



California Water Plan 2028

Advisory Committee Meeting 1 Day 2 Meeting Summary

May 14, 2026 | 8:30 AM–12:30 PM

Introduction

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) convened the first Advisory Committee (AC) meeting for California Water Plan (CWP) 2028 on May 13 and 14, 2026, which was held in person in Sacramento.

The AC consults with DWR and provides recommendations to help inform development of the CWP. The following meeting summary provides a brief overview of the first AC meeting.

This meeting summary provides a high-level summary of discussions and is not a transcript of the meeting. To view recordings, presentation slides, and materials from the meeting, please visit the [CWP's Advisory Committee Meetings webpage](#).

Day 2 Meeting Overview

Day 2 Meeting Objectives

- Provide a brief overview on the Senate Bill (SB) 72 strategies for implementation and reflect on how CWP 2028 can reinforce opportunities and help address barriers
- Learn more about the CWP 2028 engagement framework, including the role and proposed approach for the Tribal Advisory Committee, State Agency Team, Technical Working Group, and Regional Forums
- Discuss and confirm AC member roles in Regional Forums
- Discuss SB 659 Work Plan and engagement strategy
- Gather AC feedback on next steps for planning future meetings

Day 2 Meeting Highlights

- **An integrated, multi-strategy approach will be essential to achieving the 9-million acre-foot (MAF) target.** After hearing presentations on SB 72 strategies, the AC recognized that no single strategy is sufficient and that success will depend on a diverse portfolio of solutions tailored to regional needs.
- **DWR is committed to meaningful engagement through multiple venues.** DWR is developing a communications plan to raise awareness, prioritize transparency, and reach broader audiences.
- **AC members were supportive of DWR's approach to Regional Forums and emphasized the need for coordinated and tailored engagement.** There was strong interest in a hybrid meeting format and holding more than one meeting per region. AC members elevated the need for clarity on modeling, sensitivity to regional differences, and the importance of local knowledge.
- **A Groundwater Recharge Working Group will be established to advance SB 659.** The working group will support development of groundwater recharge recommendations, help align SB 72 with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) outcomes, and help identify opportunities to advance recharge statewide. AC members were invited to participate.
- AC members expressed a preference for **two half-day sessions** for the next AC meeting, and most AC members expressed interest in **a water tour** before the next AC meeting.
- In future meetings, AC members would like to see **more time devoted to discussions and feedback**, deeper dives into **project evaluation criteria**, and the **Water Evaluation and Adaptation Planning (WEAP) model**, and AC members would appreciate having provisions during the meeting.

Day 2 Quote of the Day

"Our barriers are our opportunities."

— Karen Cowan, Executive Director, California Stormwater Quality Association

Day 2 Meeting Summary

Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Speaker(s): Emily Finnegan, Lead Facilitator, Stantec and Cindy Messer, Lead Deputy Director, DWR

Emily Finnegan welcomed AC participants and provided a review of the day's meeting objectives. The purpose of Day 2 was to provide an overview of SB 72 strategies, share about the CWP 2028 engagement framework, discuss AC member roles in Regional Forums, discuss the SB 659 Work Plan and gather feedback for planning the next AC

meeting. Emily reminded meeting participants that public comment would occur at the end of Day 2.

Cindy Messer, Lead Deputy Director, DWR provided a warm welcome to the AC Day 2 participants.

Lightning Round Presentations: California Water Plan Strategies for Implementation

Speaker(s): Joel Metzger, Deputy Director, Statewide Water Resources Planning, DWR; Grant Davis, Sonoma County Water Agency; David Guy, Northern California Water Association; Lisa Haney, Orange County Water District; Juan Guerreiro, City of San Diego; Levi Johnson, Bureau of Reclamation; Erik Ekdahl, State Water Resources Control Board; Mike Myatt, Environmental Defense Fund; Tia Fleming, California Water Efficiency Partnership; Karen Cowan, California Stormwater Quality Association

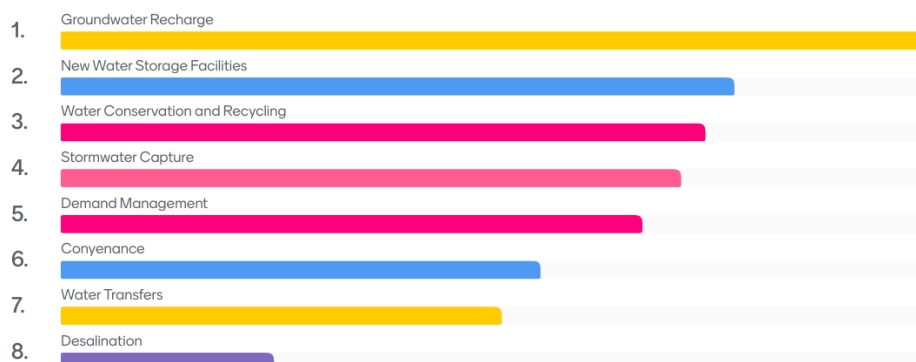
Joel Metzger introduced the lightning round presentations on SB 72 strategies for implementation. Presentations were given by AC members and expert speakers on the following topics:

- Surface Water Storage and Operations
- Water Storage Investment Program
- Groundwater Recharge
- Water Recycling
- Desalination
- Conveyance
- Water Transfers
- Demand Management
- Water Conservation
- Stormwater Capture

To review the presentations from the session, view the [Day 2 meeting slides](#). The presentation recordings are also available at the time stamp [linked here](#).

After presentations, an interactive poll was conducted to gather AC member input on the strategies presented. Results from the poll are summarized below.

1. Which strategies are most promising for the communities you represent? Rank in order of priority (1 = Most promising, 8= Least promising).



2. What are some key takeaways looking at these strategies together?

- **We have the solutions** and the tools in our toolbox to reach the 9-MAF interim target.
- **Storytelling, public outreach, and political will** be critical to advancing these strategies.
- We have known “**what**” to do for a long time. We need to collectively figure out the “**how.**”
- **Water rights and regulations** need to adapt.
- **Think big and integrated;** these strategies are interrelated and partnerships are key.
- We **lack funding.**
- **Groundwater banking and forecast-informed reservoir operations** need additional investment.
- We need to **recognize regional differences.**
- A shared **understanding of the water accounting** and data will be important.
- “**Really challenging**” does not equal “**impossible.**”

CWP 2028 Engagement Framework

Speakers: Emily Finnegan, Lead Facilitator, Stantec and Janet Barbieri, JB Comm

Emily Finnegan shared the CWP Engagement Framework, including the purpose and membership of each of the following groups:

- State Agency Team
- California Water Commission
- Regional Forums
- CWP Advisory Committee
- Tribal Engagement and Consultation, including the Tribal Advisory Committee
- Technical Working Group
- Topic-Based Groups and Workshops, including the Groundwater Recharge Working Group
- Statewide Plenary

To learn more about the CWP engagement, see the [California Water Plan 2028 Engagement Venues](#) one-pager or refer to the [Day 2 meeting slides](#).

Janet Barbieri from JB Comm provided information on the communication plan being developed for the CWP. The goal of the CWP communications plan is to raise awareness and build an understanding of what the CWP is trying to accomplish, elevate the venues for engagement and communications, make participation meaningful, and prioritize transparency and access for disadvantaged and underrepresented communities. A communications toolkit is being developed for AC members to share with their networks with the hopes of reaching broader audiences.

An interactive poll took place to gather input on conferences and events the CWP team should attend. Results from the poll are summarized below.

1. What events or conferences would you recommend the CWP team attend?

- Urban Water Institute Conference
- Environmental Water Resources Institute
- World Ag Expo
- Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Advisory Group Meetings
- California Data Summit
- California Water Policy Conference
- Salmon Restoration Federation
- California Association of Sanitation Agencies
- Groundwater Resources Association Western Groundwater Congress
- Groundwater Resources Association Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Summit
- Groundwater Leadership Forum
- Groundwater Collaborative Environmental Justice Groups
- River Rally
- Association of California Water Agencies
- California Stormwater Quality Association
- American Water Works Association
- California WaterReuse Conference
- California Water Efficiency Partnership Plenary Events
- Wildfire Taskforce
- Sustainable Agriculture Summit
- North Coast Resource Partnership
- Water Education Foundation Water Summit
- Farm Bureau Meetings
- California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance Conference
- Mid-Pacific Water Users' Conference
- California Technical Assistance Providers Fair
- Wastewater Needs Assessment Advisory
- California Forward's Economic Summit

Emily then shared information on the purpose, approach, and focus of the Regional Forums. Regional forums are intended to help DWR validate existing data, identify local issues and priorities, and discuss regional adaptation strategies and projects to help achieve the 9-MAF target. DWR will aim to have at least 10 Regional Forums (i.e., one for each hydrologic region, though more may be added). Five of the hydrologic regions with baseline modeling results are anticipated to have several Regional Forums as part of CWP 2028: Sacramento River, San Joaquin River, Tulare Lake, San Francisco Bay, and South Coast.

Each region will have several Forum meetings. For each region, the first Regional Forum will focus on providing background on the CWP and SB 72, discussing regional priorities and challenges, reviewing the initial database of projects, and discussing the project selection criteria. The second Regional Forum will discuss initial modeling results and refine projects. Additional Regional Forums will be held to share modeling results and discuss regional

recommendations. Emily requested that AC members start thinking about their level of interest in supporting a Regional Forum.

AC members were instructed to join one of five breakout groups that represent the hydrologic region(s) where they work or represent. Each breakout group was asked to answer the following questions:

- What questions do you have about this approach and the proposed Regional Forum key topics?
- What advice do you have for the DWR team as we begin planning for these Regional Forums?

Facilitators then provided a summary of discussions at each group which are summarized below.

Group	Summary
Group 1: South Coast, Colorado River, and South Lahontan	AC members generally agreed with DWR’s approach to Regional Forums. Given the region’s large population, they recommended holding meetings in Los Angeles, Orange County, Inland Empire and San Diego. There were conversations about the value of in-person and virtual meetings. The group emphasized the importance of clearly defining the problem to be addressed at both the state and regional levels and expressed interest in seeing stronger alignment across regions. DWR was encouraged to prioritize trust-building and to develop a diverse portfolio of strategies. AC members also cautioned that there may be push back at the local level and advised being mindful of content when engaging with technical water experts.
Group 2: North Coast and Central Coast	AC members raised several questions about when DWR would come to the region and if there was opportunity for local managers to further develop their project lists, since modeling work would be later for these regions. Many wanted to know who the intended audiences would be for these Regional Forums, who would weigh in on project priorities, and how local data and quantified gaps will influence the process. There were many ideas on hybrid meetings and one suggestion to host regional “watch parties” where small groups could convene separately in a sub-region to watch a presentation and then provide feedback within their sub-region. They also encouraged DWR to partner with existing networks, such as the Farm Bureau, to promote Regional Forums. Additional questions focused on how modeling would address issues like seawater intrusion and drinking water needs, as well as how DWR plans to address gaps in Groundwater Sustainability Agency representation along the North Coast.
Group 3: Tulare Lake and San Joaquin River	DWR was advised to understand the regional differences between users in Tulare Lake and San Joaquin River regions and to consider meeting with smaller groups of users. AC members recommended building upon engagement forums that already exist such as the Water Blueprint. The group emphasized the need for consistent, ongoing communication to avoid overwhelming stakeholders with large volumes of information at meetings. Frequent engagement with environmental justice and disadvantaged

Group	Summary
	communities was highlighted. AC members stressed the importance of producing an actionable plan and urged DWR to be thoughtful about terminology, such as terms like “demand management,” which may raise concerns among agricultural users. They also noted the need to clearly define how affordability will be measured. Questions were raised about how the CWP will align with programs such as flood-managed aquifer recharge (Flood-MAR).
Group 4: Sacramento River, Delta, and San Francisco Bay	The group posed questions regarding how overlapping regions and projects would be managed, how the CWP would be operationalized, and how constraints in water allocations would be addressed. There were also several questions about the structure and assumptions of the modeling approach. Members recommended holding more than one meeting within the region and emphasized the value of providing background materials and discussion questions in advance to support more informed participation.
Group 5: Sierra Nevada and North Lahontan	This group focused on how to ensure the CWP is relevant across all regions of California, including smaller and rural communities that are often underrepresented. They recommended holding at least two meetings in the region and offering hybrid formats to improve accessibility and participation.

SB 659 Work Plan and Engagement Strategy

Speakers: Steven Springhorn, Supervising Engineering Geologist, DWR

Steven Springhorn presented on the origins of SB 659, and how it will be included in CWP 2028 and CWP 2033. SB 659 requires DWR to develop actionable recharge recommendations and incorporate long-term solutions for expanding groundwater recharge facilities statewide. This information will be summarized in a groundwater recharge appendix to CWP 2028. A Groundwater Recharge Working Group will be formed to support development of the recommendations, align SB 72 with SGMA outcomes, identify opportunities and barriers, and inform State water strategy. DWR would like AC members to participate in the working group and requested that AC members reach out if they are interested. The working group will be launched in summer 2026 and is anticipated to meet on a quarterly cadence.

The AC was then provided time for comments and questions, which are summarized below.

Comment/Question	DWR Response
Is the term “recharge” used interchangeably with “storage” as far as using the aquifer as a place to deposit water in wet years? If so, accounting will be critical to understand how recharge connects to the statewide 9-MAF target.	DWR confirmed that “recharge” includes water stored underground and agreed that accounting will be critical. DWR has been working with the California Water Data Consortium to support their groundwater accounting platform and pilots. Some of the use cases are in SGMA implementation, where local agencies are using water accounting platforms

Comment/Question	DWR Response
	to understand allocations as they bring their water budgets into balance.
How does DWR plan to work with academic institutions and researchers who are working on groundwater recharge studies?	DWR confirmed that academic institutions, technical organizations, and industry experts will be included and engaged in the working group. Academic institutions are on the cutting edge of research and are helping to train the next generation of water managers, so they are critical for this work.
Is DWR capturing historical and ongoing conjunctive use projects as part of this work? Will water agencies who have been doing conjunctive use for decades be captured in this CWP?	Conjunctive use is being included in SB 659 and is typically referred to as “in-lieu” recharge as defined by California Water Code. Conjunctive use, or the practice of keeping water in the ground, is considered one of the most efficient mechanisms of recharge. DWR has seen great examples of this, even in early SGMA implementation. Local agencies reported pumping half as much groundwater in WY 2023 as they did in the droughts of WY 2022 and WY 2015. Increased recharge in WY 2023 led to decreased groundwater pumping, which contributed to increased groundwater levels, less subsidence, and fewer dry wells. DWR will work with local agencies that have historically performed this work to capture the success stories of where successful conjunctive use has occurred.
Has DWR considered working with industry and technology partners who can support artificial intelligence and better data?	DWR is working to form more partnerships and would like to hear from AC members about how they have established working relationships with industry and technology groups to help advance data management. DWR has worked with NASA and NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) for many years and is supporting OpenET, which works with Google Earth Engine. DWR encouraged AC members to bring up topics like this to the Groundwater Recharge Working Group.

Future Advisory Committee Meetings and Next Steps

Speaker: Emily Finnegan, Lead Facilitator, DWR

AC members were asked to answer an interactive poll to gather feedback on future meetings. Results from the poll are summarized below.

1. Do you have a preferred format for future AC meetings?

- 14 preferred two half-day sessions (afternoon session followed by a morning session)
- 9 prefer one full-day session (8:30 AM–5:00 PM)

2. Meeting 2 is anticipated to take place in Southern California in August. Which of the following dates are you available for?

- 17 are available for August 19–20, 2026
- 15 are available for August 25–26, 2026
- 13 are available for August 26–27, 2026
- 13 are available for August 18–19, 2026

3. Meeting 3 is anticipated to take place in the Fresno/Visalia area in October or November. Which of the following dates are you available for?

- 18 are available for November 4–5, 2026
- 14 are available for October 28–29, 2026
- 13 are available for November 3–4, 2026
- 9 are available for October 28–29, 2026

4. Would you be interested in a water tour occurring BEFORE or AFTER the next AC meeting(s)?

- 20 prefer a tour before the meeting
- 8 prefer a tour after the meeting

5. What are you most excited about for the next AC meeting?

- More time devoted to discussions and conversations with AC members
- Opportunities to brainstorm ideas and provide feedback
- SB 659 updates
- WEAP model, modeling assumptions, and project evaluation criteria
- Hearing from different voices, perspectives, and organizations
- Coffee and food
- Field trips

Read It and WEAP

Speakers: Eric Tsai, Supervising Engineer, DWR

Eric Tsai, Supervising Engineer, DWR, shared a brief overview of the [draft WEAP model one-pager](#) developed by DWR that highlights the capabilities of the model, how DWR will use the model for CWP 2028 and CWP 2033, and background information on why the WEAP model was selected by DWR. This one-pager will be discussed in greater detail during the next AC meeting.

Public Comment

Public comments received in person and written public comments submitted to DWR by email are summarized in Appendix B.

Closing Remarks

Speaker: Joel Metzger, Deputy Director, Statewide Water Resources and Planning, DWR

Joel Metzger shared takeaways from Day 1 and 2 and thanked the AC for their participation. Joel reflected on a few key words that summarize what makes this 2028 CWP different:

- **Relevancy** to the moment we're in
- **Action** as a thread connecting all the things we're doing
- **Implementation** and moving beyond just the planning work
- **Optimism** and the belief that this is actually possible

Joel also highlighted what he heard we need as a State, including:

- **Flexibility** with water solutions
- **Reliability** to count on our water supply
- **Affordability**
- **Alignment** across sectors
- **Transparency** and the trust that these things will get done
- **Courage**

Joel challenged the AC to come at this work with courage and to help DWR move forward with actions that will be meaningful to all Californians and the environment.

Meeting Adjourns

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.