

AB1520 Statewide Watershed Program

Key Points

Background

In 2007, the Secretary for Resources instructed the CALFED Watershed Program begin a transition to become a Statewide Watershed Program (Program). This legislation is the latest step in completing the transition.

As defined in the legislation, the Program will be administered by the Department of Conservation on behalf of the Secretary. It is based on many previous watershed policy enactments, in addition to the CALFED Watershed Program, including the 2002 report to the legislature *"Addressing the Need to Protect California's Watersheds"* required by AB2117.

The Program

The purpose of the Program set forth is to assist the State to *" . . .assume leadership in formulating and putting into effect a statewide program that will advance sustainable watershed based management of California's natural resources, using community based strategies. . ."*

The anticipated outcome will be to provide assistance to conserve, protect, restore and manage the state's watersheds, and thus measurably retain and enhance the broad range of products, services and values they provide, including for example:

- Water supplies and protecting water supply origins
- Ground water recharge
- Carbon sequestration
- Food, fiber, and fuel
- Water purification and waste treatment
- Flood mitigation
- Drought mitigation and flow attenuation
- Aquatic and terrestrial habitat
- Soil fertility, health, and productivity
- Nutrient and mineral cycling and delivery
- Biodiversity maintenance
- Recreational opportunities
- Climate moderation
- Aesthetics and open space
- Pollination

Main elements of the Program will include development and delivery of:

Coordination and communication, in order to:

- Support coordination of natural resource management by watershed
- Improve coordination and compatibility of permitting processes and applied practices
- Assist science, research, monitoring and policy coordination
- Promote increased alignment of existing programs, processes, and funding
- Support consistent networking opportunities

Information and data management to:

- Provide watershed status and change tracking
- Develop a common language
- Offer opportunities for technology transfer and success sharing
- Increase the amount and accessibility of information available

Training and technical assistance in:

- Organizational development and building management capacity
- Leadership, conflict management, team building and collaboration skills
- Delivery methods for expanding and using technical skills

Education for:

- General public outreach and awareness
- Decision makers at all levels
- Landowners and managers
- Schools at all levels

Science assistance to:

- Improve access to, and the use of, scientific and technical information to support watershed management decisions and policy development
- Support inclusion of applied science, including economics, land use planning, water budgeting, natural resource use and climate change adaptations
- Promote interdisciplinary science research and applications
- Provide watershed status and change tracking methods

Financial assistance to support watershed management efforts at both the project and organizational levels

The Legislation:

To assist the Program, the legislation authorizes the role of the Statewide Watershed Advisory Committee (Committee). The Committee will provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary, the Director, and to the Program on implementation and assessment of Program progress at multiple levels.

The Program will be non-regulatory, and will not displace existing agency programs, obligations or requirements.

The legislation does not request additional funding for the Program. Plan development and early implementation will be accomplished with existing funding. On recommendation from the Secretary, funding will be considering following thorough vetting with State agencies, local governments, and the general public.

The legislation authorizes development of a Program, but does not provide the Program's details. They will be developed in a parallel process during consideration and passage of the legislation. That process will include extensive Committee involvement and broad public outreach and interaction.

The present schedule is to have a complete Program Plan developed and published before October, 2009, with early implementation of the plan to begin immediately thereafter.