

How can California boost its water supply?

Explore the CalMatters Water Solutions explainer by reporter Rachel Becker at cal.news/water-solutions.



RECYCLE MORE WATER

Californians recycled 732,000 acre feet of water in 2021 and used it for non-drinking purposes, like irrigating landscapes, golf courses and crops. By 2030, the state plans to increase its recycled water usage by 9% from the amount used in 2021.



REPLUMB CALIFORNIA

A plan to replumb the California Delta would redirect hundreds of thousands more acre-feet of water south instead of allowing it to flow out to the ocean. But environmentalists say the tunnel project could harm endangered salmon and other species.



MORE DESALINATION

Four ocean water desalination facilities in California produce nearly 60,000 acre-feet of drinking water. High costs, lack of local demand and risks to marine life have limited the potential for new desalination proposals.



STORE MORE WATER IN RESERVOIRS

Many reservoirs in California do double-duty: they store water but also provide flood control. Water managers are working on strategies to reduce flood risk while reserving more water in California's reservoirs.



CAPTURE STORMWATER RUNOFF

Some cities capture and treat rainwater and spillover from sprinklers that flow off roads, yards and roofs. Collecting more water would avoid waste, but high costs, water quality concerns and lengthy planning processes are barriers.



RECHARGE GROUNDWATER BASINS

California's underground aquifers can hold vastly more water than its above-ground reservoirs. But they are being depleted by overpumping, mostly from agricultural wells. Using floodwater to recharge these basins would boost supplies.



TRANSFORM CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

California's agriculture is the most productive in the country. But it also drinks up about 80% of the developed water used in the state. Growers could change crops, fallow fields or install more efficient irrigation, but this adds costs for the people who grow our food.



CONTROL GREENHOUSE GASES

The governor says climate change could deplete water supplies by up to 10% by 2040. Parts of the state's climate plan, such as reliance on technologies to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere or capture it from smokestacks, are contentious.



TEAR OUT LAWNS

Turf drinks up the most water in any month, in any part of California, of any plant analyzed in a state report. Tearing lawns out and replacing them with drought-tolerant plants could save between 1 million and 1.5 million acre-feet per year.



REFORM WATER RIGHTS

California's water supplies are governed by a decades-old rights system. Those with the oldest claims are usually the last to be cut back during shortages. Some experts say this system of seniority is plagued with inequalities excludes Native peoples.

Have a question about water in California?

Send it here: cal.news/questions-water or mention **@CalMatters** and use the hashtag **#CalMattersforLearning** on social.

Visit us at cal.news/water-solutions or scan the QR code to learn more.

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