



San Joaquin Valley Water  
Collaborative Action  
Program

December 13, 2023

Governor Gavin Newsom

Sacramento, CA

Dear Governor Newsom,

Thank you for your leadership in addressing sustainable water management and climate adaptation for California. We are writing to request your support for critically needed strategic investments that should be included in any natural resource and climate bonds that are put before the voters in 2024.

As a collective of over 80 leaders from agriculture, water agencies, safe drinking water advocates and technical assistance providers, environmental organizations, technical assistance organizations, academia, and state and federal agencies, the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP) developed recommendations for more resilient water and land management to support your leadership and reinforce the urgency to avert statewide drought and flood disruptions.

Our work is focused in the San Joaquin Valley, the watershed that feeds California's urban and agricultural populations. These requests are focused here, given their importance to over 27 million Californians dependent on the State Water Project and Central Valley Project and to the 40 million Californians (and untold global populations) who consume the food produced in the valley. Nowhere else in the state offers better opportunities for bold and visionary public investments that solve multiple problems simultaneously to the benefit of California's people, economy, and ecosystems.

Investment in the San Joaquin Valley carries another crucial benefit: virtually every census tract in the valley meets the state's official definition as a disadvantaged community under Senate Bill 535. Your administration and the Legislature have rightly emphasized that the benefits of climate-related public investments must also serve to uplift these communities.

This is a critical time to increase state funding to advance sustainable water management, climate adaptation and improve safe, reliable, and affordable access to water, vibrant farms, and healthy ecosystems. The Natural Resources and Climate bonds can be an important next step in the state's ongoing investment in our communities and natural environment.

Attached are recommendations supported by our diverse collaborative for inclusion in the bonds. Our

top priority is funding to improve the quantity and quality of water for disadvantaged communities with at-risk drinking water. The collective interests of the CAP also recognize that all of these funding priorities are critical to advancing meaningful and sustainable work in the San Joaquin Valley and support the inclusion of all items within proposed bond legislation.

We request your consideration of recommendations for your proposal to the legislature.

Sincerely,



Ann Hayden  
Environmental Defense Fund



Sarah Woolf  
Water Wise

Co-Chairs  
San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program

The CAP Members in Support		
Name	Caucus	Organization
Mike Faria	Agriculture	Faria Farms
Megan Nicolas-Harper	Agriculture	Manulife
Mas Masumoto	Agriculture	Masumoto Family Farms
Jon Reiter	Agriculture	McConnell Farms
Geoff Vanden Heuvel	Agriculture	Milk Producers Council
Kimberly Brown	Agriculture	Wonderful Orchards
Sarah Woolf	Agriculture	Water Wise
Kara Heckert	Agriculture	American Farmlands Trust
Cannon Michael	Agriculture	Bowles Farming Company
Emmy Cattani	Agriculture	
Mike Lynes	Environmental	Audubon California
Ann Hayden	Environmental	Environmental Defense Fund
Julie Rentner	Environmental	River Partners
Ashley Boren	Environmental	Sustainable Conservation
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Kassy Chauhan	Safe Drinking Water	
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Justine Massey	Safe Drinking Water	

Barton "Buzz" Thompson	Strategic Advisor	
Jason Phillips	Water Agencies	Friant Water Authority
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Jennifer Pierre	Water Agencies	State Water Contractors
Ric Ortega	Water Agencies	Grassland Water District
Austin Ewell	Water Agencies	

# **The San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP)**

## **Natural Resource and Climate Bond Recommendations**

### **Safe Drinking Water**

Support funding for:

1. Projects that ensure the provision of safe drinking water to all Valley residents, including consolidation of at-risk and failing community water systems with nearby systems; funding infrastructure needs for low-income community water systems and domestic well owners; and providing access to new sources of drinking water for systems dependent on a single source of supply.
2. Projects that address wastewater infrastructure needs, particularly replacing failing septic systems that affect drinking water.
3. Funding to restore aquifers that serve as drinking water sources contaminated by nitrates, including recharge projects and programs in the vicinity of communities impacted by nitrate contamination.
4. Partnership-based multibenefit infrastructure projects that deliver targeted benefits to improve water supply and quality for disadvantaged and at-risk communities lacking safe and reliable drinking water.

### **SGMA Implementation and Groundwater Recharge**

Support funding for:

1. GSA projects for SGMA compliance
2. Groundwater recharge projects, which offer increased water supply reliability for all beneficial users such as drinking water and agriculture, particularly those that incorporate any of the following benefits: ecosystem enhancement, particularly with expanded floodplain reconnections; flood risk reduction; subsidence mitigation; climate change adaptation; water quality improvement; improved water quantity or water quality for disadvantaged communities; improved water quantity or water quality for agricultural water users and municipal users.
3. Project funding to support the engagement of community members in local project planning and development.
4. GSAs for enhancing the establishment of monitoring systems designed to answer water quality questions related to the movement and timing of pollutant plumes towards drinking water wells, detect problems early, adjust management actions accordingly, and improve water quality risk assessments for recharge projects generally.
5. Projects to improve conveyance and storage capacity to accommodate improved opportunities for SGMA implementation and groundwater recharge opportunities.
6. Electrical infrastructure supporting power delivery for SGMA implementation and additional groundwater recharge.

## **Sustainable Agriculture**

Support funding for:

1. The California Department of Food and Agriculture's State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program with specific funding allocations to promote on-farm water use efficiency and grower adoption of groundwater recharge practices.
2. The California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Program with specific funding allocations in proposed soil health funding for cover cropping practices.
3. Agricultural land conversion to natural floodplains adjacent to rivers and/or crops that accommodate frequent flooding.
4. Land conversion program that promotes on-farm water use efficiency improves soil health, accelerates atmospheric carbon removal or soil carbon sequestration, enhances groundwater recharge, and improves habitat.

## **Multibenefit Land Repurposing**

Support funding for:

1. The Multibenefit Land Repurposing program, which is aimed at the long-term repurposing of irrigated agricultural land to other uses that require little to no water, supports groundwater sustainability and benefits local communities and the environment. Funding will support collaborative planning and beneficial projects, including creating and restoring habitat, multibenefit groundwater recharge, floodplain restoration, community parks, low-impact renewable energy generation, utility-scale solar and associated transmission, and other land uses that require little to no water while maintaining natural and working lands.

## **Habitat Restoration and Improvement**

Support funding for:

1. Voluntary projects that achieve multiple benefits, i.e., restoration, public access, flood protection, etc., with clear criteria to assess costs/benefits and monitoring to validate that measurable, desired outcomes are achieved.
2. Voluntary projects that utilize efficient permitting mechanisms, such as the Habitat Restoration Enhancement Act and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Restoration Management Permit.
3. Projects to help restore existing south Delta channels that achieve multiple benefits, including reducing or mitigating water stagnation in channels, which exacerbates contaminant accumulation and low dissolved oxygen conditions, impacting water quality and fish habitats.

## **Water Data Collection**

Support funding for:

1. Water data infrastructure, including the implementation of stream gauges, monitoring wells, support for local and state databases such as the Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and

Assessment Program, etc.

## **Flood Control**

Support funding for:

1. Local flood control, with priority given to projects designed and implemented to achieve the objectives of both flood safety and ecosystem functions while providing additional benefits.
2. Focus on funding to widen and restore floodplains in the San Joaquin Valley to reduce downstream flood effects and increase groundwater recharge, among other benefits.
3. Flood control improvements that protect low-income communities.
4. Flood control improvements that provide greater storage and conveyance opportunities through expanded capacity and/or management strategies, including modernized operations.

## **Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Support funding for:

1. Projects that will enhance the functionality and operations of water projects and advance them toward achieving 100% renewable and zero-carbon resource goals – while improving statewide grid reliability and resilience, through improvements to existing infrastructure and the expansion of grid infrastructure including construction and development – by 2035.