Meeting Summary

Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative

Water Infrastructure and Planning Workgroup Meeting
California Natural Resources Agency, 715 P St, Sacramento, Room 04-211
April 3, 2025 | 2:00PM to 3:30PM

The meeting recording is available at: https://youtu.be/eT8U6yfVuT0.
Meeting materials, including the presentation, are available at: http://www.water.ca.gov/drip

Meeting Objective: Discuss the scope of the Water Infrastructure and Planning focus area and define a problem statement to be presented at the Spring 2025 DRIP Collaborative meeting.

Workgroup members in attendance:

- Emily Rooney, Agricultural Council of California
- Jason Colombini, Jay Colombini Ranch, Inc.
- Tim Worley, California Association of Mutual Water Companies
- Kyle Jones, Community Water Center
- Alvar Escriva-Bou, University of California Davis
- Suzanne Pecci, Public Member
- Katie Ruby, California Urban Water Agencies
- Carolina Hernandez, Los Angeles County Public Works
- John Andrew, Executive Manager for Climate Resilience at DWR

Absent

- Laura Ramos, California Water Institute at Fresno State

Vision Setting Exercise

To begin the discussion and align on potential future successes, the workgroup participated in a visioning exercise, responding to a prompt question: **What water supply infrastructure action, either identified or not in the Strategy, would be most successful in the next 5 to 15 years in advancing towards drought resilience?**

Key themes that emerged include:

- **Portfolio approach:** Increase groundwater and surface water storage, improve conveyance, seek new water supply sources such as desalination and recycled water, as well as boost water conservation.
- **Short-term and long-term successes of water infrastructure:** Expansion of groundwater recharge is an example of short-term success to implement while long-term projects such as the WSIP projects are needed.
- **Large- and small-scale projects needed:** Implement both large-scale projects (statewide water system improvements) and small-scale projects (local channels and canals to support local water infrastructure) are needed.
- **Local water needs addressed:** Progress to address vulnerable domestic wells and small water systems from droughts as well as from increased demands due to emerging local development (e.g., new housing development, denser service population, etc.)

Increased Awareness and Common Knowledge

There were two presentations by Department of Water Resources staff to share current Department planning on water infrastructure. One presentation on the State Water Project Long-term Drought Contingency Plan highlighted the plan and the 13 actions to improve long-term drought resilience, Delta Conveyance Project, California Aqueduct Subsidence Program, and the Forecasted-Informed Reservoir Operations. The 13 actions are projects and programs to improve existing or develop new infrastructure as well as improve the operation of the State Water Project and its facilities. The second presentation was on the San Joaquin Flood-MAR Watershed Studies. These Flood-MAR (Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge) planning studies are on five water sheds in the San Joaquin River system; Calaveras, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, and Upper San Joaquin. The studies will assess and quantify the watersheds' vulnerability to climate change, quantify Flood-MAR adaptation performance, and create a foundation of support for Flood-MAR implementation. The presentation highlighted a portfolio of actions that could happen in each of the 5 watersheds that could benefit flood control, increased water supply storage (ground water), and the environment. The reports are scheduled to be released in the fall of 2025.

Brief discussion centered around:

- **Potential goal to maximize long-term deliveries and potential tradeoffs to drought resiliency:** Use of delivered water depends on the water contractor and their ability to store water past the Delta. If carryover storage in Oroville is increased that water may need to be "spilled" in a wet year and would not be available when drought arrives.
- **As part of the San Joaquin Watershed studies, Integrated Forecast-Informed Resources Management (I-FIRM) changes management of reservoirs:** I-FIRM identifies and provides specific benefits for flood control and the environment, beyond just groundwater recharge and water supply benefit

Scope of Work Discussion

This workgroup was established during the October 2024 In-person DRIP Collaborative meeting. Other workgroups were established earlier and have progressed further (e.g., developed problem statements and identifying potential draft recommendations). Because of this fact, this workgroup's development has been behind in comparison to other workgroups. The full DRIP Collaborative membership in October 2024 directed that the workgroup develop the scope of work for this focus area as well as an understanding of what infrastructure is meant for this effort.

To facilitate a discussion on the workgroup's scope of work, the workgroup was prompted with the spectrum of water infrastructure and planning: type, purpose, scale, and framework. Additionally, the following prompting questions were presented:

- **What do we mean when we say "infrastructure"?**
- **What is the scope of this workgroup?**

Responses were the following:

- A potential understanding of infrastructure would be water storage and distribution (e.g., conveyance)
- Infrastructure should be "all inclusive", e.g., keep definition of infrastructure (and scope) broad while keeping recommendations focused

- The scope of work should not necessarily keep water use efficiency, but resilience of water supply and bolstering of existing water supply should be included
- Infrastructure should include grey (engineered) and green (natural) infrastructure, connectivity
- For context, from SB 552, the scope should include small water systems and domestic wells (including small state water systems)
- Consideration of an analysis of vulnerability of water users from droughts should be included in the workgroup's scope

Initial Statement Discussion

An initial statement was developed to either be replaced by a problem statement or, through discussion, draft a problem statement for the May 16, 2025, In-person DRIP Collaborative meeting.

Initail Statement and corresponding discussion points from the workgroup meeting on 4/3/25

California's aging water infrastructure is not well adapted to rapidly changing climate conditions which will require new and rehabilitated infrastructure as well as reoperation. This is particularly true in how we address the extreme weather whiplash of floods and droughts and how that affects our drought resilience at state, regional, and local levels. Because extreme weather occurrences are projected to increase, California water supply and its infrastructure will be increasingly challenged to meet economic and societal demands, while still needing to address non-water supply issues such as water quality, environmental, and power production needs.

- **Given this initial statement, what should be modified to inform the focus of the workgroup and opportunities for recommendations?**

Think Small Scale and Protection

Need to extend infrastructure for existing water users where new development is forth coming (new areas should not be dependent on groundwater). Extension of new water infrastructure to communities that are readily identifiable. Should consider for context a section under Primer for SB 552, "*SB 552 includes new responsibilities and requirements at both the state and local levels to help small water suppliers and rural communities reduce their risk of inadequate water supply during a water shortage event.*" (Second paragraph, Page 7, *Primer of Senate Bill 552: Drought Planning for Small Water Suppliers and Rural Communities*). Consider the lack of baseline infrastructure to support vulnerable communities, need basic levels of infrastructure for resiliency to drought.

Backbone of Water Supply System and More

Large scale is needed, as identified in the initial statement, to support local and regional needs, but also should include and lead to "small" infrastructure for local drought resiliency (e.g., distribution via pipes, canals, etc.). Look to include local and regional infrastructure as well as the "larger" infrastructure that is needed.

Improve System Flexibility

Identify communities that have single points of failure; dependent on one source and thus not tolerable to drought and dry conditions. Further evaluate small system consolidation and consider adding other options to improve their sustainability and resilience.