Water Supply Challenges During the Drought
Irrigation Association Education Conference
Nov. 13, 2015 • Timothy Quinn, ACWA Executive Director

About ACWA

Who We Represent...
+ ACWA members responsible for 90% of the state’s distributed water

Water Sources & Services
+ Federal, state and local projects
+ Surface and groundwater
+ Agricultural, urban, industrial customers
+ Wholesale, retail
Water in the News

Agricultural sector taking a hit
Drought is accelerating land subsidence
Drought fueling massive fires

Presentation Overview

Managing the drought
Near-term actions
A call to action: California Water Action Plan
Advancing comprehensive statewide solutions
California Drought: A Long History

DROUGHTS ARE A RECURRING FEATURE OF CALIFORNIA’S CLIMATE

Source: PPIC Water Center

2015 Drought: Four Years and Counting

The Bad News:

+ First-ever statewide mandated water use reductions in effect
+ Australian-style “Millennium Drought”


93% Severe
70% Extreme
45% Exceptional
2015 Drought: Impacts and Challenges

+ High temps, reduced snowpack, low flows = “Drought of the Future”
+ Wildfires, hydropower impacts, ecosystem stress, groundwater subsidence
+ Continued drought will present more challenges

Some Good News: Better Prepared For Drought Than Ever Before

+ Huge local and regional investments in past two decades
  + Statewide GPCD reduced
  + Substantial investments in regional storage
  + Increased water marketing

We were prepared!
Managing the Drought

- Emergency regulations, mandatory conservation
- Save Our Water public education campaign
- Increased water marketing to move water where it's needed
- Substantial local/regional investments have protected state's overall economy

2015 Drought: Mandatory Rationing

The Good News

- Unprecedented outreach by ACWA members
- Water suppliers exceeded conservation targets in June, July, August and September
- Californians are stepping up in a big way
2015 Drought: Mandatory Rationing

The Bad News
- Discourages investments in local and regional solutions
- Huge costs for water agencies
- Significant reductions in revenues
- Reality check: water rate increases necessary
- Drought fatigue for customers

Mandatory Conservation: A Divided Road

“Isn’t it good to be prepared?”

“Shouldn’t we all share in the pain?”

We’re all trying to get to the same destination
2015 Drought: Key Takeaways

Urban Sector

- Local, regional investments have paid off, big time!
- Economy largely shielded from impacts
- The “real” story of this drought may be the resilience of our economy

Source: PPIC, August 2015

2015 Drought: Key Takeaways

Agricultural Sector

- Groundwater pumping, water transfers staving off major losses
- 550,000 acres fallowed (6% of total acreage)
- Overall ag economy showing resilience
- Pumping is accelerating subsidence

Source: PPIC, August 2015
2015 Drought: Key Takeaways

Some rural communities at risk

+ 2,000+ dry domestic wells already
+ 100+ small water systems in trouble

Source: PPIC, August 2015

2015 Drought: Key Takeaways

Ecosystems at severe risk

+ 18 fish could face extinction
+ Permanent loss of conifer forests
+ Waterbird mortality

Source: PPIC, August 2015
2015 Drought: Will El Niño Save Us?

- Projections point to fierce El Niño
- Same class as 1982-83 and 1997-98

Near-Term Focus for ACWA:
Emergency Drought Regulations

- 27.3% saved in June; 31.3% in July; 27% in August; 26% September
-Regs in place through February
- State Board work group process
- ACWA engaged, working with member subcommittee
- Advocating more flexible approach that recognizes past investments and emphasizes market
Near-Term Focus for ACWA: More Effective Water Market

- Supports existing water right priorities
- Advocates greater reliance on market (not regulatory) forces
- Commits to working with Administration/others
- Partnership with EDF
- ACWA Tech Advisory Committee developing specific recommendations

Approved by ACWA Board on July 31

What About Longer Term?

- Implement the plan the governor has put on the table
- Drought need not impair the California economy, if we stay prepared
The Comprehensive Water Plan “In a Nutshell”

1. Conserve more
2. Store more
3. Fix the Delta
4. Manage groundwater
5. Provide safe drinking water
6. Invest in habitat and watersheds

ACWA: Keeper of the “Comprehensive” Water Policy Flame

2015 Focus:
+ Investing in Storage
+ Implementing SGMA
+ Modifying Proposition 218?
+ Investing in Habitats and Watersheds
+ California WaterFix in Context
Investing in Storage: Above and Below Ground

- We increased storage capacity by 4 MAF+ in past 20 years
- We need to do at least that in the next 20 years
- Integrating storage / other investments will be key

Implementing SGMA

- SGMA requires:
  - GSAs by 2017
  - GSPs by 2020/2022
  - Sustainable GW basins by 2040/2042
- ACWA working with DWR / locals
- 2016 report on replenishment water will be a big deal
Modifying Proposition 218?

+ Strong interest in addressing current impediments to conservation rates, lifeline rates, stormwater recovery
+ Working with partners on Nov. 2016 ballot measure

Investing in Habitats and Watersheds

+ Building on ACWA's Headwaters Framework
+ Emphasizing importance of headwaters to the state's overall water system
+ CAFWA partnership gaining traction
+ Coalition working in D.C. for better forest management
What About the Delta?

A New Approach

+ If we focus on the Delta alone, all we will have is an argument
+ Sometimes you have to grow a problem to solve it
+ Delta solutions make the most sense in the context of statewide policy
ACWA’s SWAP Supporters

External Affairs effort on California Water Action Plan

Status report on what’s been accomplished, what’s left to do

Put Delta Fix in context of true statewide plan

Questions?

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