CALIFORNIA'S VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS

A TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH TO HEALTHY RIVERS, FARMS AND COMMUNITIES

For many years, the state of California has led the development of a watershed-wide approach to flows, ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability. Termed "Voluntary Agreements" (VAs), this transformational approach represents a collaborative integration of the latest science, dedicated funding and flow and habitat actions to improve and protect the Delta and its tributaries while preserving adequate water supplies for 35 million Californians.

The Voluntary Agreements are More: Affordable | Flexible | Adaptive | Reliable | Better for California

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Through partnerships and cooperation with state, federal and local water agencies, the VAs set California on a new and innovative path — a remarkable alternative to more limited regulatory approaches that result in prolonged litigation and no benefits to California's environment or economy.

THE LARGEST PURCHASE OF WATER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN CALIFORNIA'S HISTORY

The VAs provide significant investments to improve fish and wildlife habitat conditions throughout the watershed. Many identified environmental improvement projects could be implemented in the next 12-18 months — injecting tens of millions of dollars into the state's economy for habitat restoration projects.

- Up to **825,000 acre-feet of water** for the environment
- **More than 45,000 acres** of instream habitat, new spawning and rearing habitat, floodplain habitat and fish food production

AN UNPRECEDENTED SUITE OF INNOVATIVE FINANCING

Funding for the VAs will come from the state government, federal government and Public Water Agencies, totaling nearly $3 billion at full participation.

- Public Water Agencies: **$522 million** for an environmental water budget, science program and governance
- State of California: **$1.4 billion**
- Federal Government: **$740 million** to assist with science and habitat restoration

SCIENCE-BASED GOVERNANCE & ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The VAs Governance Program will bring together conservation groups, public water agencies and local, state and federal representatives to direct flows and habitat restoration, conduct regular assessments and implement a robust science program. The Governance Program will address changing climate conditions and support research to improve management actions for native fish. Flow and non-flow measures will be adaptively managed through structured decision making and informed by the latest science.

UNPRECEDENTED COMMITMENT & MOMENTUM: THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

Ongoing droughts and increased climate extremes mean Californians cannot afford to take a decades-long regulatory or litigious approach — time is not on our side. California's economy and environment needs a holistic, functional flow water management strategy that applies the best science to meet real-time ecosystem needs while providing sustainable water supplies for communities. **The VAs provide this solution.**

NEXT STEPS

Once approved by participating parties, the VAs proposal will be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) for third-party scientific assessment, environmental review and appropriate public input. The Water Board's environmental review will analyze the VAs plan as an alternative for the update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. If approved by the Water Board, the VAs will become the new Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan and will be implemented through binding agreements between the Water Board, the Department of Water Resources and participating water agencies to direct water, funding and habitat restoration efforts to improve the health of California's Bay-Delta ecosystem and its tributaries.

Public Water Agencies are working with a broad coalition of stakeholders, including state and federal agencies, to implement the VAs and ensure that the flow, habitat and funding objectives are realized in terms of real water, real habitat projects and real dollars.

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Northern California Water Association

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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