



THE STATE WATER PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS CALIFORNIA'S STATE WATER PROJECT (SWP) AND WHY IS IT CONSIDERED OUR MOST CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

The SWP is a collection of 700 miles of canals, pipelines, reservoirs and hydroelectric power facilities that deliver water flowing from high in the Sierra Nevada mountains all the way to your tap. Two of every three Californians receives water from the SWP, which provides high-quality drinking water to 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland throughout the state. This complex water grid is the largest state-owned and operated water delivery system in the world, and drives California's quality of life and economic vitality.

WHO ARE THE STATE WATER CONTRACTORS (SWC)?

The SWC is a non-profit association of 27 public water agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that deliver water for use in our homes, schools, hospitals, farms and businesses. These public water agencies help manage our state's precious and finite water resources. The State Water Contractors' mission is to advocate on behalf of our members for improved supply reliability and water quality based on sensible, science-based policies related to the State Water Project that result in sustainable and cost-effective management of the SWP for California's citizens, economy and environment.

WHAT PARTS OF CALIFORNIA DOES THE SWP SERVE WITH HIGH QUALITY DRINKING WATER?

California relies on the SWP as the backbone of the state's water supply delivery system. It serves the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, Southern California, Inland Empire and Desert regions. Without the SWP, California would need to replace 4.2 million acre-feet of water annually to meet state demand, or enough to supply approximately 6.3 million homes for a year.

WHERE DOES THE WATER COME FROM AND HOW DOES THE SYSTEM WORK?

The SWP's water supplies come from the high Sierra Nevada Mountains where rainfall and snowmelt fill rivers and tributaries that travel toward the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which serves as the hub for California's water supply and delivery system. The SWP captures and stores a share of these supplies, which are then delivered through 700 miles of canals and pipelines for use throughout the state.

HOW DOES THE SWP HELP TO BOLSTER CALIFORNIA'S RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change is creating a new normal in California – prolonged periods of drought, reduced snowpack, flashier and more unpredictable rainfall and sea level rise. To meet the challenges ahead, we must continue to invest in maintaining the SWP while seeking every opportunity to develop alternative sources of water supplies. The SWP can store and move water when it is available, so that it can be called upon during drier times and used to support local projects. The SWC are able to deploy a host of innovative water management techniques such as water banking, recycled water, groundwater storage and recharge and local surface water storage. These methods, made possible through the SWP, increase our ability to manage water supply more efficiently, especially in times of drought.

HOW DOES THE SWP BALANCE THE NEED TO ENSURE WATER RELIABILITY WHILE ALSO PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT?

The SWC and its public water agencies are committed to science-based decision-making for the management of water supplies for the environment and the people of California. The SWC invests over \$2 million annually in science and research to study the delicate Delta ecosystem. The SWC aims to manage water actions and decisions in response to real-time conditions in the environment – nature doesn't operate on a calendar and neither should the regulations governing water management. The SWC promotes the use of science to inform the way state and federal regulators maintain a balance between providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.

HOW IS THE SWC WORKING TO PROTECT AND RESTORE HABITAT – ESPECIALLY IN THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA?

The SWC is restoring thousands of acres of habitat as part of our permits to operate the SWP – returning previously threatened species back to their native environments. In addition to the work being done by the SWC and its member agencies, the state has been working with various stakeholders in the Delta to develop Voluntary Agreements that present California's water community with a unique opportunity to combine flow and non-flow actions and to collectively study, test and resolve our differences to protect this environmental treasure – ultimately placing the Delta on a path to a healthier ecosystem while realizing more reliable water supplies.

HOW DOES THE SWP SUPPORT DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES?

The SWP serves millions of people in disadvantaged communities throughout the state, and provides them with the most cost effective and pure source of natural high-quality drinking water. Public water agencies provide subsidies for water rates to members of California's disadvantaged communities, ensuring the SWP can continue to provide California's most affordable water supply.

HOW ARE THE PUBLIC WATER AGENCIES WHO FINANCE THE SWP WORKING TO REDUCE CALIFORNIA'S RELIANCE ON THE DELTA?

Each and every day, more than 27 million California residents and countless businesses depend on Sierra Nevada snowmelt traveling through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for anywhere from 30 to 80 percent of their water supply, which is captured, delivered and stored through the SWP. As our state's water supply is threatened by climate change and the realities of more intense droughts and floods, public water agencies are working to reduce their reliance on water from the Delta by:

- Applying best practices in water supply management to conserve water
- Investing in additional local and regional water supply sources such as water reuse, stormwater capture, recycling and desalination
- Partnering with local municipalities to capture and store stormwater
- Implementing local conservation programs with rebates, financial incentives, and outreach and education
- Collaborating with fellow water agencies to pool our collective knowledge, resources and experience

HOW DOES THE STATE REGULATE AND OVERSEE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE WATER PROJECT IN CALIFORNIA?

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) manages California's SWP water supply, systems and infrastructure in a responsible, sustainable way. The State Water Contractors (SWC) public water agencies contract with DWR to receive and deliver water through the SWP. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) works to ensure water quality standards are met for California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.

HOW DOES CALIFORNIA BENEFIT FROM THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER GENERATED BY THE SWP?

As California looks to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels and increase our investment in renewable energy, the state's electricity grid may become even more dependent on hydro-electric power generated by the SWP.

In addition to providing 60% of its own energy needs with greenhouse gas (GHG) emission-free power, the SWP helps to stabilize the state's electricity grid by using solar energy when it is available mid-day and generating emission-free hydropower during peak hours. This helps California further integrate additional renewable resources into the grid, displaces fossil fuel generation, lowers overall grid emissions and helps to keep water rates low for ratepayers. The SWC is committed to continuing our contributions to a carbon-free California.

WHO PAYS FOR THE SWP?

The SWC public water agencies finance the system's maintenance, operations and capital improvement costs. Ultimately, the SWP is paid for by the 27 million Californians who receive water from the SWP. The water rates paid by ratepayers help to ensure California can continue to meet our needs for high quality drinking water now and into the future. Since the SWP first began delivering water in 1960, Californians have invested billions of dollars to support and expand the backbone of the state's irreplaceable water supply system.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PREPARE THE SWP FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS?

California's water reliability depends on hydrology – the way that water moves from the Sierra to your taps. Climate change is presenting California with tough challenges, but the SWP is tougher. As we look towards the future, we must continue to invest in upgrading and maintaining SWP infrastructure to increase the system's resilience to climate change and seismic activity, including a solution for conveying water through the Delta, and to improve our operations to be as flexible as possible to meet the water needs of both people and the environment.

HOW IS THE SWC WORKING WITH DWR TO STREAMLINE AND IMPROVE WATER MANAGEMENT IN CALIFORNIA?

For more than a decade, public water agencies that receive water allocations from DWR have acknowledged the need to simplify the way water is managed in California. One of the ways the SWC public water agencies can streamline and improve water management is by amending their water supply contracts with DWR. The water management tools contract amendment will provide public water agencies more flexibility to sustainably manage their SWP water supplies, better matching supply and demand throughout the state.

WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE?

California wouldn't be the same without the SWP, a foundational network woven into the fabric of our communities from the Bay Area to San Diego. To learn more about the value of the SWP and what it means to you and your community, check out our website at <https://swc.org/> where you can view our fact sheets, op-eds, blogs, videos and other materials. You can also learn more by visiting DWR's webpage about the SWP at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project>.