



WATERSHED RESILIENCE PROGRAM:

Watershed Collaboration to Combat Climate Change

Climate change is significantly affecting California in complex ways. Each watershed in the state faces its own specific challenges related to climate change, which must be better understood to create effective adaptation strategies. To enhance California's resilience to these impacts, it's essential for different partners within each watershed to work together.

To help California better handle climate change, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) launched the Watershed Resilience Program as part of the 2023 *California Water Plan*. This plan emphasizes the importance of studying climate risks in specific watersheds and creating strategies to adapt to these challenges. It also encourages investments in teamwork and solutions that address multiple sectors within each watershed.

The Watershed Resilience Program is an evolution of the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program that builds on local relationships, trust, and collaborative regional planning while placing a stronger emphasis on climate vulnerability assessment, adaptation planning, watershed-scale collaboration, and equity and inclusiveness. Increased collaboration across water-related sectors- water supply, flood, groundwater, water quality, forest/fire, ecosystem, and land use sectors- is also a priority.

The Budget Acts of 2021 and 2022 provided initial funding for DWR to begin implementing the Watershed Resilience Program.

A set of five 2-year pilot planning projects have been awarded and are underway to apply and test the watershed resilience approach in representative regional watersheds across California and lay the foundation for future efforts.

Pilot watersheds include:



Pilot watersheds receive funding and guidance from DWR to convene broad, inclusive watershed networks of local agencies, Tribal governments, community leaders, non-profit organizations and other partners. DWR envisions equity and inclusion as being a critical focus for watershed networks. These locally-led networks collaborate across their watershed to quantify their greatest climate vulnerabilities, and develop multi-benefit adaptation strategies and projects to increase climate change resilience.

Lessons learned from these pilots will inform future State funding programs. If additional funding becomes available, DWR intends to incentivize this watershed resilience approach in other watersheds throughout the State.

Questions? Please send to dwr_irwm@water.ca.gov

The Watershed Resilience Program works to improve regional climate resilience through integrated watershed management.

