

## **Sonoma Water Federal Platform 2026-2027**

### **Water Resources Development Act Authorization**

Prioritize the authorization of a \$65 million Environmental Infrastructure Project in the forthcoming Water Resources Development Act legislation. The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is biennial legislation, most recently signed into law as the Thomas R. Carper WRDA of 2024 on January 4, 2025. It authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study and construct projects for flood control, navigation, and ecosystem restoration. WRDA provides policy direction and project authorization but not direct funding. Authorization of Sonoma Water’s Environmental Infrastructure Project would enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with Sonoma Water, to advance critical wastewater, water supply, and other infrastructure improvements that are essential to protecting public health and water quality in Sonoma County.

### **Russian River Biological Opinion**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Sonoma Water, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District received the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) final Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion and Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Response for the Russian River Watershed Water Supply and Channel Maintenance Project (2025 Russian River Biological Opinion) on April 29, 2025. The 2025 Russian River Biological Opinion has a 10-year term and states that “it is NMFS’ Opinion that the Proposed Action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon, California Coastal Chinook salmon, CCC steelhead, Southern Resident Killer Whale, or destroy or adversely modify their designated critical habitat.” To address take (i.e., adverse impacts to fish), NMFS included requirements for USACE and Sonoma Water (technically known as Reasonable and Prudent Measures) in the Opinion.

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Continue to meet and coordinate with federal officials to keep them apprised with status updates on the project.
- Maintain activities, including monitoring of USACE implementation of Dry Creek habitat restoration.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Projects**

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Support funding for ongoing maintenance and operations of Warm Springs Dam (Lake Sonoma) and Coyote Valley Dam (Lake Mendocino).
- Support funding for dam safety projects.
- Support funding for operation and maintenance of hatcheries associated with Warm Springs Dam and Coyote Valley Dam.

- Building on success of previous appropriations bills, seek continued funding for invasive species prevention and monitoring programs, particularly through funding for watercraft inspection stations at Lakes Sonoma and Mendocino utilizing authorization secured through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020.
- Support funding and legislative and regulatory language for fire prevention and vegetation management initiatives at both Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino.
- Explore possibility of addressing sewage treatment improvement needs through WRDA that is expected to be taken up in the coming session of Congress.
- Explore need to further facilitate the modernization of Coyote Valley Dam.

### **Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO)**

In October 2025, leaders from Sonoma Water, USACE, UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography Center of Western Weather and Water Extremes, and California Department of Water Resources entered an agreement to update the water control manual for Coyote Valley Dam and Lake Mendocino. The revised manual redefines the operating rules around flood control schedules for the first time in the dam's 66-year history by incorporating the principles of modern-day forecast-informed reservoir operations to enhance the facility's dual mission of flood risk management and water supply security. The work related to FIRO at Lake Mendocino is the first of its kind in the nation, and the manual revision is the product of over a decade of Sonoma Water's partnership federal and state partners.

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Ensure sufficient funding is provided to support FIRO and updates to water control manuals for Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma.
- Monitor regulations or legislative efforts in support of FIRO.
- Seek, as needed, funding to support FIRO efforts throughout the nation, including through the Water Operations Technical Support (WOTS) program.
  - WOTS was funded in both FY24 and FY25 at \$14.5 million and is slated to receive an increase to \$23.5 million in FY26 upon Congressional approval and enactment by the President.

### **Seasonal to Sub-seasonal (S2S) Forecasting**

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Identify and pursue opportunities to work with the Office of Atmospheric Research's U.S. Weather Research Program, to leverage the \$1.0 million FY25 appropriation to seed innovative research testbeds for a pilot project for S2S precipitation forecasts for water management in the western United States.

- Support advancement of the *Weather Act Reauthorization Act of 2025*, which includes language authorizing \$50.3 million for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030 to carry out pilot projects on S2S, one of which is focused on western precipitation.
- Support additional funding for, and prioritization of, increased modeling and technology for enhanced weather forecasting.
- Build, leverage, and coordinate with growing coalition of over 50 stakeholders to increase awareness of funding requests and project implementation.

#### **Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information Program**

##### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Identify and pursue opportunities to leverage \$900,000 appropriated in FY25 for a regional radar array demonstration project to enable better forecasting of extreme West Coast precipitation events, like atmospheric rivers.
- Continue to seek federal appropriations in FY26 and FY27.
- Coordinate with growing coalition to build support for future federal funding.

#### **Pacific Coastal Salmon Restoration Fund (PCSRF)**

##### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Since the establishment of PCSRF in FY2000, due in part to Sonoma Water's leadership and ongoing advocacy efforts, the program has received \$1.88 billion in federal funding.
- Support continued appropriations for PCSRF in FY26 and FY27.
- Coordinate with stakeholders to increase awareness of funding requests and project implementation.
- Work with Congressional delegation to demonstrate support for the program by sending letters of support to the Appropriations Committees from a wide range of stakeholders.

#### **Potter Valley Project**

At the end of 2023, the Eel-Russian Project Authority was created and empowered to negotiate with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) regarding its surrender of the Potter Valley Project. The board consists of representatives from the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, Sonoma Water, Sonoma County and the Round Valley Indian Tribes. The proposal is aimed at achieving co-equal goals of significantly improving fish migration at the Cape Horn Dam site and constructing a new Eel River diversion facility to replace the Van Arsdale Diversion facility that will be removed along with Cape Horn Dam.

##### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Support efforts of the coalition to negotiate terms and conditions to ensure reliable water supplies to the Russian River and protect and restore degraded Eel River fisheries.

- Engage with Sonoma Water’s Congressional delegation and appropriate Executive Branch agencies to advance the coalition’s work to create regional outcomes that benefit the Russian River interests, Eel River interests and tribal interests.
- Work with coalition partners to attain the \$15 million released from the Department of the Interior for the Two Basin Partnership in order to help design and build the Eel River diversion and provide funding for the Round Valley Indian Tribe to begin ecosystem restoration work in the basin.

### **Fish Passages**

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) authorizes the use of substantial amounts of federal-aid highway funding for wildlife crossing structures, including those related to fish crossing.

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Engage the Congressional delegation, including Senator Padilla, to assure that fish crossings would be eligible for funding as wildlife crossing structures.
- Pursue strategies on how and whether this eligibility might be utilized to further our objectives on this priority.

### **Occidental County Sanitation District**

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Maximize utility of the \$1.45 million earmarked in FY2023 appropriations for the Occidental County Sanitation District wastewater pipeline project and explore sources of funding for construction of project, as needed.

### **Recycled Water**

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Continue to support increased funding for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSMART programs that provide assistance for recycled water and other water management projects.

### **Wastewater Infrastructure Financing**

#### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Support federal appropriations for the Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving loan and grant programs.
- Review new infrastructure initiatives and position Sonoma Water and its wastewater districts/zones to be eligible for funding from these programs.

## **Climate Adaptation**

### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Support funding programs aimed at putting national climate change policies into practice at the local level.
- Support funding of the Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan.
- Support legislation and programs increasing funding opportunities in alignment with Sonoma Water's Carbon Free Water program.

## **Flood Protection Funding**

### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Support flood protection facility funding.
- Seek authorization and appropriation of funding in the Farm Bill to support infrastructure improvements within the Central Sonoma Watershed Project.

## **Legislative and Regulatory Review**

### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Track legislative and regulatory developments as reported by Sonoma Water advocates and information provided by coalitions and trade organizations.
- Communicate Sonoma Water positions on legislation or regulatory initiatives consistent with Board direction through engagement with policymakers and staff.

## **Miscellaneous**

### *Goals/Outcomes:*

- Advocate for allocation of authorized funding, which includes over \$17 billion in USACE programs, to address climate resiliency issues in the categories of flood control, ecosystem restoration, and coastal emergencies, which will provide opportunities to support these priorities.
- Pursue programs under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that have the potential to assist in efforts to ensure a more resilient watershed during times of disaster and to aid in recovery if/when they occur, including:
  - *Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program*: \$1 billion (\$200 million per year) to support pre-disaster and hazard mitigation activities undertaken by states, U.S. territories, Indian tribal governments, and local communities.
  - *Flood Mitigation Assistance Program*: \$3.5 billion in flood mitigation assistance grants over five years (\$700 million per year) for FY 2022-2026. This program provides financial and technical assistance to states and communities to reduce the risk of flood damage

to homes and businesses through buyouts, elevation, and other activities. In previous years, the annual grant cycle for the program ranged from \$150-\$200 million a year.

- *Safeguarding Tomorrow Through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act*: \$500 million in grants (\$100 million per year) to establish a revolving fund for mitigation assistance to reduce risks from disasters and natural hazards. Such funds would provide assistance to local governments in States for projects to reduce disaster risks to homeowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and communities to decrease the loss of life and property, the cost of insurance claims, and federal disaster payments.
- Strongly advocate for continuation of these programs, which could be in jeopardy in the near future.