March 12, 2015

North State Water Alliance Update

While 2014 brought historic drought conditions as well as historic actions in the legislature, 2015 may prove to be just as challenging for water managers and the region's residents, farms, and businesses.

The North State Water Alliance continues to provide a framework for alignment throughout the Sacramento Valley and neighboring Sierra Nevada on water issues. The NSWA principles have been adopted by a number of water agencies, municipalities, and business groups and were adopted by SACOG in April 2014 (Attachment A). Three of the founding members of the NSWA are water organizations, Northern California Water Association, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association, and Regional Water Authority, which collectively represent many of the same interests as SACOG members.

The region's water managers continue to prepare for and respond to a fourth year of drought in California. Although water storage in reservoirs is somewhat above this time last year, January was exceedingly dry, and the snowpack is well below average. The region's municipal water suppliers responded to drought in 2014 by using nearly 20% less water than in 2013. In addition, water suppliers identified a number of projects that could make supplies more resilient in an ongoing drought. Many of these projects are completed or underway to serve the region in 2015. Regional Water Authority members were fortunate to receive $9.7 million in state drought grant funding to implement $30 million in projects.

Water managers throughout the region and the Sacramento Valley are engaged in planning to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which passed the legislature in 2014. The Act requires all areas of the state that overlie high and medium priority groundwater basins to create a groundwater sustainability agency by 2017, and to develop a groundwater sustainability plan by 2022. Compliance with the Act will build on many years of progressive groundwater management in the region.

State agencies have released proposed schedules for rollout of grant and loan programs to be funded by Proposition 1, the $7.6 billion water bond that was approved by voters in November. A number of programs could provide fiscal, water supply, and environmental benefits to the SACOG region. The Governor's proposed budget identifies appropriations for programs that include water conservation, recycled water, integrated regional water management, in-stream flow enhancement and other purposes. The deadline for bill introduction in the State Legislature is February 27th. NSWA partners will evaluate water-related legislation for adherence to the aforementioned principles.

DS:ts
Attachment
PRINCIPLES OF THE NORTH STATE WATER ALLIANCE

Adopted by SACOG Board of Directors
April 17, 2014

Preamble

We, the undersigned, support the NSWA, a growing coalition of cities, counties, water providers, business, agriculture and community groups in Northern California, to promote responsible statewide water solutions that protect the economy, environment and quality of life for the north state and for all Californians; and

Whereas, the Sacramento Valley and adjacent Coast Ranges and Sierra Nevada (the North State) is a unique place linked by its water resources; and

Whereas, the North State is committed to balancing economic, environmental and social sustainability for the entire State; and

Whereas, reliable and sufficient supplies of water are critical to a vibrant economy, a healthy environment, and the State’s overall quality of life; and

Whereas, the North State understands and recognizes the importance of regional coordination and collaboration in developing implementable solutions to address existing and future water resources challenges and opportunities; and

Whereas, changing hydrology and sea level caused by climate change, coupled with population growth, forest management practices, and increasingly stringent and rigid regulatory requirements impinge on current water supplies to meet California’s needs; and

Whereas, the currently proposed solutions for the Delta pose serious risks for the water supply reliability of the North State; and

Whereas, the California drought of 2012-2014 underscores the water supply and water management challenges we face and the urgency for action to address these challenges; and

Whereas, in order to protect our region’s interests, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), in partnership with other key regional partners, seeks to promote regional cooperation on water issues, and to be part of a collaborative and comprehensive plan to meet all of California’s water needs.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that in partnership with other key regional partners, SACOG supports actions based on the following principles of the NSWA:

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**Principles**

Water rights and area-of-origin protections must be recognized and preserved through water supply assurances to guarantee reliable supplies for all beneficial water uses and environmental needs.

The North State will continue to aggressively pursue water conservation and efficiency measures that promote our regional self-reliance and water supply reliability.

We will continue to invest in water supply development, water recycling and reuse, increased water storage capacity, and other water management projects and programs that are cost effective and improve our regional self-sufficiency, and that serve to benefit other regions of the State.

State and federal actions must respect and not impinge on or preempt the authority and responsibilities of cities, counties, and other local agencies to take actions in the interests of the jurisdiction and its citizens.

The North State will continue to work with state and federal governments to develop a comprehensive operational plan for statewide water supply reliability, including investing in regional water supply reliability and self-reliance. This operational plan must also demonstrate how the state’s water system will meet future water demand while adapting to the effects of climate change. This plan should address adaptive management changes in the current rigid regulatory requirements.

Stakeholders in the North State must be fully involved in all aspects of the development of a Delta solution and other state and federal water policies and operations that affect the region.

We support a Delta solution that is: part of a comprehensive statewide solution to address California’s long-term water supply challenges; is based on sound science to ensure it is effective and implemented in an equitable manner; requires the beneficiaries of any actions associated with a Delta solution to fully fund the costs of such actions; avoids or fully mitigates negative economic, environmental, or societal impacts to areas in our region; and, provides a meaningful role in governance for representatives of the North State.

In summary, we support a statewide plan for water reliability that supports the economic, environmental, and social needs of all of California. Such a plan must support the diverse rural and urban, agricultural, environmental, recreational, power generation, and flood protection needs of the North State.