission conducts an annual review of the progress of the construction and operation of the SWP, focusing on how the SWP adapts and responds to hydrological extremes expected with climate change, restores critical ecosystems, and addresses aging infrastructure. The Commission reports its findings and recommendations to DWR and the Legislature. This briefing will serve to inform the Commission in preparation for the 2022 annual review. The final 2022 briefing will update the Commission on SWP construction projects in 2022.

The September meeting of the California Water Commission will take place in the Warren-Alquist State Energy Building, Rosenfeld Hearing Room, 1516 9th Street in Sacramento. For those unable to attend, learn how you can comment remotely at cwc.ca.gov/meetings.

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The nine-member California Water Commission uses its public forum to explore water management issues from multiple perspectives and to formulate recommendations to advise the director of the California Department of Water Resources, and as appropriate, the California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor and Legislature on ways to improve water planning and management in response to California's changing hydrology. As required by Water Code section 165, the Commission conducts an annual review of the construction and operation of the State Water Project. For more information regarding the California Water Commission visit cwc.ca.gov.