



Water Storage Investment Program: Pulse Flow Overview

Agenda Item at a Glance

- The [Water Storage Investment Program](#), called “WSIP,” funds the public benefits of water storage projects. The public benefits are funded by Proposition 1, passed by voters in 2014, and Proposition 4, passed by voters in 2024. “Public benefits” are the ways in which water storage projects provide benefits to Californians broadly, such as cleaner water, new recreational opportunities, and improvements to the land and water fish and wildlife need to survive. For WSIP, public benefits are defined by Proposition 1. Water storage projects include reservoirs and underground water storage.
- Three projects in the WSIP will provide pulse flows. Pulse flows are rapid increases in water released through a waterway that can provide ecosystem benefits.
- This is an informational agenda item, important to anyone interested in how pulse flows will work for the WSIP projects that have these benefits.
- At this meeting, staff from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and Department of Water Resources (DWR) will present information on how pulse flows work and the benefits they provide to the environment. Commissioners will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the information presented. Tribes and the public will have an opportunity to make a comment to the Commission before the Commission discusses this agenda item.

Introduction

The California Water Commission (Commission) administers the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) to fund the public benefits associated with water storage projects using funds from Proposition 1, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), codified at Water Code section 79750 *et seq*, and supplemented by funds from Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clear Air Bond Act of 2024 (Proposition 4). The amount of Proposition 1 funding available to a given project is based on the value of the public benefits that the project will provide. All projects must provide an ecosystem public benefit.

Three WSIP projects, Chino Basin Program, Kern Fan Groundwater Storage Project and Willow Springs Water Bank Conjunctive Use Project, propose to provide pulse flows from Lake Oroville, a State Water Project facility, to benefit spring-run Chinook salmon as their ecosystem public benefit. DWR and CDFW have been working with these three “pulse flow projects” to

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understand how to implement the pulse flows utilizing State Water Project facilities. Providing a pulse flow requires a series of decisions and water exchanges to produce an ecosystem benefit. Ultimately, DWR and CDFW will have an agreement that provides for a decision-making process that allows for the pulse flow exchange process without adversely impacting State Water Project operations. Other agreements with the pulse flow projects and their partner State Water Project Contractors are also needed to produce the ecosystem public benefits required by WSIP.

CDFW will present on the benefits of pulse flows and their role in administering these ecosystem benefits. DWR will present the process of how groundwater generated by each project can result in a pulse flow from Lake Oroville through a series of water exchanges.

Background

Through the WSIP, the Commission will invest \$2.6 billion in the public benefits of water storage projects, consistent with the requirements of Proposition 1, Chapter 8. In July 2018, the Commission made Maximum Conditional Eligibility Determinations, which set the amount of Proposition 1 funding potentially available to each project. One project received a final award at the June 2023 Commission meeting. The five remaining WSIP applicants successfully met Proposition 1 interim requirements by the deadline of January 1, 2022, and are working to complete the remaining statutory requirements. These include obtaining permits and completing environmental documents, executing contracts for the administration of public benefits, and completing contracts for non-public benefit cost share. When the applicant completes these requirements, the applicant will return to the Commission for a final award hearing.

This agenda item relates to Goal One of the [Commission's Strategic Plan](#), which calls on the Commission to implement the WSIP to achieve public benefits.

Meeting Overview

At the May meeting, Kristal Davis-Fadtke, Environmental Program Manager from CDFW, and David Okita, Program Engineer from DWR, will provide an overview of the pulse flow process for projects in the WSIP.

This is an informational item.

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