



Subcommittee on Imported Water

# Water Quality Control Plan Update

Item 3b

August 26, 2025

## Item 3b

# Update to Subcommittee on Imported Water

## Subject

Water Quality Control Plan Update, including the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

## Purpose

Review content of the July 2025 Draft Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta

## Next Steps

Metropolitan staff to provide written comments to the State Water Board

# Progress Toward a Durable Water Quality Control Plan

News for Immediate Release\_\_

## Metropolitan issues statement on inclusion of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes in Water Quality plan

July 24, 2025

*Metropolitan Water District Assistant General Manager John Bednarski issues the following statement regarding the State Water Board's [release today](#) of a new draft update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan that includes the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program:*

"The State Water Board has taken an important step today toward building a more sustainable Bay Delta by including the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program in the revised Water Quality Control Plan. We're grateful to our state, federal and local agency partners who have worked together to develop these solutions to support healthy ecosystems and reliable water supplies.

"This transformational approach allows water managers to respond to challenges in the Bay Delta watershed more comprehensively, using a variety of tools. It incorporates science-based decision-making, improved metrics and monitoring, and dedicated funding sources to improve habitats, enhance water quality and increase flows at optimal times.

"We appreciate the hard work and collaboration of State Water Board staff in refining the WQCP. We look forward to reviewing the plan in detail."

# Agenda

- Overview of the Bay-Delta WQCP
- Summary of Proposed Updates
- Public review and comment periods
- Next Steps



# Background Bay-Delta WQCP



## Why

- Review of Bay-Delta WQCP required under state and federal law
- Changes to the WQCP can have significant consequences to statewide water management

## What

- Designates beneficial uses of water
- Sets water quality objectives for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses
- Establishes program of implementation for objectives
- Includes monitoring, special study, evaluation, and reporting to assess compliance and effectiveness of implementation actions

# Draft Update to Bay-Delta Plan **New Components**

## **Newly Designated Beneficial Uses**

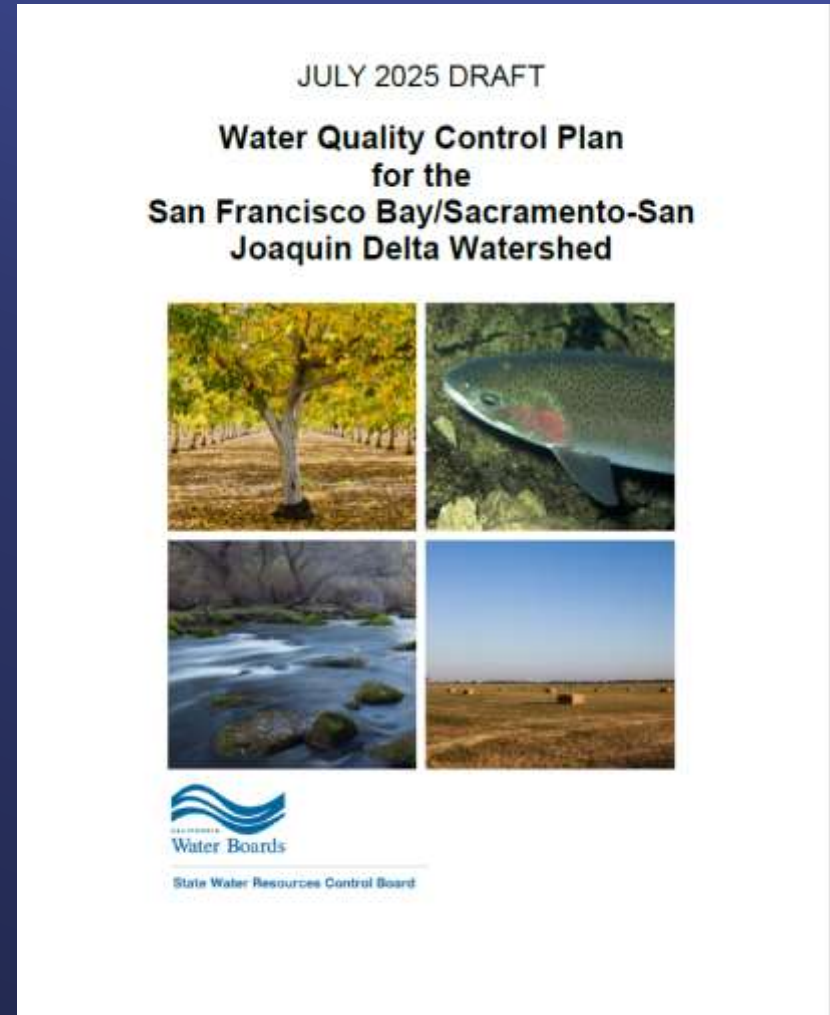
- Tribal Tradition and Culture (CUL)\*\*
- Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB)
- Subsistence Fishing (SUB)

## **New Narrative Water Quality Objectives**

- Native Fish Viability
- Outflow
- Inflow Based Outflow
- Interior Delta Flows
- Cold Water Habitat

## **New Implementation Pathways**

- Flow Based on percent of hydrograph
- Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program



# Tribal Beneficial Uses of Water

## Tribal Tradition and Culture (CUL) :

Uses of water that supports the cultural, spiritual, ceremonial, or traditional rights or lifeways of California Native American Tribes, including, but not limited to: navigation, ceremonies, or fishing, gathering, or consumption of natural aquatic resources, including fish, shellfish, vegetation, and materials.

Tribal **Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB)** and **Subsistence Fishing (SUB)** to be adopted by Water Board but not designated in the Bay-Delta at this time.



Photo: Courtesy of DWR

# New Narrative Water Quality Objectives

- Intended to protect native fish species.
- Designed to recognize that multiple approaches, including flow and non-flow, are appropriate implementation actions.





# Implementation Path

## Flow Based Percent of the Hydrograph

Continuation of proposed requirement of **55% of unimpaired flow (UIF)**

Due to water supply and cold-water management concerns, modifications possible:

- Water Supply Adjustments (WSA): Lower UIF available in drier hydrology based on the river index or reservoir levels.
- Flow shaping
- Cooperative Agreements
- Adaptive Management

# Implementation Path

## Flow Based Percent of the Hydrograph

### Cold Water Habitat Narrative Objective

- Minimum September **carryover storage requirement**
- Downstream **temperature requirement** and compliance location
- Reservoir operations decision making process that includes the Water Board and fishery agencies
- Evaluation of additional temperature management actions that include, at a minimum, fish passage, temperature control device, and riparian habitat.

# Implementation Path

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

- Comprehensive approach focused on flows serving ecological functions in combination with physical habitat restoration
- Extensive science, monitoring, and reporting structure
- Transparent governance, adaptive management and multiple funding sources including public water agencies and State/Federal funding



# Implementation Path

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program



- **New Flow**  
Up to 700,000 acre- feet
- **New Physical Habitat**  
More than 47,000 acres
- **Eight Year Initial Program Term**  
Can be extended



# Implementation Path

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program



Tides End Multi Benefit Restoration Project in Yolo Co. (April 2024, DWR)

- **Flow Accounting** to show that HRL flows are additive
- **Actions to improve temperatures** to the extent possible and avoid redirected impacts
- **Habitat Accounting** to show physical habitat design is appropriate and habitat is functioning
- **Science Program and robust monitoring** to support adaptive management and to evaluate effectiveness

# Participants & Responsibilities

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

- Participation and implementation responsibility broader than SWP-CVP, participating entities include: Sacramento, Feather, Yuba, American, Mokelumne, Tuolumne, Friant and Putah Creek tributaries.
- Responsibilities under all new objectives currently limited to implementation of existing WQCP and HRL commitments, including flow and non-flow measures
- Water users subject to \$10/AF HRL program surcharge to support implementation, including water purchases.

# Performance Review

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

### Evaluation at Year Six

- HRL Parties request continuation of HRL beyond eight-year term
- Public workshop regarding program performance
- Draft Water Board Staff recommendation subject to public comment period
- Water Board determination

Green Light	Yellow Light	Red Light
Program continues without significant modifications	Program continues with modifications	HRL parties may be subject to regulatory provisions, including unimpaired-flow requirements

# Performance Review

## Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

**The HRL program can be modified or terminated before year eight due to:**

- Failure or inability to implement HRL commitments such as flow, habitat or other provisions consistent with the program of implementation
- Significant evidence that continuing implementation of the HRL program will not provide reasonable protection of beneficial uses or will jeopardize the continued survival of native fishes.



# Next Steps

## Water Quality Control Plan

Review and comment on July 2025 Draft

- Written comments due September 29, 2025
- Two hearing days: September 25 and 26, 2025

If current schedule is maintained, the State Water Board could complete its update by the end of 2025.

