

Part 0. Recommendation Declaration

To be submitted to the DRIP support team prior to commencing work on Part I.

Recommendation Proposer

DRIP Member name, member type (state/non-state) and any partners (DRIP members or external) in development of proposed recommendation.

Justine Massey (NGO), Sierra Ryan (Santa Cruz County)

Recommendation Idea

Provide a brief (no more than 150 words) description of the idea for a recommendation.

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 552](#), passed in 2021, outlines the new requirements for small water suppliers, county governments, DWR, and the State Water Board to implement more proactive drought planning and be better prepared for future water shortage events or dry years. The DRIP Collaborative proposes minor adjustments to enhance the law's feasibility and implementation. The recommended amendments aim to streamline the legislation, promoting effective execution by state and local governments in line with the law's original purpose. Key revisions are recommended below in [Part I](#).

Focus Area

Drought Relevant Data Drought Narrative **Drought Preparedness for Domestic Wells**

Intended Benefit to the Drought Risk Management Cycle (Please check all that apply)

- Mitigation, Preparation and Capacity**
- Forecasting and Monitoring**
- Response**
- Recovery**

Part I: Recommendation Overview

Recommendation Title

SB 552 Update

Description

In one or two paragraphs, please provide a brief overview of the recommendation and how it addresses the Focus Area problem statement. Supporting documentation to include an overview of existing trends, the reasons for urgent action, and people currently impacted.

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 552](#), passed in 2021, outlines the new requirements for small water suppliers, county governments, DWR, and the State Water Board to implement more proactive drought planning and be better prepared for future water shortage events or dry years. The DRIP Collaborative proposes recommendations to enhance the law's feasibility and implementation related to the county portion of the legislation, [Water Code Sec. 10609.70](#). The recommendations aim to create structured expectations

for the counties and the state legislation, with the intent to support effective execution by state and local governments in line with the law's original purpose.

Key recommended revisions:

Counties:

1. Establish a deadline for county plans and for updates. The DRIP Collaborative recommends establishing a five-year plan update deadline, synchronize with relevant updates in local General Plan Safety Elements or Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, as feasible.
2. Require counties to report Task Force status by specified deadlines and maintain a website that shares this information with the public.
3. Revise the language which states “A county shall consider, at a minimum, all of the following in its plan” to “A county shall develop an outline for how each following element will be implemented within its jurisdiction.”
4. Set more realistic expectations/guidelines for how often the County Drought Task Forces should meet and what specifically they are supposed to do:
 - a. For example, in Santa Cruz the alternative process was more helpful than creating a new Task Force: they have a standing water commission and in order to comply pulled together an advisory group for SB 552 plan development. The standing water commission covers topics beyond just a narrow definition of “drought,” such as discussing water quality and hearing from GSA representatives regarding overdraft and implementation plans for demand management.

State:

5. Ensure DWR review and provide compliance-dependent approval of plans. The process to approve plans must also include a public comment period.
6. Mandate DWR to submit a comprehensive implementation report to the legislature every five years highlighting key information about the plans.
7. Include a directive for the State to appoint a staff member as point of contact for County Drought Task Forces, facilitating positive dialog between the State and the standing county task forces or alternative processes.
8. Commission a study, involving counties and representative organizations, to assess existing plans and task forces and understand evolving county needs.
9. Recommend state funding to support pre-hazard domestic well drought assistance, create contracts (with GSAs or Counties) in advance of acute disasters so that urgent funding can be distributed when it is needed.

Impacts

What are the expected outcomes or benefits of this recommendation, and how will it specifically enhance drought resiliency in California?

- Add clarity in expectations for county drought planning
- Enable county drought plans to benefit from meaningful feedback from DWR as part of review process
- Standardize the baseline of county drought preparedness
- Standardized plans can lead to greater equity if grant programs become available to help fund the implementation of aspects of the plans.

What are the anticipated impacts or consequences of not adopting this recommendation?

- Uncertainty such as the lack of a deadline for county drought plans
- Vastly different standards of drought preparedness per county
- Drought Resilience Plans will not be robust enough to serve as a tool to guide counties' drought preparedness and response

Implementing Parties and Partners

Who would be the implementing agency or entity (potentially multiple)?

- California Legislature is needed to make identified revisions and specifications in the SB 552 statute
- Department of Water Resources; DWR already provides financial and technical assistance support to counties when implementing SB 552. In the past, DWR has held workshops to assist counties to better understand their responsibilities in meeting SB 552 requirements.

Which existing entities (e.g., departments or other agencies, private or nonprofit groups, community-based organizations) will the implementing agency or entity need to partner with for successful implementation of this recommendation?

(See above)

Describe the coordination required by federal, state, local and tribal governments to successfully implement this recommendation.

The CA Legislature would ultimately make amendments to SB 552, informed by the DRIP's recommendations. DWR would remain the agency tasked with facilitating successful implementation of the law, and counties would create and implement their SB 552 Drought Resilience Plans. (Small system requirements would remain in place but are not addressed as part of this recommendation.)

Alignment with Other Initiatives

How does the recommendation align with and/or leverage existing state efforts, concurrent public or private initiatives?

This recommendation aligns with the potential state actions needed to promote drought preparedness and response for communities which are identified within the Water Commission's "Potential State Strategies for Protecting Communities and Fish and Wildlife in the Event of Drought" (p. 19. Available at: https://cwc.ca.gov/-/media/CWC-Website/Files/Documents/2024/01_January/Drought-Strategies-White-Paper_Final.pdf).

Implementation Time Frame

Approximately how quickly could the proposed recommendation be implemented? Factor time needed to develop, design, permit, construct (if applicable). Select one timeframe:

- Short term (1-2 yrs.)** Medium term (2-4 yrs.) Long term (4-5+ yrs.)

Part II: Implementation Considerations

Necessary Steps & Measuring Success

What are the key steps to adopt and implement action?

Discussion and development of a set of recommendations to improve state and county implementation of SB 552 to better prepare for drought.

To help monitor progress and success, what thresholds and reporting can be identified to reflect successful implementation?

Implementation success will be with a strong set of recommendations that the DRIP Collaborative can agree to.

Potential Challenges

What issues or challenges might arise during implementation (e.g. authority or need for additional authority, funding or revenue streams, public awareness and perception, technical, interagency coordination)? List these hurdles and offer a brief description of how to address/mitigate them. Are there foreseeable potential negative consequences or unintended impacts associated with implementing this recommendation?

Additional authority and guidance may be needed, as well as additional state funding may be required for future implementation of recommendations. However, this recommendation will just be a discussion of policy options from the DRIP Collaborative and not commit to seeking future authority or funding from the Collaborative.

Funding

What are the potential (estimated) costs to implement the recommendation? Is there both an implementation cost and ongoing costs? Briefly describe any assumptions behind the estimate.

Recommendations can be developed through the existing DRIP Collaborative process without additional costs. The State has already provided funding to the majority of Counties to establish some of the law. There are some ongoing costs to counties that need to be considered as part of the discussion, as aspects of the current SB 552 and this recommendation amount to unfunded mandates.

What potential existing and/or future funding sources or mechanisms are available (e.g., grants, general fund, bond funds, rate payers, philanthropic foundations, etc.)? Does the recommendation require funding from the state and potentially matching funds?

At this time, more discussion is needed.

Equity and Outreach

How does this recommendation align with established agency equity policies and how might the recommendation address any specific equity or justice concerns, as defined by the DWR Racial Equity Vision, during its implementation?

Drought can impact low-income communities of color reliant on domestic wells. A stronger SB 552 could empower DWR to better serve those residents.

What sort of outreach is necessary for the successful implementation of the recommendation? Describe the target audience and the methods of outreach needed (e.g., communication, technical or financial assistance, partnering assistance).

Successful development of a recommendation will require outreach to other interested parties, primarily counties.