

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: June 18, 2026
Re: **Authorization to Participate as an ACWA Vision Partner and Adoption of Resolution Supporting the Vision for Our Water Future Initiative**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors:

1. Authorize the Salton Sea Authority to participate as a Vision Partner in ACWA's Vision for Our Water Future initiative; and
2. Adopt Resolution No. _____ expressing support for the Vision for Our Water Future.

DISCUSSION

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) has invited the Salton Sea Authority to participate as a Vision Partner in its Vision for Our Water Future initiative. The initiative seeks to elevate water as a statewide priority and advance policies supporting reliable, affordable, and resilient water management.

Participation as a Vision Partner is voluntary, carries no fiscal obligation, and will help ensure that Salton Sea public health, restoration, infrastructure, and Colorado River priorities remain part of statewide water policy discussions. The attached Resolution expresses the Authority's support for the initiative and authorizes participation as a Vision Partner.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution No. _____
2. ACWA Vision for Our Water Future Materials

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SALTON SEA AUTHORITY
EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR
THE ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA WATER AGENCIES
VISION FOR OUR WATER FUTURE**

WHEREAS, in April 2026, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) launched Vision for Our Water Future, a member-driven initiative to identify statewide water priorities to inform engagement with California's next Administration; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority (the "Authority") is a Joint Powers Authority formed in 1993 and representing Imperial County, Riverside County, Coachella Valley Water District, Imperial Irrigation District, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, created to coordinate actions that improve water quality, address public health, and advance restoration of the Salton Sea; and

WHEREAS, the Authority serves as the only federally recognized local sponsor of Salton Sea restoration efforts, functioning as the coordination backbone for local, state, and federal engagement on one of California's most complex and consequential water and public health challenges; and

WHEREAS, the Authority, Coachella Valley Water District, and Imperial Irrigation District are each member agencies of ACWA, reflecting the longstanding commitment of the Salton Sea region's water institutions to statewide collaboration and unified advocacy on California water policy; and

WHEREAS, the Vision for Our Water Future priorities are a set of recommendations for the next governor, emphasizing the importance of strong leadership, sustainable investment, and coordinated action across all levels of government to secure California's water future; and

WHEREAS, the first priority -- to lead on water and elevate water as foundational to California's economy, agriculture, communities, environment, and climate resilience -- directly reflects the Authority's mandate, as the Salton Sea is a terminal basin receiving drainage from the Colorado River system that sustains the agricultural economies of the Imperial and Coachella Valleys and provides critical habitat along the Pacific Flyway; and

WHEREAS, the second priority -- to ensure safe and reliable water remains affordable through sustained and predictable funding partnerships and streamlined investment delivery -- is essential to the Authority's mission, as decades of reduced agricultural transfers to the Salton Sea have accelerated shoreline exposure, dust emissions, and public health burdens borne disproportionately by low-income communities in Imperial and Riverside Counties; and

WHEREAS, the third priority -- to strengthen and modernize California's water infrastructure, including both built and natural systems -- encompasses the Authority's core restoration objectives, including dust suppression, habitat restoration, and the Authority's role as Joint Local Sponsor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Imperial Stream and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study; and

WHEREAS, the fourth priority -- to improve regulatory, operational, and scientific frameworks to enable efficient project delivery and adaptive water management -- aligns with the Authority's Strategic Plan commitment to advancing a Health Assurance Framework that coordinates agency responsibilities for monitoring and mitigating public health impacts at the Salton Sea; and

WHEREAS, the Authority's five member agencies span two counties, two major water districts, and a federally recognized tribe, making the Authority a model of the multi-jurisdictional, science-based collaboration that the Vision recommendations recognize as essential to securing California's water future; and

WHEREAS, supporting the Vision recommendations demonstrates a unified commitment to the collaborative, practical, and equity-conscious policies necessary to protect the communities, farms, ecosystems, and economies of the Salton Sea region and the State of California; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority hereby expresses support for ACWA's Vision for Our Water Future recommendations and affirms the Authority's commitment to working collaboratively with its member agencies, partner jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians to advance reliable, affordable, and resilient water management that protects public health and advances long-term stewardship of the Salton Sea region; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Authority calls upon the State of California and the next Administration to recognize the Salton Sea as a statewide water and public health priority deserving sustained leadership, predictable funding, and coordinated regulatory action consistent with the principles set forth in the Vision for Our Water Future; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Executive Director is authorized to transmit this Resolution to ACWA and to any state or federal partner as evidence of the Authority's support for the Vision for Our Water Future initiative.

ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority at a regular meeting duly held on _____, 2026.

President, Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors

Secretary, Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors

VISION

FOR OUR WATER FUTURE

CALIFORNIA THRIVES WITH WATER

Water is the foundation upon which California is built. As the world's fourth-largest economy, the nation's breadbasket, a global technology leader, and home to extraordinary ecosystems, the prosperity of the Golden State depends on safe, resilient, and affordable water supply — now and into the future.

WATER IS AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE

Catastrophic wildfires, prolonged droughts, more intense storms, land subsidence, and aging infrastructure are reshaping California's risk landscape. Meeting these challenges demands that we acknowledge the seriousness of the threat, act with urgency and intention, and work together to advance our shared priorities.

IT STARTS WITH A VISION

The Association of California Water Agencies' (ACWA) Vision for Our Water Future seeks to elevate water as a top priority for California's next governor, legislative leadership, and state officials. It provides a clear, focused framework to secure a reliable, affordable, and modern water system that supports California's economy, communities, and environment.



BOLD LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED NOW

State and local water suppliers are on the front lines of California's water management to sustain communities, agricultural land and economy.

Water managers across the state are already pursuing local, practical and innovative solutions, but long term, meaningful progress requires a strong state partnership to achieve these shared goals. Bold leadership is needed to set a unified direction, accelerate action and deliver results that prepare California for an increasingly uncertain future.



VISION FOR OUR WATER FUTURE

Securing California’s water future requires more than incremental fixes — it demands a fundamental shift in how the state leads, invests, and operates. The Vision for Our Water Future provides an essential framework for our next administration to:

1. LEAD ON WATER

Recognize water as an essential resource and the infrastructure that underpins California’s economy, housing growth, food production, environmental health, and community resilience. Sustained executive leadership is needed to improve water supply reliability, accelerate climate resilience, and ensure coordinated action across state government.

2. PROTECT AFFORDABILITY

Ensure safe and reliable water remains affordable by strengthening sustained state investment and funding partnerships with local, regional, and federal agencies to address rising infrastructure, climate, and regulatory costs. California’s ratepayers fund more than 85 percent of the system. Without predictable investment, these costs will increasingly fall on households, businesses, and farmers.

3. DELIVER CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Future-proof California’s critical water infrastructure to ensure reliable supplies in the face of climate change, growing economic and community demands, and escalating emergency risks. This requires strengthening the statewide water system, including both built and natural infrastructure, while advancing regional resilience to maximize systemwide reliability.

4. MODERNIZE WATER MANAGEMENT

Improve California’s regulatory and operational systems so water projects can move forward reliability and efficiently, infrastructure can be operated more flexibly, and agencies can respond more rapidly to changing conditions. California’s regulatory framework should deliver clear, coordinated decisions grounded in the best available science, while maintaining environmental protections, public transparency, and California’s existing water rights priority system.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A MODERN WATER SYSTEM



Designed and upgraded for the future



Flexible and responsive to changing climate conditions



Supported by aligned state permitting, regulatory, & investment frameworks



Informed by technology, data, & science



Grounded in long-term affordability-term



Vision for Our Water Future is an initiative of the Association of California Water Agencies, representing approximately 470 public water suppliers in the state.

www.acwa.com/vision



VISION

FOR OUR WATER FUTURE



Setting the Vision

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) represents approximately 470 public water agencies that collectively deliver approximately 90 percent of the water used by Californians — in their homes, on their farms, and for their businesses.

Water agencies are being proactive and are on the front lines of the state’s most pressing challenges — from droughts, floods, and wildfires to aging infrastructure and the need for more housing. Meaningful progress requires state partnership with local water suppliers to achieve common goals. Bold leadership from the governor is critical to setting a unified direction, accelerating action, and delivering results to prepare California for the future. Action is needed now.

Why Water Matters

Water is the foundation upon which California is built. This State is the world’s fourth-largest economy, the nation’s breadbasket, a global technology leader, and home to extraordinary ecosystems. None of it functions without water.

Water is not a single-sector issue. It is the backbone every other sector depends on. It determines where homes can be built, whether farms can produce, how businesses operate and grow, and whether species can survive a changing climate. A safe, reliable, and affordable water supply is one of the most important investments California can make.

ACTION IS NEEDED NOW



**Lead
on Water**



**Protect
Affordability**



**Deliver Critical
Infrastructure**



**Modernize Water
Management**

California Thrives With Water

- › **Housing:** California must plan for 2.5 million new homes in the next decade. Every unit requires a reliable water supply.
- › **Agriculture:** California agriculture is 12% of the state's economy, contributing \$60 billion; employing over 400,000 people; and producing more than half of the nation's fruits, nuts, and vegetables. Both surface and groundwater are fundamental to California's agriculture sector.
- › **Economy:** California's \$4 trillion economy spans technology, innovation, manufacturing, trade, and tourism. Every dollar of it depends on a reliable water supply.
- › **Environment:** California's extraordinary ecosystems — its rivers, wetlands, and floodplains — depend on the same water system managed by local water suppliers. A thriving California requires managing water to sustain both communities and ecosystems.
- › **Public Health:** Water suppliers are California's first line of public health defense, delivering safe, clean drinking water to every community in the state.
- › **Climate Resilience:** Climate whiplash — the swing between extreme droughts and extreme floods — is increasing, snowpack is diminishing, and wildfires are growing more severe. Water suppliers are modernizing, but they cannot do it alone.

Building A Modern System

Securing California's water future requires more than incremental fixes. It demands a fundamental shift in how the State leads, invests, and operates. The Vision for Our Water Future provides an essential framework for ensuring a resilient and reliable water system.

Funded, built, and managed for extreme conditions, our modern water system is resilient, coordinated, and flexible — meeting the needs of California's communities, economy, and environment.

- › **Anchored by Backbone Infrastructure:** The State Water Project and Central Valley Project form the foundation of the statewide water system. These assets capture and manage California's highly variable hydrology and move water where and when it is needed.
- › **Strengthened by Regional Resiliency:** Regional and watershed-based partnerships strengthen local water reliability under changing hydrologic conditions and during emergencies through coordinated planning, interconnected infrastructure, diversified supplies, and shared responsibility.
- › **Delivered Locally:** Water is delivered by local suppliers, even when conveyed through or interconnected with statewide or regional systems. Local agencies set rates and policies — ratepayers fund approximately 85% of California's water system costs — while navigating structural constraints from Proposition 218, regulatory mandates, and permitting complexity.

Key Elements of A Modern Water System

- › Designed and upgraded for the future
- › Flexible and responsive to changing climate conditions
- › Supported by aligned state permitting, regulatory, and investment frameworks
- › Informed by technology, data, and science
- › Grounded in long-term affordability

A modern water system must be resilient, coordinated, and flexible to meet California's evolving needs.





LEAD ON WATER

Recognize water as an essential resource and the infrastructure that underpins California's economy, housing growth, food production, environmental health, and community resilience. Sustained executive leadership is needed to improve water supply reliability, accelerate climate resilience, and ensure coordinated action across state government.

- › **Set a Bold Water Agenda (First 100 Days):** Establish a focused statewide water agenda aligned with this Vision for Our Water Future.

- › **Appoint Leaders to Deliver Results:** Appoint and empower leaders to deliver measurable outcomes.
- › **Unify State Agencies:** Direct state agencies to align under unified statewide water priorities and jointly advance implementation in partnership with local, regional, and federal water managers. Designate a cabinet-level water policy executive, reporting directly to the Governor, to align agencies and organize state resources to implement California's water priorities.



PROTECT AFFORDABILITY

Ensure safe and reliable water remains affordable by strengthening sustained state investment and funding partnerships with local, regional, and federal agencies to address rising infrastructure, climate, and regulatory costs. California's ratepayers fund more than 85% of the system. Without predictable investment, these costs will increasingly fall on households, businesses, and farmers.

- › **Secure Sustainable Water Funding:** Create a reliable sustainable state funding source for water infrastructure that provides predictable, long-term investment. This funding should support critical water infrastructure projects, environmental needs, and California's Human Right to Water while leveraging federal, regional, and local investment.

- › **Accelerate Funding:** Improve funding programs and coordination so investments reach projects faster — reducing administrative delays, lowering project costs, and accelerating infrastructure delivery.
- › **Integrate Investments Across Sectors:** Align state investments and integrate water infrastructure funding across energy, housing, and climate and hazard mitigation to advance multi-benefit projects and maximize federal, state, and regional investment.





DELIVER CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Future-proof California's critical water infrastructure to ensure reliable supplies in the face of climate change, growing economic and community demands, and escalating emergency risks. This requires strengthening the statewide water system, including both built and natural infrastructure, while advancing regional resilience to maximize systemwide reliability.

- › **Strengthen the State's Water Backbone:** Upgrade, repair, and optimize California's essential backbone infrastructure — the California State Water Project and Central Valley Project.
 - ◆ **Modernize and Protect Infrastructure:** Advance a durable Delta conveyance solution, strengthen Delta levees, safeguard critical infrastructure from subsidence and seismic risk, and upgrade system technologies — including Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations, snowpack measurement, and remote monitoring control.

- ◆ **Improve Coordinated Operations:** Integrate operations of the California State Water Project and Central Valley Project to increase system flexibility, expand the storage and movement of water, and enhance water supply reliability.
- › **Safeguard Colorado River Water Supplies:** Protect California's Colorado River allocation, consistent with the State's legal entitlements and the efforts of the Colorado River Board of California.
- › **Empower Regional Water Solutions:** Champion regional and watershed-based solutions. State policy should empower regions with the tools, flexibility, and investment needed to advance regional planning, partnerships, and projects that diversify water supplies, strengthen system connectivity and operational efficiency, and restore ecosystem functions to ensure reliable water supplies.



MODERNIZE WATER MANAGEMENT

Improve California's regulatory and operational systems so water projects can move forward reliably and efficiently, infrastructure can be operated more flexibly, and agencies can respond more rapidly to changing conditions. California's regulatory framework should deliver clear, coordinated decisions grounded in the best available science, while maintaining environmental protections, public transparency, and California's existing water rights priority system.

- › **Improve Permitting Performance:** Enhance the clarity, coordination, and efficiency of state permitting processes to accelerate infrastructure and operational improvements; eliminate avoidable costs; and ensure state and local agencies deliver timely, accountable results.
 - ◆ **Integrate Permit Requirements:** Integrate requirements and processes across regulatory agencies to eliminate redundancy and inconsistency.
 - ◆ **Enhance Regulatory Certainty:** Establish transparent procedures, clear criteria for permit approval, and accountable timelines for agency decisions — developed in direct partnership with water suppliers.

- ◆ **Streamline Pathways:** Create efficient pathways to advance multi-benefit, climate-resilient water supply projects.
- › **Modernize Water Operations:** Advance operational approaches that reflect changing climate realities to improve water supply reliability across environmental, agricultural, and urban sectors. This may include coordinated reservoir management, flexible diversion rules tied to real-time hydrology, accelerated groundwater recharge and conjunctive use, expanded water transfers, and other adaptive strategies.
- › **Strengthen Water Data and Science:** Invest in integrated, science-based statewide data systems and technology that improve transparency, inform real-time decisions, and strengthen regulatory and operational performance to increase efficiency and better manage water resources.

VISION
FOR OUR WATER FUTURE



Vision for Our Water Future is an initiative of the Association of California Water Agencies, representing approximately 470 public water agencies in California.

VISION

FOR OUR WATER FUTURE

Join the Vision for Our Water Future

ACWA's Vision for Our Water Future is a statewide, member-driven initiative to elevate water as a top priority for California's next Administration and advance a unified policy agenda for safe, reliable, and affordable water.

Coalition partners play a critical role in reinforcing the importance of water across sectors — from housing and agriculture to economic growth and climate resilience.

By joining this effort, your organization helps amplify a shared message and align priorities that support California's future.

Complete the form to confirm your organization's support



Become a Vision Partner



Scan for the Partner Toolkit or visit acwa.com/vision

What It Means to Be a Vision Partner

Participation is flexible and scalable based on your organization's priorities and capacity. Vision Partners will be listed on the ACWA website with a logo under our "Partners" section at acwa.com/vision.

ACWA invites coalition partners to engage in three key ways:

1. Amplify

Help raise awareness and reinforce the importance of water across your networks.

- › Share Vision content on your organization's social media channels.
- › Communicate with your membership about the Vision through newsletters, meetings, or committees.
- › Use provided talking points and fact sheets in your outreach.

Optional Opportunities:

- › Participate in earned media (e.g., op-eds, joint statements).
- › Provide input to inform issue-specific Vision fact sheets (e.g., housing, agriculture).

2. Engage

Incorporate Vision priorities into your advocacy and outreach.

- › Include relevant Vision priorities in meetings with gubernatorial candidates, legislative leadership, and Administration officials.
- › Share the Vision document and fact sheet in policy discussions.
- › Designate a spokesperson to represent your organization at ACWA-led events and discussions.

Optional Opportunities:

- › Integrate Vision priorities into your organization's panels, webinars, and events.
- › Participate in joint outreach or convenings with ACWA and partners.

3. Advance

Support long-term efforts that align with Vision priorities.

- › Consider supporting future legislation and administrative actions that advance the Vision.

Questions

For more information or to get involved, please contact ACWA Regulatory Relations Director [Chelsea Haines](mailto:Chelsea.Haines@acwa.com) at (916) 669-2431.