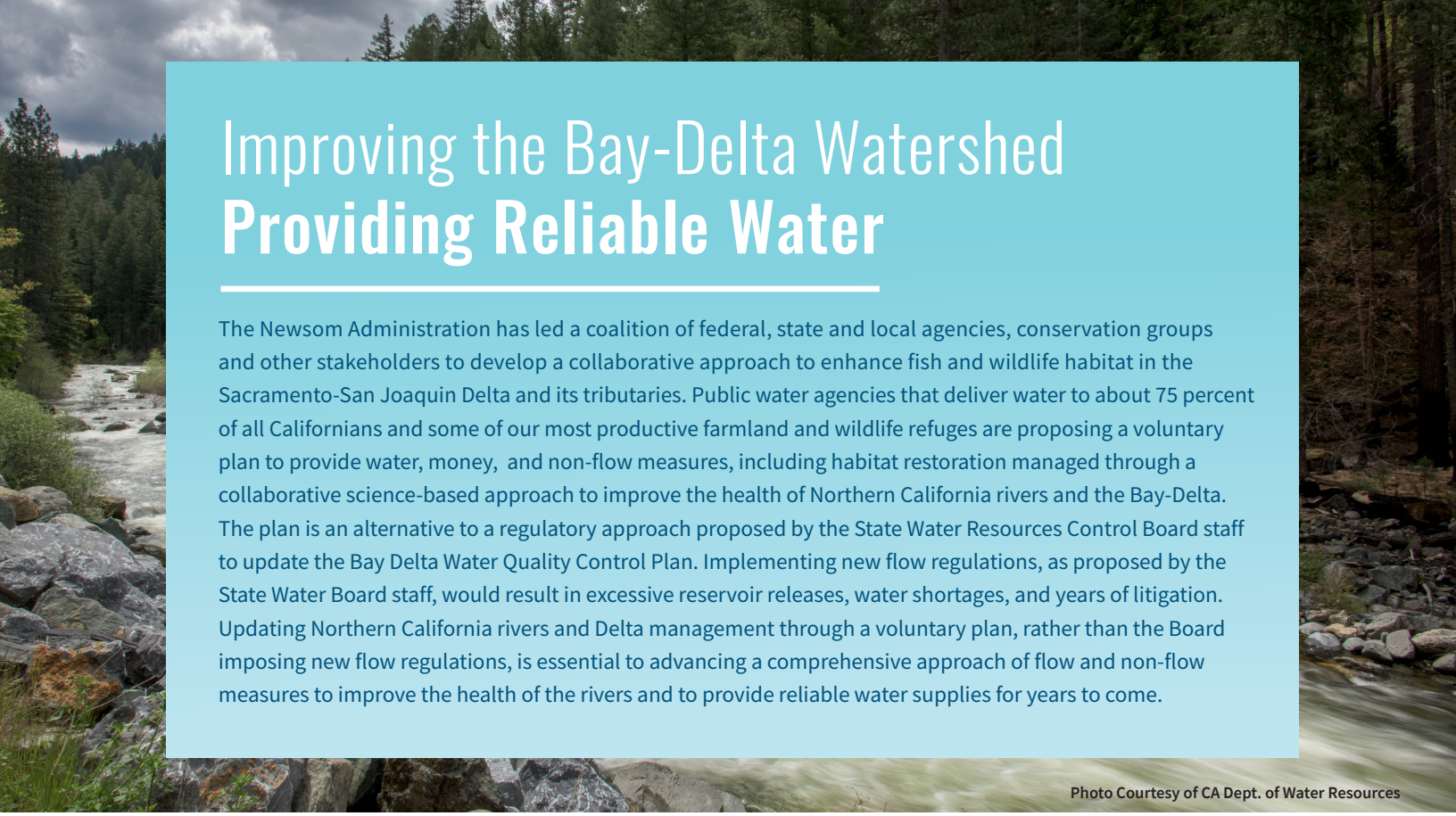


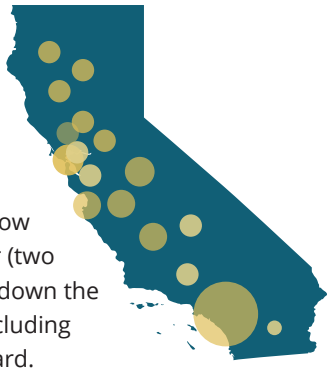
Improving the Bay-Delta Watershed
Providing Reliable Water

The Newsom Administration has led a coalition of federal, state and local agencies, conservation groups and other stakeholders to develop a collaborative approach to enhance fish and wildlife habitat in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its tributaries. Public water agencies that deliver water to about 75 percent of all Californians and some of our most productive farmland and wildlife refuges are proposing a voluntary plan to provide water, money, and non-flow measures, including habitat restoration managed through a collaborative science-based approach to improve the health of Northern California rivers and the Bay-Delta. The plan is an alternative to a regulatory approach proposed by the State Water Resources Control Board staff to update the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan. Implementing new flow regulations, as proposed by the State Water Board staff, would result in excessive reservoir releases, water shortages, and years of litigation. Updating Northern California rivers and Delta management through a voluntary plan, rather than the Board imposing new flow regulations, is essential to advancing a comprehensive approach of flow and non-flow measures to improve the health of the rivers and to provide reliable water supplies for years to come.

Photo Courtesy of CA Dept. of Water Resources

The Board: A Key Update

The State Water Resources Control Board, the agency tasked with protecting beneficial uses of water, is reviewing the environmental needs of all Northern California rivers and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Board staff via this process, known as the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan Update, has proposed new flow regulations that would direct 2 million acre-feet of water (two times the size of Folsom Reservoir, possibly even more) down the river channels through the Delta. Many stakeholders, including public water agencies believe there is a better way forward.



Most of California Impacted:

The San Francisco Bay-Peninsula, East Bay, North Bay, Sacramento River Basin, Silicon Valley, Southern California, and San Joaquin Valley farms and communities are all impacted by the decision of the Board. Water reallocated by the Board would result in less surface water for cities, farms, and wildlife refuges, and decrease water for groundwater recharge with severe impacts to California's economy.

Proposed: A Comprehensive Approach to Restoration

It takes more than just reservoir releases to improve conditions for native fish species such as salmon and smelt. Water agencies are proposing a historic suite of integrated actions that is far broader than a flow-only approach to benefit fisheries. This approach will integrate flow and non-flow assets that will be will be governed through a stakeholder governance structure, using science-based decision-making and measures to improve fish and wildlife.

Science

Additional studies, monitoring and evaluation to advance implementation of flow and non-flow measures that will help guide structured decision-making to better meet the needs of fish

Flows

Dedicated block of water (initially up to 750 thousand acre-feet above existing Board requirements) adaptively managed for habitats

Funding

$425 million in new funding for additional flows; an additional $262 million for habitat and collaborative science

Restoration

Improved access to food and habitats through increased floodplain access, and breaches, and habitat improvements throughout the basin.

Conflict or Collaboration? A Comparison

	SWRCB Staff Approach	Comprehensive Approach
New Flows	Imposes drastic reduction in in public water supplies	Voluntarily provides additional flows within the Sacramento and San Joaquin River watersheds and the Delta
Timing	Will likely result in decades of lawsuits, and no timely action	Promotes 15-year partnership among stakeholders and immediate implementation
Restoration	None	Dozens of new improvements throughout the Central Valley and Delta, and protection of terrestrial species
New Science	None	Collaborative governance to incorporate science into decision-making and adjustments over time to improve management actions
New Funding	None	At least $687 million provided by water users for new flows, habitat, science
Cities, Farms, and Rural Communities	Potentially severe economic and land use impacts due to lost supplies	Supply reliability for 75 percent of all Californians, and appropriate balance for other uses

A Historic California Water Partnership

The following water agencies and organizations are among those supporting a collaborative solution to managing Sierra supplies for the good of the rivers, the Bay-Delta, the state economy and urge the Board to adopt the proposed voluntary approach.

Biggs-West Gridley Water District
Richvale Irrigation District
San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority
SWC State Water Contractors
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority
Western Canal Water District
Napa County California
Reclamation District 108
Yuba Water Agency
Grassland Water District
NCWA Northern California Water Association
GCID Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
Central California Irrigation District
Central Coast Water Authority
Westlands Water District
Friant Water Authority
Solano County Water Agency
Kern County Water Agency
Valley Municipal Water District
Mojave Water Agency
River Garden Farms
AVEK
Water District
30 years California Farm Water Coalition
Palmdale Water District