THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Committee Item
INFORMATION

Legislation and Communications Committee

10/12/2026 Committee Meeting

6a

Subject

Update on the Association of California Water Agencies' "Vision for Our Water Future" Initiative

Executive Summary

Earlier this year, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) launched "Vision for Our Water Future" (Vision), a statewide initiative designed to elevate water as a top priority for California's next governor, his administration, and the legislature. The initiative recognizes that water agencies are on the front lines of the state's most pressing challenges —including droughts, floods, climate resilience, housing, economic development, and aging infrastructure—but that meaningful progress requires a strong partnership between the state, regional and local water suppliers. Metropolitan is actively participating in the process to develop the recommendations for the Vision's solutions-focused framework on how California can improve water supply reliability and affordability. The recommendations are informed by a statewide poll of California voters that ACWA conducted in June 2026 to assess views of key water issues.

ACWA plans to present the recommendations to its board of directors for consideration and adoption in early 2027. Once adopted by ACWA, Metropolitan staff will review the adopted Vision Framework and recommendations with the Legislation and Communications Committee for alignment with Metropolitan's adopted 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles.

Fiscal Impact

None

Applicable Policy

By Minute Item 54347, dated December 9, 2025, the Board adopted the Legislative Priorities and Principles for 2026.

Related Board Action(s)/Future Action(s)

By Minute Item 8-2, dated July 14, 2026, the Board adopted a resolution **(Attachment 1)** supporting the framework for the Association of California Water Agencies' Vision for Our Water Future and requested staff to bring back the ACWA Vision recommendations to review for consistency with Metropolitan's 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles.

On November 9, 2026, the Legislation and Communications Committee will discuss the proposed 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles, and the Board will consider adoption at its meeting on December 8, 2026.

Details and Background

Overview

Earlier this year, ACWA launched "Vision for Our Water Future," a statewide initiative designed to elevate water as a top priority for California's next governor, his administration, and the legislature. The Vision recognizes that water agencies are on the front lines of the state's most pressing challenges—including droughts, floods, climate

resilience, housing, economic development, and aging infrastructure—but that meaningful progress requires a strong partnership between the state, regional and local water suppliers. The Vision provides a solutions-focused framework on how California can improve water supply reliability and affordability (Vision Framework).

The Vision Framework was developed through an extensive member-driven process involving ACWA's approximately 470 public water agency members across all 10 ACWA regions, including representatives from Metropolitan and its member agencies. Input was gathered through member surveys, regional briefings, committee discussions, review of historic strategic priorities, and a General Manager Working Group with representatives from every region of the state. On March 20, 2026, the ACWA Board of Directors unanimously approved the Vision Framework.

Metropolitan and the following eight Metropolitan member agencies have adopted resolutions or submitted statements of support for the Vision or Vision Framework: Calleguas Municipal Water District, Eastern Municipal Water District, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, Three Valleys Municipal Water District, Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, West Basin Municipal Water District, and Western Municipal Water District. The Vision webpage shows there are currently 82 ACWA member agencies and water-focused associations from across the state supporting this effort.

Vision Framework

In June 2026, ACWA conducted a statewide poll of California voters to assess views of key water issues. **(Attachment 2 and Attachment 3)** Working groups were convened to develop more detailed recommendations for the Vision Framework. Metropolitan is actively participating in the three specialized working groups organized around protecting affordability, delivering critical infrastructure, and modernizing water management. Metropolitan's participation helps ensure that the perspectives of Southern California's communities, businesses, and ratepayers are reflected in that statewide conversation.

The Vision Framework outlines four priority actions for the next governor, legislative leadership, and administration officials:

1) Lead on Water

The Vision Framework encourages state leadership to recognize that water is foundational to California's economy, communities, and environment. The Vision calls for strong gubernatorial leadership, clear accountability, and improved coordination across state agencies to advance unified statewide water priorities in partnership with local, regional, and federal water managers.

2) Protect Affordability

The Vision Framework calls for a stronger state partnership in water infrastructure investment. It is asking for the creation of a reliable, sustainable state funding source for water infrastructure and improving existing funding programs, so investments reach programs faster. The framework also recognizes the importance of integrating water infrastructure investments with housing, energy, and climate and hazard mitigation to maximize public benefits and improve project delivery.

3) Deliver Critical Infrastructure

The Vision Framework supports strengthening California's water backbone, including the State Water Project and Central Valley Project, protecting California's Colorado River supplies, improving operational flexibility, and advancing regional water solutions.

4) Modernize Water Management

The Vision Framework supports improving permitting processes, reducing unnecessary regulatory redundancy and inconsistency, increasing certainty and accountability, and advancing flexible and adaptive water operation and management strategies.

The Vision Framework also promotes strengthening water science, data, and technology to improve transparency and support informed decision-making. These priorities are directly connected to Metropolitan's mission and its commitment to maintaining reliable and affordable water service for Southern California. They are intended to

help advance water supply, infrastructure, and resilience projects more efficiently while continuing to meet environmental objectives.

Next Steps for the Vision for Our Water Future

ACWA has been working with its member agencies and association partners to draft recommendations for the Vision Framework under the four priority actions listed above. These recommendations are intended to support the Vision's overarching priorities and a commitment to advance areas of common interest across California's water community. ACWA is also engaging with labor, housing, business, environmental, and environmental justice organizations to identify areas of alignment and opportunities for broader collaboration.

The proposed recommendations will be presented to the ACWA board of directors in early 2027 for consideration and adoption. Upon adoption, ACWA will begin implementation, engaging California's governor, his administration, and the legislature. Metropolitan staff will review the adopted Vision Framework and recommendations with the Legislation and Communications Committee for alignment with Metropolitan's adopted 2027 Legislative Priorities and Principles.

10/2/2026
Carolyn Schaffer *Date*
Group Manager, External Affairs

10/2/2026
Shivaji Deshmukh *Date*
General Manager

Attachment 1 – Resolution 9396 of the Board of Directors of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Supporting the Association of California Water Agencies' "Vision for Our Water Future"

Attachment 2 – FM3 Research Memo on California Voter Views of Water Quality and Supply Issues

Attachment 3 – ACWA Infographic on Californians' Views on Water Quality & Supply Issues

Ref# ea12709754

Attachment 1

REVISED

RESOLUTION 9396

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORTING THE ASSOCIATON OF CALIFORNIA WATER AGENCIES "VISION FOR OUR WATER FUTURE"

WHEREAS, in April 2026, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) launched "Vision for Our Water Future," a member-driven initiative to identify statewide water priorities to inform engagement with California's next Administration; and

WHEREAS, the "Vision for Our Water Future" priorities are a set of recommendations for the next governor, emphasizing the importance of strong leadership, sustainable investment, and coordinated action across all levels of government to secure California's water future; and

WHEREAS, the first priority is to lead on water and elevate water as foundational to California's economy, agriculture, communities, environment, and climate resilience through sustained leadership and coordinated state action; and

WHEREAS, the second priority is to ensure safe and reliable water remains affordable through sustained and predictable funding partnerships and streamlined investment delivery; and

WHEREAS, the third priority is to strengthen and modernize California's water infrastructure, including both built and natural systems, to improve reliability and resilience; and

WHEREAS, the fourth priority is to improve regulatory, operational, and scientific frameworks to enable efficient project delivery and adaptive water management; and

WHEREAS, regional and local water agencies play a critical role in delivering safe and reliable water supplies and are essential partners in implementing statewide solutions; and

WHEREAS, supporting the "Vision for Our Water Future" framework demonstrates a unified commitment to collaborative, science-based, and practical policies that advance a secure and resilient water future for California's communities, farms, economy, and environment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California hereby expresses support for ACWA's "Vision for Our Water Future" framework and affirms its commitment to working collaboratively to advance reliable, affordable, and resilient water supplies.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, at its meeting held on July 14, 2026.

Lois Fong-Sakai

Secretary of the Board of Directors
of The Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California

FM3 RESEARCH | OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

TO Interested Parties

FROM Curtis Below and Miranda Everitt
FM3 Research

RE: California Voter Views of Water Quality and Supply Issues

DATE July 8, 2026

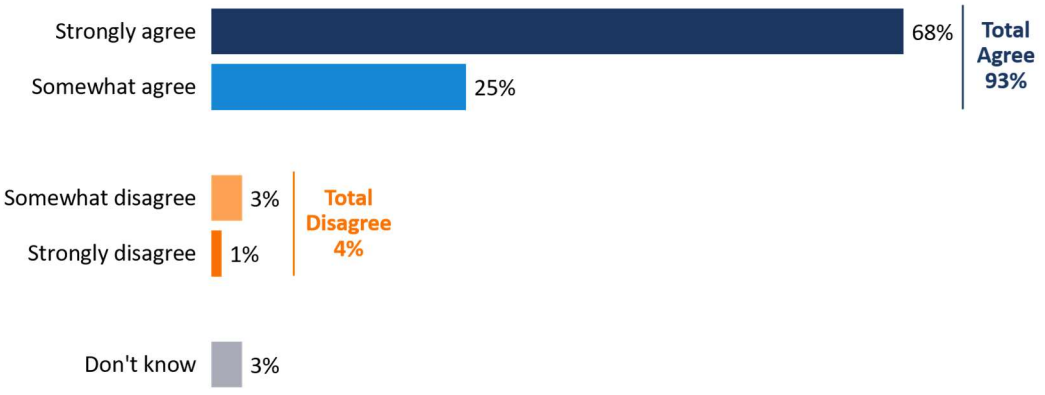
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of California voters[i] to better-understand their views of water quality and supply issues facing the state. **The study found that overwhelming shares of voters see safe and reliable water supplies as critical to achieving some of California's most important goals, including building more housing and supporting agricultural and manufacturing economies**. Seven in ten also support the state investing more in improving water systems, preparing for drought and flooding, and helping to keep water rates affordable – and bipartisan majorities are more likely to support a gubernatorial candidate who makes this a priority.

Key findings include:

- **An overwhelming share of Californians agree that safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California's goals.** Given the statement below, naming goals for our communities, the economy, the environment and public health, fully 93% agree, and more than two-thirds (68%) "strongly agree."

Figure 1: Importance of Safe and Reliable Water Supplies to Addressing California Goals

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California's goals for our communities, the economy, the environment, and public health?"



- **Three-quarters are more likely to support a gubernatorial candidate who makes long-term water supply reliability and affordability a high priority – a view that cuts across party lines.** Seventy-seven percent of California's likely November 2026 voters say they would be "more likely to support" a candidate who makes water a priority. This includes 83% of Democrats, 77% of independents, and 67% of Republicans. Notably, just 3% of California voters are less likely to back a candidate who makes water a high priority.

- **Broad shares see safe and reliable water supplies as important for agriculture, housing construction, manufacturing and climate change response.** As shown in Figure 2, more than four in five voters see safe and reliable water supplies as a major factor supporting agriculture, and broad majorities say the same of the ability to build more housing.

Figure 2: Importance of Water for Aspects of Life

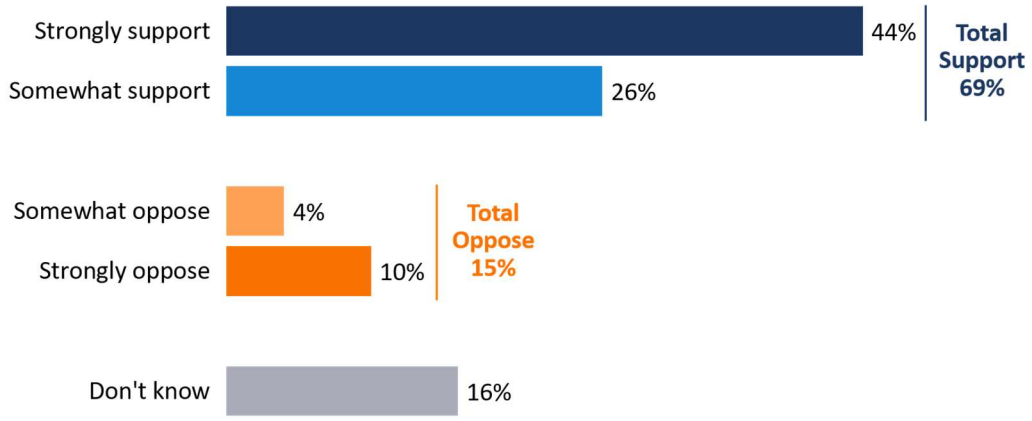
Next, please consider the following aspects of life in California. For each one, please indicate whether having safe and reliable water supplies is a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in contributing to that aspect of life.

Aspect of Life	% Major Factor
Supporting agriculture	81%
The ability to build more housing	60%
Supporting the manufacturing economy	53%
Preparing for climate change	53%

- **Nearly seven in ten support the state investing in improving water systems, preparing for drought and flooding, and helping keep water rates affordable.** Figure 3 shows that 69% support this proposal, and more than two in five (44%) "strongly support" it. Just 15% oppose the idea. Notably, more than four in five Democrats (83%), nearly two-thirds of independents (63%), and a majority of Republicans (52%) back the idea.

Figure 3: Support for State Investment in Water

Currently, California's local water agencies and their customers pay most of the cost of maintaining and upgrading water infrastructure. Would you support or oppose the state providing additional funding to improve water systems, prepare for drought and flooding, and help keep water rates affordable?



- **Overwhelming shares agree that the water system must be upgraded.** Figure 4 below shows that more than four in five voters agree that the water system must be upgraded to address new challenges – and that more specifically, the state must streamline approval to advance critical infrastructure.

Figure 4: Views of Water System Upgrades

Statement	Total Agree	Total Disagree
California's water system must be upgraded to address new challenges such as droughts, floods and changing climate conditions.	88%	5%
California needs to accelerate the construction of water infrastructure to prepare for droughts, floods and changing climate conditions.	87%	8%
California must streamline water project approval to advance critical infrastructure more efficiently.	81%	10%

- **Voters see the need to modernize water infrastructure to protect drinking water and upgrading the state's distribution system.** Figure 5 on the next page shows the shares who see "great need" or "some need" to invest in specifics related to the state's water infrastructure. More than four in five see the need to invest in protecting drinking water and in upgrading the system of levees, canals, pumps and pipes that deliver water to the entire state.

Figure 5: Perceived Need for Funding

Please consider this list of water infrastructure investments. For each one, please indicate if you think California has a great need, some need, a little need, or no real need to invest additional funding in that type of infrastructure.

Priority	Great/Some Need
Modernizing water infrastructure to protect clean drinking water	88%
Upgrading California's water distribution system of levees, canals, pumps and pipes that deliver water to the entire state	84%

In sum, California voters see ensuring the state's water quality and supply as critical to their quality of life and goals for the state – including its economy, climate, and needed housing construction. **They broadly support the state investing in improving water systems, and are more likely to vote for a gubernatorial candidate who makes water a high priority.** Voters also see a strong need to invest in upgrading the state's water infrastructure, especially when it comes to drinking water quality and supply through water delivery infrastructure.

[i] **Methodology:** From June 6-11, 2026, FM3 completed 623 online and telephone interviews with likely November 2026 voters in California. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

VISION FOR OUR WATER FUTURE

Attachment 3

acwa.com/vision

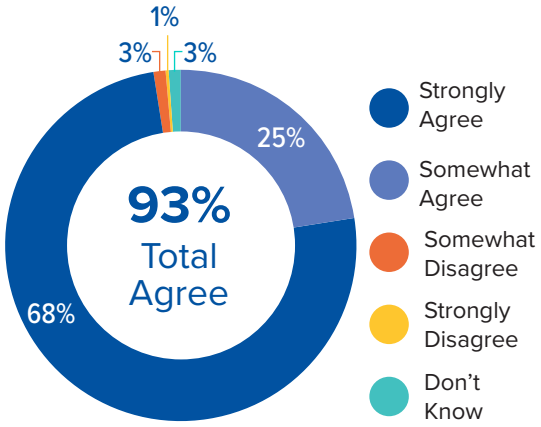
JULY 2026

Californians' Views on Water Quality & Supply Issues

A new statewide survey conducted by the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) and FM3 Research found strong, broad-based and bipartisan support for prioritizing and addressing California's water issues. The polling results reinforce the timing of ACWA's Vision for Our Water Future initiative to elevate water as a top priority for California's next governor, legislators, and state officials.

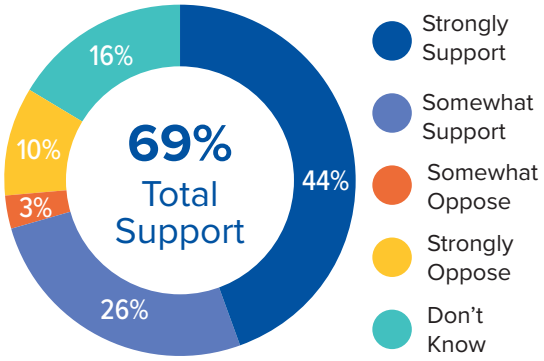
Safe & Reliable Water is Critical to California's Future

"Safe and reliable water supplies are critical to addressing California's goals for our communities, the economy, the environment, and public health?"



Support for State Investment in Water

Should California provide additional funding to improve water systems, prepare for drought and flooding, and help keep water rates affordable?



Where the Greatest Need for Water Investment

% saying California has a great or some need for additional funding

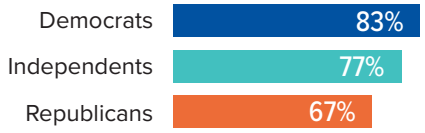
88% Modernize water infrastructure to protect clean drinking water

84% Upgrade California's water delivery system, including levees, canals, pumps, and pipes

Support for a Gubernatorial Candidate Who Prioritizes Water

77% California voters say they are more likely to support a candidate for governor who prioritizes improving California's water reliability and affordability

Across party lines:



Support for Modernizing California's Water System

88% agree that **California's water system must be upgraded** to address droughts, floods, and changing climate conditions. (5% disagree)

87% agree that **California should accelerate construction of water infrastructure** to prepare for droughts, floods, and climate change. (8% disagree)

81% agree that **California should streamline water project approvals** to advance critical infrastructure more efficiently. (10% disagree)

Methodology

From June 6-11, 2026, FM3 completed 623 online and telephone interviews with likely November 2026 voters in California. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

FM3 RESEARCH

ACWA Association of California Water Agencies

ACWA is the largest statewide coalition of public water agencies in the country. Our approximately 470 public agency members collectively are responsible for 90% of the water delivered to cities, farms, and businesses in California.