



State Water Project Briefing: Adaptation Strategies and Operations Update

Introduction

This State Water Project (SWP) briefing will provide details on how the SWP will apply the new State Water Project Adaptation Strategy to adapt to changes in hydrology due to climate change. The briefing will also include an overview of the creation and construction of the major elements that make up the SWP and provide an update on current-year SWP water operations.

Background

In August 2025, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released a new report, [State Water Project Adaptation Strategy](#), that examines how a combination of strategies can help the SWP maintain reliable water deliveries to 27 million Californians despite hotter temperatures, more extreme storms, more severe droughts, and higher sea levels. This first-ever report details over a dozen different actions DWR is already taking or evaluating. The plan concludes that, while climate change makes a long-term decline in SWP annual average water deliveries likely, a portfolio of actions can offset much of the decline.

The SWP, constructed in the middle of the last century, consists of 36 water storage facilities and 700 miles of rivers, pipelines, and canals, and supplies water to 27 million people and irrigates 750,000 acres of farmland. The system includes 21 pumping plants, powered by a system of power-generation and power-recovery plants. The SWP also operates the world's tallest water lift – the Edmonston Pumping Plant – which pumps water more than 1,900 feet up and over the Tehachapi Mountains into Southern California.

DWR manages the SWP to ensure adequate water supplies are available under various hydrologic and legal conditions while maintaining operational flexibility. DWR also develops, plans and implements the operation of the SWP in coordination with environmental and regulatory agencies to meet fish, water, and environmental requirements for the Feather River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Goal Five of the [Commission's Strategic Plan](#) directs the Commission to receive briefings on the SWP on an annual basis, and to produce a report, as specified by Water Code section 165, that includes findings and, as appropriate, recommendations for DWR and the Legislature. Through these briefings and reports, the Commission aims to improve the public's understanding of decision making within the SWP and create accountability by using previous findings and recommendations to guide subsequent briefings.

Agenda Item: 9

Meeting Date: September 17, 2025

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Meeting Overview

At the September meeting, DWR Principal Engineer David Gordon will describe the historical context for construction of the State Water Project and the major elements of the project. John Yarbrough, Deputy Director of the State Water Project, will discuss efforts to adapt the State Water Project to hotter temperatures, more extreme storms, more severe droughts, and higher sea levels. SWP Water Operations Manager, Tracy Hinojosa, will provide an update on current-year operations, including the current water year allocation, planning decisions made to date, current hydrology, and considerations for the rest of the year. Following their remarks, the Commission will hear Tribal and public comment and have an opportunity to discuss the information presented.

This is an informational item.

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