

Senate Bill No. 72

CHAPTER 210

An act to amend Sections 10004.5 and 10004.6 of, to repeal Section 10013 of, and to repeal and add Section 10004 of, the Water Code, relating to water.

[Approved by Governor October 1, 2025. Filed with Secretary
of State October 1, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 72, Caballero. The California Water Plan: long-term supply targets.

Existing law requires the Department of Water Resources to update every 5 years the plan for the orderly and coordinated control, protection, conservation, development, and use of the water resources of the state, which is known as “The California Water Plan.” Existing law requires the department to include a discussion of various strategies in the plan update, including, but not limited to, strategies relating to the development of new water storage facilities, water conservation, water recycling, desalination, conjunctive use, and water transfers, that may be pursued in order to meet the future needs of the state. Existing law requires the department to establish an advisory committee to assist the department in updating the plan.

This bill would revise and recast certain provisions regarding The California Water Plan to, among other things, require the department to expand the membership of the advisory committee to include, among others, tribes, labor, and environmental justice interests. The bill would require the department, as part of the 2033 update to the plan, to update the interim planning target for 2050, as provided. The bill would require the target to consider the identified and future water needs for all beneficial uses, including, but not limited to, urban uses, agricultural uses, tribal uses, and the environment, and ensure safe drinking water for all Californians, among other things. The bill would require the plan to include specified components, including a discussion of the estimated costs, benefits, and impacts of any project type or action that is recommended by the department within the plan that could help achieve the water supply targets. The bill would require the department to report to the Legislature the amendments, supplements, and additions included in the updates of the plan, together with a summary of the department’s conclusions and recommendations, in the session in which the updated plan is issued. The bill would also require the department to conduct public workshops to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the plan.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) To thrive as a state, California needs a reliable supply of water for urban, agricultural, and environmental uses that is resilient to climate change.

(b) California's existing water usage is highly reliant on capturing snow melt on an annual basis. That water is stored in lakes, reservoirs, and groundwater basins and is then transported around the state for environmental, residential, business, and agricultural use when needed.

(c) California has one of the most intricate and elaborate systems of water conveyance in the world.

(d) Dependent on the extent of drought or flood conditions, the Department of Water Resources has calculated that the volume of water used by people in California for agricultural, urban, and environmental purposes ranges from 60,000,000 acre-feet per year to 90,000,000 acre-feet per year.

(e) Per capita water use has declined over time, thanks to a conservation ethic encouraged by water agencies and other stakeholders, water-saving indoor plumbing fixtures and appliances, better leak detection, efforts to reduce outdoor water use, and legislative action.

(f) California is experiencing significant impacts of a changing climate on our water supply systems and environment, including fisheries and ecosystems.

(g) According to the Department of Water Resources, hotter and drier weather may diminish our existing water supply.

(h) A 10-percent loss of water supplies could mean the disappearance of about 6,000,000 acre-feet to 9,000,000 acre-feet of water.

(i) Many rivers, lakes, and estuaries are being impacted by declining water quality, including increases in harmful algal blooms.

(j) According to the Department of Water Resources' Bulletin 118 (2020), statewide groundwater overdraft is estimated to be between 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 acre-feet of water per year. Additionally, in a Public Policy Institute of California blog post from March 11, 2020, titled "A Reality Check on Groundwater Overdraft in the San Joaquin Valley," the California central valley has a groundwater overdraft of 2,000,000 to 2,400,000 acre-feet of water.

(k) Following more than two decades of "megadrought" in the Colorado River Basin, reservoir levels are so low that supply cuts are likely.

(l) California's precipitation is changing from seasonal snow in the Sierra to periods of substantial rainfall, including from atmospheric rivers.

(m) The shift to drier dry years and wetter wet years makes it imperative that the state of California develop comprehensive wet year strategies that take full advantage of times of abundance, while also ensuring public safety from floods.

(n) California is the nation's agricultural powerhouse, accounting for 12 percent of agricultural production in 2021, including more than 70 percent of the nation's fruits and nuts.

(o) The agricultural sector produces annual revenues of more than \$50 billion, employs more than 420,000 people, and supports large food and beverage processing industries.

(p) The Department of Water Resources describes a statewide capacity in groundwater basins in the range of 1,000,000,000 acre-feet or approximately 20 times the total surface water storage capacity statewide.

(q) California is the home to cutting-edge job-creating industries.

(r) Local and regional water suppliers are at the forefront of implementing projects to build resiliency, but need additional support from the state and federal governments through funding and regulatory frameworks that are adapted for the new climate reality.

(s) It is essential for our economy, environment, and well-being that California increases the resilience of the state's water supplies.

(t) The implementation of projects to increase the resilience of the state's water supplies can also create good jobs for California workers.

(u) Governor Gavin Newsom released "California's Water Supply Strategy: Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future" in August 2022 that began to outline strategies for increasing California's water supply and streamlining approvals.

(v) The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 establishes a state policy to meet California's future water needs through the coequal goals for the Delta of increased water supply reliability and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta ecosystem restoration.

(w) The State Water Resources Control Board and other authorities estimate that over one million Californians lack access to safe and affordable drinking water.

SEC. 2. Section 10004 of the Water Code is repealed.

SEC. 3. Section 10004 is added to the Water Code, to read:

10004. (a) The department shall develop a comprehensive, strategic plan for the sustainable management and stewardship of California's water resources. This plan shall be known as "The California Water Plan" and shall provide an update on the status and trends of California's water-dependent natural resources, water supplies, and its agricultural, urban, and environmental water demands for a range of plausible future scenarios. The plan also shall include long-term water supply targets and strategies to meet those targets as outlined in this chapter.

(b) The department shall update The California Water Plan on or before December 31, 2028, and every five years thereafter.

(c) To develop the plan, the department, in consultation with the California Water Commission, shall establish an advisory committee, composed of representatives of agricultural and urban water suppliers, local government, business, agriculture, tribes, labor representatives from building and construction trades, labor representatives from public agencies involved in critical water infrastructure, including, but not limited to, water treatment and water wholesalers, environmental justice interests, environmental interests, and other interested parties, to assist and provide input to the department in the updating of The California Water Plan. The department

shall consult with the advisory committee and consider recommendations in carrying out this chapter. The department shall provide written notice of meetings of the advisory committee to any interested person or entity that requests the notice. The meetings shall be open to the public.

(d) The department may add members to the advisory committee to carry out the purposes of Section 10004.7. Additional advisory committee members may include those from environmental justice sectors, local water supply agencies, and researchers and experts on climate science, climate science solutions, water storage, water conveyance, and environmental protection.

(e) The department shall release a preliminary draft of The California Water Plan, as updated, upon request, to interested persons and entities throughout the state for their review and comments. The department shall provide these persons and entities an opportunity to present written or oral comments on the preliminary draft. The department shall consider these comments in the preparation of the final publication of The California Water Plan, as updated.

(f) The department shall coordinate with the California Water Commission, the board, other local, state, and federal agencies as appropriate, and the advisory committee to develop the plan.

SEC. 4. Section 10004.5 of the Water Code is amended to read:

10004.5. (a) As part of the requirement of the department to update The California Water Plan pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 10004, the department shall include in the plan a discussion of various strategies, including, but not limited to, those relating to the development of new water storage facilities, water conservation, groundwater recharge, water recycling, desalination, conjunctive use, conveyance, stormwater capture, water transfers, and demand management activities that may be pursued in order to meet the future water needs of the state and the water supply targets developed by the department. The department shall also include a discussion of the potential for alternative water pricing policies to change current and projected uses. The department shall include in the plan a discussion of the potential advantages and disadvantages of each strategy and an identification of all federal and state permits, approvals, or entitlements that are anticipated to be required in order to implement the various components of the strategy.

(b) In preparing any update of The California Water Plan, the department shall conduct a series of public workshops to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the plan. The department shall select workshop locations to maximize geographic distribution, to ensure that regions of the state that have been impacted the most by drought, flood, and other weather extremes are included, and to ensure the workshops are accessible to communities with minority populations, communities with low-income populations, or both.

(c) Each update of the plan shall include, at a minimum, all of the following components:

(1) A discussion of environmental needs on a regional basis. The department's discussion shall rely on the best available peer-reviewed scientific information.

(2) A discussion of urban sector water needs on a regional basis.

(3) A discussion of agricultural water needs on a regional basis.

(4) A summary of sources that could finance project types or actions within the various strategies.

(5) A discussion of the estimated costs, benefits, and impacts of any project type or action that is recommended by the department within the plan that could help achieve the water supply targets. The department shall also consider and incorporate into the discussion, if appropriate, existing studies or planning documents that quantify the costs and impacts to the state if there are inadequate water supplies to meet sustainable demands for all sectors.

(6) A report on the development of regional and local water projects within each hydrologic region of the state undertaken to improve water supplies to meet municipal, agricultural, and environmental water needs and minimize the need to import water from other hydrologic regions.

(d) Notwithstanding Section 10231.5 of the Government Code, the department shall report the amendments, supplements, and additions included in the updates of The California Water Plan, together with a summary of the department's conclusions and recommendations, to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, in the session in which the updated plan is issued.

SEC. 5. Section 10004.6 of the Water Code is amended to read:

10004.6. (a) (1) As part of updating The California Water Plan every five years pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 10004, the department shall conduct a study to determine the amount of additional water needed to meet the state's future water needs and to recommend programs, policies, and facilities to meet those needs.

(2) As part of the 2033 update to The California Water Plan, the department shall update the required planning target pursuant to subdivision (f) for 2050. The target shall consider the identified and future water needs for all beneficial uses, including, but not limited to, urban uses, agricultural uses, recreational uses, tribal uses, and the environment, recognize the impacts of climate change on the state's water resources, ensure safe drinking water for all Californians, and reflect statewide, regional, and local planning efforts. In establishing the long-term supply target, the department shall analyze current and future water needs trends, including identifying additional water necessary to sustain public trust resources. Nothing in this paragraph shall require the state water board or regional boards to update water quality control plans in order for the department to update the required planning target described in subdivision (f).

(3) Subsequent updates of the plan shall include a range of water supply targets that consider future scenarios with a 50-year planning horizon at a watershed scale.

(b) The department shall consult with the advisory committee established pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 10004 in carrying out this chapter.

(c) On or before December 31, 2027, and one year prior to issuing each successive update to The California Water Plan, the department shall release a preliminary draft of the assumptions and other estimates upon which the study will be based, to interested persons and entities throughout the state for their review and comments. The department shall provide these persons and entities an opportunity to present written or oral comments on the preliminary draft. The department shall consider these documents when adopting the final assumptions and estimates for the study. For the purpose of carrying out this subdivision, the department shall release, at a minimum, assumptions and other estimates relating to all of the following:

(1) Basin hydrology, including annual rainfall, estimated unimpaired streamflow, depletions, and consumptive uses.

(2) Groundwater supplies, including estimates of sustainable yield, supplies necessary to recover overdraft basins, and supplies lost due to pollution and other groundwater contaminants.

(3) Current and projected land use patterns, including the mix of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and undeveloped lands.

(4) Environmental water needs, including regulatory instream flow requirements, nonregulated instream uses, and water needs by wetlands, preserves, refuges, and other managed and unmanaged natural resource lands.

(5) Current and projected population.

(6) Current and projected water use for all of the following:

(A) Interior uses in a single-family dwelling.

(B) Exterior uses in a single-family dwelling.

(C) All uses in a multifamily dwelling.

(D) Commercial uses.

(E) Industrial uses.

(F) Parks and open spaces.

(G) Agricultural water diversion and use.

(7) Opportunities for demand management.

(8) Evapotranspiration rates for major crop types, including estimates of evaporative losses by irrigation practice and the extent to which evaporation reduces transpiration.

(9) Current and projected adoption of urban and agricultural conservation practices.

(10) Current and projected supplies of water provided by water recycling and reuse.

(11) Current and projected water and infrastructure needs of disadvantaged communities, as defined in Section 79505.5, served by public water systems, state small water systems, and individual domestic wells, including, but not limited to, access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, water quality, and water supply. The department may incorporate by reference the State Water Resources Control Board's Drinking Water Needs Assessment or other available relevant assessments or reports.

(12) Climate change impacts by region and resulting water supply trends, including changes in timing and intensity of snowmelt runoff.

(d) The department shall include a discussion of the potential for alternative water pricing policies to change current and projected water uses identified pursuant to paragraph (6) of subdivision (c).

(e) This section does not require the department to update, or prohibit the department from updating, any data necessary to update The California Water Plan pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 10004.

(f) As part of the 2028 update to the plan, the department shall include an interim planning target of 9,000,000 acre-feet of additional water, water conservation, or water storage capacity to be achieved by 2040. This target may be achieved through strategies, including, but not limited to, a combination of the development of new or expanded surface or groundwater storage, conservation efforts, including the ongoing implementation of the Making Conservation a California Way of Life regulation pursuant to Article 1 (commencing with Section 965) of Chapter 3.5 of Division 3 of Title 23 of the California Code of Regulations, or the development of stormwater capture, graywater, recycled water, or other water supplies.

SEC. 6. Section 10013 of the Water Code is repealed.