

Governor Gavin Newsom has directed state agencies to prepare a water resilience portfolio. [Executive Order N-10-19](#) describes a set of broad principles to inform the development of the portfolio, as well as extensive outreach that should accompany the process, which is being conducted on an aggressive timeline.

The EO states, correctly, that California needs a portfolio of collaborative strategies to meet water management challenges that will grow as a result of climate change. Historically, forward progress on California water management has often, although certainly not always, been equated with sizeable expenditures on sizeable physical structures to store or convey water.

Our [comments](#) to the Administration, summarized briefly here, argue that this view is outdated and limiting.

- *Governance infrastructure, not specific physical water projects, will be the key to a successful Water Resilience Portfolio*

We argue that improving governance, not pouring concrete, will enable the long-term, systemic change California water management needs. A crucial foundational element is currently missing from California's water governance: the ability to make informed, rational, transparent decisions in real time that balance the range of human and environmental water needs.

A portfolio that leaves a legacy of more effective water decision making by state agencies and other stakeholders will be more impactful than any physical structures.

- *Fulfilling the promise of existing water management institutions will be crucial to achieving resilience*

The low-hanging fruit for increasing California's water resilience lies not in developing new water management agencies or laws but in making the ones we already have more effective. As two examples, the water resilience portfolio could emphasize support for [effective implementation](#) of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, and for improving [water rights administration and oversight](#).

- *Resilience Requires Improving Data for Water Decision Making*

Data are crucial to California's next generation of integrated water management, and data systems should be recognized as critical governance infrastructure. Consistent with our previous work on [water data](#), we argue that making water related data open and

transparent in a useful and useable way is not only consistent with Governor Newsom's conviction that data can transform governance in remarkable ways, but essential for a modern vision of resilient water systems. State support for effective [AB 1755 implementation](#) is one example. Another, more specific opportunity lies in expanding the [pilot](#) for a [modern](#) Water Rights and Use Information System currently being developed by CLEE and its collaborators.

The Water Resilience Portfolio offers a golden opportunity for major and lasting progress towards a stronger future for California's water system. But this opportunity could easily be squandered, even with the best of intentions, if its implementation comes from a dated mindset focused on physical infrastructure projects developed without clear, system-wide goals. The key to lasting impact from this Executive Order lies in governance infrastructure.

*Find CLEE's comment letter, written by Michael Kiparsky, Nell Green Nysten, Kathleen Miller, Holly Doremus, and Dave Owen, [here](#).*