

October 28-29, 2026

BAY-DELTA PLAN

What you need to know
about the upcoming vote.

Why is the State of California Updating the Bay-Delta Plan?

California is updating the Bay-Delta Plan to address declining fish and wildlife populations while managing water supplies for communities, farms and the environment. On October 28-29, the State Water Resources Control Board is scheduled to consider a final draft plan that includes two implementation pathways: **Healthy Rivers and Landscapes** and a **regulatory unimpaired-flow only** approach.

Why the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program is the Best Path Forward for People, Fish and Wildlife in California.

Healthy Rivers and Landscapes is a collaborative approach based on modern science to restore river health, floodplains, and natural landscapes, while supporting our fish, farms, wildlife, communities, and recreation sites across the state. Implementing HRL means investing in a combination of flows integrated with habitat projects, creating multi-benefit water management strategies and state-wide policies that unite cities, communities, agriculture & conservationists in a way rarely seen in California.

Healthy Rivers and Landscapes combines strategically timed additional water flows with habitat restoration and science-based adaptive management. The regulatory pathway relies primarily on requirements for a percentage of unimpaired river flows.



Water: Contributing up to 825,000 acre-feet of water to support fish and wildlife when and where they need it most.

Habitat: 58 Early Implementation projects have been completed, are under construction, or will complete final design by the end of 2026. These habitat improvements are already yielding results across the American, Feather, Mokelumne, Sacramento, and Yuba rivers and the Delta and Sacramento Valley floodplains.

Accountability: HRL includes annual reporting, ongoing scientific monitoring and governance to track progress and adapt based on results.

How Do We Know Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Will Work?

Putah Creek, located south of Davis and Winters, shows how flows and habitat improvements will yield positive results for fish and wildlife. Putah Creek had received consistent flows for almost a decade, but **adult salmon did not routinely return in significant numbers until the additional actions occurred:**

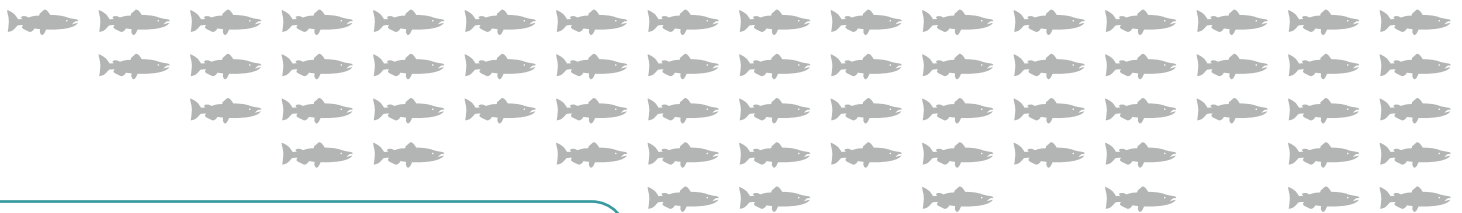
- Improved fish passage through the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
- Gravel beds were restored to suit spawning needs
- Access to food was made available from the floodplains for juvenile salmon
- Rearing habitat was created with trees and shrubs planted along the banks

[For more on Putah Creek, Read Here.](#)

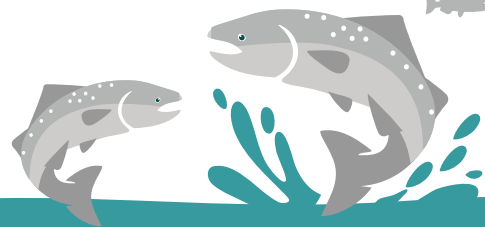
The fish spawning in the creek last fall is the equivalent production of a small hatchery. Putah Creek demonstrates why flows alone are not enough: fish also need access to spawning, rearing and food-producing habitat.



Fall 2013
8 Adult Salmon



Fall 2025
Record Salmon Run:
2,150 Spawned



Why A Flows-Only Approach Falls Short

The **unimpaired flows regulatory pathway** would rely primarily on requirements for up to 55% of unimpaired river flows to remain instream. Simply leaving more water instream does not ensure it will provide the habitat fish and wildlife need. At the same time, [modeling suggests](#) the unimpaired flows approach would lead to the decrease of wetland habitat provided by farmlands and refuges, it would reduce the amount of water

available for storage (especially in drier years when needed most), it will increase reliance upon ground water supplies, and it will negatively affect farms, cities and rural communities.

It is estimated that a 55% unimpaired-flow scenario could result in about 330,000 acres of farmland being fallowed every year across the Sacramento Valley alone. The San Joaquin Valley could see even more acreage fallowed if this option is chosen. Reduced agricultural water supplies could affect employment, food production and rural economies.

	Healthy Rives & Landscapes	Unimpaired Flow Scenario
 River Salmonid Habitat	Benefits	Neutral
 Terrestrial Habitat	Neutral	Adverse Impacts
 River Temperatures	Neutral	Adverse Impacts
 Reservoir Storage	Neutral	Adverse Impacts
 Water Supply	Neutral*	Adverse Impacts

What Does this Mean to Your Viewers and Readers?

The Bay-Delta Plan is undergoing its first comprehensive update in more than 30 years, at a time when increasingly extreme swings between wet and dry years are making it more challenging to manage water for people and the environment.

The decision before the State Water Board will shape how California balances water supplies with efforts to recover fish and wildlife populations. For Californians, what's at stake includes drinking-water reliability for 32 million people, food production, rural economies, river health and wildlife habitat.

Additional Resources

- [California Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [State Water Resources Control Board](#)

