California's next Governor will need to grapple with a complex array of local, state, and regional water issues. Climate change, shifting population dynamics, and a changing economy are stressing California's water systems and intensifying conflict over water resources. Floods and droughts are becoming more frequent and more severe. And there are no major new sources of water to tap or other quick fixes for increasing water supply. Our water team has outlined key themes and issues facing the next Governor in a new issue brief.

Despite mounting challenges, progress is possible. Major leaps forward in recent years include large-scale dam removals and environmental restoration efforts. California has also made vast improvements in urban water supply resilience and significant progress identifying and addressing disparities in access to safe and affordable drinking water.

These advances are promising, but much remains to be done. Tough decisions are needed.

For example, on the next Governor's watch, California needs to:

- **Follow through on its sustainable groundwater management policies:** The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was California's most significant water legislation in a generation. But translating the law into real on-the-ground improvements isn't easy. Local governments have developed and begun implementing groundwater management plans, but they face financing and other challenges. Ongoing state oversight and support will be crucial.
- **Work with other states to solve the Colorado River crisis:** The Colorado River is an important source of water for Southern California. However, flows are declining, and the states in the watershed don't agree on what to do about it. Recent rounds of negotiations have failed to develop a certain, long-term resolution. Therefore, the next Governor will need to advocate for California's interests, seek creative solutions, and help California reduce its vulnerability to declining Colorado River flows.
- **Understand and address data center water use:** Growing use of AI is driving rapid expansion in the number and size of data centers. Yet we know little about how much water data centers use or about their actual water-related impacts on local communities and ecosystems. The state can address this gap by requiring data centers to report their water use. It can also require or encourage data-center siting and design decisions to minimize negative

water and energy impacts and take steps to build local decision makers’ capacity to make informed decisions about data-center proposals.

These are just a few examples of the complex, interconnected water challenges the next Governor will face. Finding and implementing effective solutions will require creativity, coordinated funding, and strong, thoughtful leadership.

You can read more about the water issues facing California’s next Governor and access all of CLEE’s climate issue briefs at California Climate Vote. Read the other posts in the series, and a recap of the related candidate form, here:

- Transportation
- Electricity Affordability
- Building Decarbonization and Energy Efficiency
- Housing and Climate
- Recapping “Our Climate Future”: A California Gubernatorial Candidate Forum

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