

How the MORE WATER Act Would Benefit California

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California faces a growing water supply deficit from warming temperatures and more severe droughts, limitations on groundwater pumping, and other factors. The California Department of Water Resources has estimated that this deficit is six million acre feet of water per year by 2040, which is enough drinking water for 36 million people.

The MORE WATER Act would provide Federal funding assistance and Federal programmatic approvals for four types of water supply projects that benefit not only farms and cities but also the environment:

- **Large-scale water recycling:** Multiple California water districts in LA, the Bay Area and San Diego have large-scale water recycling projects (costing \$500 million or more) that together could create over half a million acre-feet of water per year, or enough water for 3 million people. The bill would reauthorize \$450 million over 5 years for a program that provides Federal grants for up to 25% of the cost of these projects. This is the same funding level as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding level for this program, which expires this year. Water recycling benefits the environment as well as water supply by reducing the need to divert water from rivers and the Delta.
- **Conveyance:** More and more of California's precipitation is coming from a few major atmospheric rivers. The capacity of the California Aqueduct and other large San Joaquin Valley canals has been reduced by subsidence, and we must restore the canals' capacity in order to be able to capture this precipitation from atmospheric rivers and move it to places where it can be stored in the ground. The bill would authorize \$500 million over 5 years for a new multi-benefit conveyance program that would provide Federal grants for up to 30% of the cost of restoring these canals, plus Federal grants for up to 20% of the projects' cost to provide environmental benefits or drinking water benefits for the many low-income communities in the San Joaquin Valley and southern California.
- **Water recycling:** California has dozens of water recycling projects, and the bill would reauthorize \$550 million over 5 years in Federal grants for up to 25% of the projects' cost (the same funding level as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding level for this program, which expires this year). The bill also increases the cap on funding of individual projects to \$50 million.
- **Environmental restoration:** The bill reauthorizes \$250 million over 5 years for a program that funds in-stream and floodplain habitat restoration and other projects to benefit threatened and endangered salmon and other fish species.

Besides the Federal funding authorized by the bill, its programmatic approvals for Bureau of Reclamation projects are also significant. **Programmatic approvals are a time-saving measure in approving individual projects without reducing environmental reviews.** To qualify, projects must meet criteria such as complying with environmental laws and demonstrating feasibility and a sufficient non-Federal cost share. Programmatic approvals avoid the need for Congress to enact specific bills for every project – which can trim 5 years or more off the process of developing projects and getting Federal funding.