



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WATER
**Collaborative
Action Program**

February 24, 2026

Senator Eloise Gomez Reyes
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
California State Senate

Assemblymember Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 4
California State Assembly

RE: San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program Response to Governor Newsom's Proposed FY 26/27 Budget

Dear Chairs Reyes and Bennett,

The San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP) is writing to express our response to the Governor's Proposed FY26/27 budget as to how it supports the need for immediate funding to address critical San Joaquin Valley water infrastructure, habitat, and safe drinking water needs. This investment will help address several State policy objectives, including implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA); drought resiliency in a hotter, drier climate; the human right to water; maximizing water supplies and storage during wet year conditions; and protection and restoration of habitat.

CAP Supports Most Proposed Proposition 4 Allocations, But More Groundwater Storage and Conveyance is Needed

The CAP supports the Governor's proposed Proposition 4 allocations for safe drinking water, the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program, and biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions. However, more funding is needed for groundwater storage as soon as possible. SGMA implementation has served as a catalyst to shift water management in the San Joaquin Valley to focus on investing in projects like capturing flood flows in multi-benefit modulating reservoirs and moving them to recharge basins over sandier soils to support groundwater levels throughout the year. In the Kaweah Subbasin, for example, the Seaborn Reservoir project is an 8,000-acre-foot storage project that seeks to convert an abandoned aggregate mine into flood control on the Kaweah River, while providing substantial riparian, wetlands, and meadow habitat and community recreation benefits. Flood flows can be released to projects like the Okieville Recharge Basin, which recharges 150 acre-feet per year near the disadvantaged community of Okieville to support their water supplies and improve water quality. We cannot miss the opportunity to recharge water in wet years that may be increasingly few and far between. We believe that with AB 35, the Department of Water Resources could formalize guidelines and

move money out before the next budget cycle and request that **all groundwater recharge funding be allocated this year.**

Further, the regional water conveyance funding pot should similarly be fully allocated. The amount of total funding for conveyance was far too low for the need in the state and funding for the entirety of the fund could be easily expended with a full allocation.

Support for San Joaquin River Restoration Allocation

CAP supports the Governor's Budget proposal of \$25M (\$9.5M Prop 1 and \$15.5M Prop 4) for the Eastside Bypass Control Structure Fish Passage Rock Ramp Project. This project is a critical component to support fish passage for salmonids and sturgeon to help restore San Joaquin River fisheries.

Fully Fund SAFER and Restore the General Fund Backfill Language

The SAFER program is critical for providing safe drinking water to the many communities and domestic well owners in the San Joaquin Valley who lack access to this basic right. The State Water Board needs consistent funding, as envisioned in SB 200, to consistently move communities towards long-term drinking water solutions. Unfortunately, the Governor's Budget proposal indicated that Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) amounts may be insufficient to provide the needed \$130M this year. We urge the Budget Committee to ensure SAFER is fully funded this year. Additionally, SB 200 included a general fund backfill for SAFER should the GGRF not have sufficient funds for SAFER. This backfill should be amended in trailer bill language to be consistent with the extension of the GGRF last year.

We urge the legislature to deploy funds this year to address the challenges facing the San Joaquin Valley, which will only become more expensive, complex, and detrimental to people, the environment, farms, and businesses the longer we wait to act. We urge support for more Proposition 4 funding, San Joaquin River Restoration, and fully funding SAFER.

Sincerely,



Ann Hayden
Environmental Defense Fund



Sarah Woolf
Water Wise

Co-Chairs
San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program