Action Memo #2:  
Proposed Actions to Address Drought & Long-Term Water Changes  

Input from Participants @ Bay Area Water in a Changing Climate (June 2015)  

Economics  

- Revamp the water rate system so reducing water use does not cause financial problems for water agencies.  
- Price water correctly to produce more action (urban and rural) on conservation and water efficiency.  
- Develop incentives and financing programs that will reach renters in multi-family buildings (40% of California residents) and get them to conserve.  
- Change regulatory regimes to allow rational economic water pricing. Example: Three tiers. 1) essential use virtually free, 2) moderate use at X rate and 3) luxury use at 10X rate. Another example: Use fees on excess use to provide badly needed funding for long-term contingencies and storage.  
- Study and analyze the economic impacts of severe drought and long-term water shortages on the Bay Area’s economy, including job loss, business relocations outside the area, Port of Oakland business losses (agricultural exports) and other factors.  

Diversifying Supplies  

- Create a comprehensive groundwater policy.  
- Accelerate the pace of statewide and regional groundwater management reforms.  
- Create better Bay Area understanding of:  
  o Groundwater basins in Bay Area  
  o Hazardous waste sites and contamination of aquifers
Water quality issues associated with extraction of contaminated groundwater vs. treatment of groundwater before use

- Create new engineering solutions for large-scale water capture and storage systems.
- Develop policies and funding for expanded grey water use.
- Develop a major near-term effort to advance potable re-use (direct and indirect) ASAP.
- Invest substantially more in all forms of water reuse.
- Achieve sustained reductions through a wide range of institutional actions—e.g., incorporating water efficiency into building/development permitting, improved stormwater management.
- Create programs to make water catchment and water reclamation more affordable for individuals, households and multi-family buildings.
- Reform water rights to meet 21st century needs.

Planning

- Grow more through infill rather than sprawl for greater water efficiency—smaller lots, less outdoor space, less infrastructure to leak, etc.
- Provide incentives and funding to maintain open space and rangelands to sustain water supply and improve resilience to climate change.
- Design and implement better land use planning and zoning to preserve important groundwater recharge areas.
- Bring water issues into regional and local planning for the Bay Area, including Plan Bay Area II.
- Include water in all sustainable community planning.
- Don’t build new housing where there is not sufficient water.
- Integrate water planning with sea level rise planning. As BCDC and other state agencies are revising their policies and programs, water agencies should work more closely with them.
• Get water agencies more involved in the sea level rise discussions since sea level rise will greatly impact fresh water supplies, water treatment, and infrastructure.

• Build better relationships between water agencies and local governments.

• Facilitate greater regional cooperation among water agencies, including co-investment in infrastructure.

• Conduct more long-term planning for on-going impacts of climate change.

• Put more focus on regional and statewide policies and programs. Behavior change at the local level is good but it won’t address the large infrastructure and storage problems.

Health

• Identify public health issues from drought and water supply changes and develop mitigation strategies, particularly for vulnerable communities and populations
  o Food costs and food insecurity
  o Drinking water quality, affordability and availability
  o Vector borne diseases
  o Air pollution
  o Wildfire
  o Unemployment
  o Mental health

• Engage in long-term planning where health sector (public health departments, environmental health organizations, hospitals) are at the table in multi-sectoral planning

Equity

• Develop a focused plan to address disproportionate risks and burdens placed on low income communities and communities of color by both climate change and historical practices

• Advocate and support a statewide water affordability safety net (lifeline rate)

• Address affordability issues for low-income communities as water rates are increased

• Build capacity in vulnerable communities so residents can take an active role in water planning
Forest/Watershed Restoration

- Explore investment in upstream forest restoration like the Denver Water “Forest to Faucet” program with USFS.
- Protect water resource areas with forest restoration in the Sierra.
- Develop greater emphasis on forest restoration to enhance Bay Area and Sierra watersheds.
- More and improved planning at the watershed level.
- Develop more resilient groundwater supplies to stabilize terrestrial ecosystems
- Re-water selected natural areas to protect and enhance ecosystems’ resilience to increased heat and changes in precipitation.

Outreach and Education

- Increase public education on the need for long-term changes in Bay Area water supply.
- Build more political will to support water portfolio diversification. This will increase costs so political support required.
- Design and conduct better public outreach with clearer messages on conservation.
- Increase community commitment to sustainable water use, including lifestyle changes and expectations.
- Invest in public education and engagement using public health resources and messengers.

Other Key Actions

- Address salinity issues in the Delta and for groundwater supplies near SF Bay.
- Provide better access to water use data for use by cities and others.
• Obtain funding for full implementation smart meters (AMI – Advanced Metering Infrastructure). While this is an expensive transformation, full implementation will change the water business profoundly.

• Prohibit the planting of permanent crops dependent on depleted aquifers.

• Create a system of equitable water rationing.

• Take a fix it first approach to water infrastructure