



Agenda No. 12.b)

Draft White Paper

San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint

BACKGROUND

This white paper provides a strategy for presentation to the Friant Water Authority (FWA) Board of Directors, and other future partners, for actions to address the substantial overdraft occurring throughout the San Joaquin Valley with the primary goal of returning the Eastern San Joaquin Valley to a sustainable balance between its available water supplies and demands.

The strategy summarized in this document would be developed into a comprehensive “blueprint” for water infrastructure and operations in the San Joaquin Valley that would balance the long-term water supply availability with demands. The San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint will be developed in collaboration with valley water interests, including those not historically represented in larger water infrastructure discussions, broader agricultural groups, and elected officials in the valley such that there is a united group advocating for a common water infrastructure package that could be pursued and funded from a variety of sources.

VISION STATEMENT

The San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint would present a comprehensive and strategic plan that, if implemented among partners, would result in a long-term water balance in the San Joaquin Valley in a way that minimizes land retirement of agricultural lands and allows the region’s economy to thrive under future conditions. It would be developed in collaboration with key interest groups, public agencies, and elected officials so that all stakeholders could advocate for a single blueprint.

PROBLEM

The San Joaquin Valley faces a water crisis; estimates of the average imbalance between available water supplies and the demand to sustain existing economic activities in the valley range from 2.5 million acre-feet per year or more. Importantly, this imbalance crosses over many political and public agency boundaries, and also includes a vast amount of productive land that is not represented by State Water Project or federal Central Valley Project contractors.

Currently, none of the solutions planned or proposed to support the valley’s long-term water needs will “close the gap” on the water balance, even if all are implemented in combination. These options include additional storage on the San Joaquin River (Temperance Flat), improved Delta reliability (operational or physical projects like WaterFix), and improved conveyance (restoring capacity on the Friant-Kern and Madera canals, constructing additional facilities). As a result, it is incumbent upon regional leadership in the valley to further develop options for evaluation.

On the Eastside of the San Joaquin Valley, a majority of the critically over drafted lands are adjacent to Friant Division lands and do not hold state or federal surface water contracts; water needs for these entities and others is being somewhat planned for by several Groundwater Sustainability Agencies. However, the partnerships needed to implement thoughtful, deliberate policies and projects to achieve a water balance need to be broader in scope.

The San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint is proposed to serve as a larger, valley-wide water plan with strategic partnerships to ensure that the plan has the representation and technical capabilities necessary to provide the highest probability for success as possible. As a first step, a Project Management Plan will be drafted that articulates the strategy for each phase of the Water Blueprint and the resources necessary for it to be successful. FWA is taking the initial step to draft the Project Management Plan to present to the FWA board and potential partners the likely resources and commitments necessary. Once the plan is fully drafted it could be presented to the FWA Board for approval to proceed in 2019.

ENVISIONED BLUEPRINT COMPONENTS

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Foundational to the Water Blueprint will be the development of a set of projects and associated operations that would bring the Eastern San Joaquin Valley into balance while avoiding as much land retirement as possible. This plan will include a comprehensive look at local, regional, and statewide activities and investments that, collectively, will aim to resolve 2.5 million acre-feet per year or more of regional overdraft. Given the magnitude of the problem being addressed, this plan will need to look ambitiously beyond the range of projects that have previously been contemplated for the region.

The project description will build upon the Friant Sustainability Plan to achieve the following:

- Improved accuracy and depiction of overdraft estimates for the region and sub-regional entities, to be done in close coordination with local agencies;
- Develop new concepts for addressing the large magnitude of problems being contemplated and conduct engineering, legal, and policy evaluations of those conceptual projects;
- Provide engineering descriptions of infrastructural and policy options that allow for prioritization, identification of partners, and development of implementation agreements; and,
- Explore partnerships with statewide regulatory agencies and water users that will be needed for implementing components of the plan.

In order to appropriately create, evaluate, and describe the contract barriers/opportunities; the team implementing this will require a comprehensive understanding of the needs and available infrastructure within the Eastern San Joaquin Valley, water supply contracts and operations throughout California, a fluency on matters related to water rights (particularly as it relates to the Delta), and expertise in navigating regulatory processes.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

Development and implementation of the Water Blueprint will require partnerships and coordination beyond the boundaries of the Friant Division. They will need to include public agencies not represented by other larger entities or districts and who need additional water supply, other interest groups that represent farmers and communities in the Valley, and elected officials. FWA staff's initial strategy for this includes:

- Identification of "regional coordinators" who will serve as a representative for each Eastside planning region from the Draft FWA Sustainability Plan. Each individual will be selected because they possess the relationships, credibility, skillset, and time to adequately secure the necessary partnerships and funding agreements to produce and implement the Water Blueprint.
- Establishment of a Water Policy committee to update an overarching governing body and collaborate on Water Blueprint progress and related efforts with commodity groups, farm bureaus, and others.

Figure 1 below provides a visual depiction of how regional coordinators will work with the Water Policy committee.

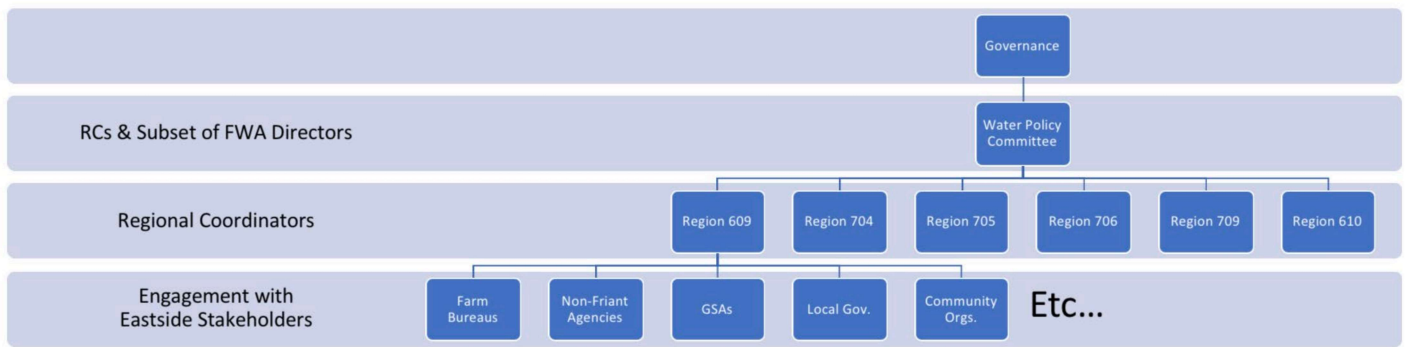


Figure 1: Organizational Relationships to Support the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Developing consensus for a comprehensive blueprint for water infrastructure and operations in the San Joaquin Valley will require extensive stakeholder outreach and engagement.

To that end, FWA will engage in a multi-pronged effort to both inform and support the partnerships and coordination in the Water Blueprint, and also to keep stakeholders inside and outside of the valley informed about progress and milestones.

The sections below describe overall goals and key initial tasks for outreach and engagement.

Public Outreach

At the broadest level, outreach to the public is intended to educate audiences in California and beyond with easy-to-understand messages about the water supply challenges facing the valley and opportunities to address it.

Development of the communications tools necessary to support this program is either complete or underway through the broader Friant external affairs activities and the tools of our other existing partners, but can be expanded upon. In general, these include tools such as the Friant website; email communications (monthly Waterline email newsletter, weekly water supply update, etc.); expanded use of social media channels, including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook; use/expansion of stakeholder database; development/use of standard visuals, graphics, and material to support the informational needs of developing the Water Blueprint; and media relations and placement of opinion pieces by key Friant leadership and friends.

Landowner Outreach

The goal of the landowner outreach component is to ensure our key messages are reaching not just the public and water agencies already involved in regional water planning activities, but as many individual landowners as possible in the valley, including those in white areas who are not represented by formal governance structures.

This aspect of the plan will likely require working closely with water districts, farm bureaus, and other regional organizations, including through the regional coordinators and Water Policy committee as described above to execute several initial tasks:

- Landowner identification (Friant Division, Eastside, and others)
- Regional coordination workshops/meetings to provide input on the plan, or participation in existing meeting structures/GSA meetings, etc.
- Targeted communications to individual landowners as needed

Political Outreach

Each member of the existing team of Friant staff and consultants has large and diverse network of relationships with local, regional, state, and federal elected officials and leaders. These relationships will be important for educating leaders and securing the necessary support for authorizing and, as appropriate, financing aspects of the Water Blueprint and the projects it evaluates.

Initial tasks for this effort include:

- Identification of key leadership at different political jurisdictions
- Identification of potential funding/financing opportunities
- Relationship mapping and assignments for each political jurisdiction/agency
- Development of schedule for regular engagement with political leaders centered around each opportunity