

DRAFT Flood Study Group Communications Framework

Working Draft, December 2019

Overview

AUDIENCE: California legislators, agency decision-makers, and their staff (*not* general public, though they might appreciate the messages too)

GOALS: Through alignment of messages across various FSG participant groups, encourage decision-makers to adopt FSG policy and funding recommendations for multi-benefit flood management.

How this can get used...

- Pull from this to
 - Have a meeting with someone new (especially a legislator, their staff, or another decision-maker)
 - Give testimony at a legislative hearing
 - Talk to a reporter
 - Write an op-ed
 - Develop social media messages
- *This is an interim document, and not meant to be final/perfect.*

Vision Statement

A Multi-Benefit Approach to Flood Protection in California: Protecting People, Restoring Rivers
Multi-benefits focus on floodplain restoration, floodways expansion, and giving “rivers more room”

- Protecting people and property
- Supporting fish and wildlife
- Improving water quality and water security
- Preserving working farms and ranches
- Enhancing recreational opportunities

In 2020 - short, focused vision statement for multi-benefit flood management in California would be helpful

Calls to Action (pulled from FSG policy recommendations):

1. **INVEST in natural infrastructure for climate resilient flood risk reduction** that protects public health and safety, reduces flood risk for our homes and businesses - especially in vulnerable communities - and provides benefits for ecosystems and all of us who depend on them. These solutions are often called “multi-benefit” solutions.
 - a. *Can lead with issue most important for given audience*
2. **Implement California’s Central Valley flood plan** to ensure a healthier and safer future. California has a plan for how to simultaneously reduce flood risk for vulnerable communities and support environmental objectives we all value. Decision-makers need to put real resources - state funding, staff, and energy - into carrying it out.
3. *If an opportunity arises for more in-depth conversation, these would be appropriate points to touch on:*
 - a. *Improve permitting and funding processes to encourage implementation of good projects*
 - b. *Improve integration among various planning processes to optimize public dollars and achieve multiple objectives*
 - i. *SGMA*
 - ii. *Flood Plan*
 - iii. *Others*
 - c. *Ensure appropriate land use in floodplains*
 - d. *Develop a flood master plan for the San Joaquin Valley*

Core Messages (in support of Calls to Action):

1. **INVEST in 21st Century Flood Solutions**
 - a. **We need more state funding (general):**
 - i. Millions of Central Valley residents live and work in high-risk flood zones. Taxpayers could be liable for billions of dollars in damages if a major flood damages private property, plus the cost of repairing levees, roads, and the state’s water transport system.
 - ii. Multi-benefit projects use time-tested, common sense approaches combined with the latest science to lower flood risk, enhance habitat, and increase resilience to climate change. The State of California’s

Central Valley Flood Protection Board supports a multi-benefit approach to flood management.

- iii. We know that flood solutions that use nature to protect our communities and the environment work. With impacts of climate change, like larger and more frequent floods, looming these need to be expanded across the Central Valley.
- iv. Right now, only one in every **NUMBER** counties has a modern flood protection program/project. But we have the technology and the know-how to fix this. Communities across the Central Valley deserve this investment in their health and safety, especially as climate change causes bigger floods.
- v. In 2017, California established a groundbreaking flood plan that calls for billions of dollars in new flood projects. This plan is largely unfunded, and needs more support from the state to make it a reality.
- vi. Sub-points for specific audiences:
 - 1. Policy/funding works: Flood is a fiscal orphan, meaning it can't be funded by ratepayers, so is an excellent candidate to be included in a bond.
 - 2. Specific ask for the 2020 bond - e.g. multibenefit central valley floodplain management

b. We need specific funding for maintenance:

- i. Ongoing investment in levee maintenance is the best way to prevent breaks and keep our water systems resilient to climate change.
- ii. Right now, two in every five levees in California are at risk of failing.
- iii. When we can't assume a levee is enough to defend against bigger and more frequent floods, we need to make sure we're maintaining the surrounding floodplain as a "Plan B."

2. Implement the Central Valley Flood Plan

a. California has a plan, and we need to get serious about implementing it.

- i. We already know what works. We need resources to make vision reality.
- ii. Resources we need to implement it include state funding, more staff, and a lot of energy into putting good projects and policies on the ground.

b. California is updating the Flood Plan for 2022, and we have an opportunity to improve it in the face of climate change:

- i. In 2017, California came together with a flood plan for the Central Valley that protects homes and communities, restores our rivers, and replenishes groundwater supplies.

- ii. The Flood Plan is being updated now. California gets to build on what we've already accomplished and make an even stronger flood plan that responds to modern challenges like increased flooding.
- iii. Together, we are taking a big step in giving rivers more room and using natural solutions that make us safer against bigger floods.

c. The Flood Plan update should be strengthened in several ways.

- i. Lower flood risk
- ii. Prioritize multi-benefit projects
- iii. Prevent unsafe development on floodplains while striving to meet California's critical affordable housing goals.

d. Lower flood risk:

- i. As we implement the current Central Valley flood plan and develop the next plan, we must prioritize investments where flood risk is the highest.
- ii. That means focusing on the communities hardest hit by flooding, especially as climate change makes floods bigger. The communities living with the highest flood risks are often low-income and underserved communities. This is a major social and environmental injustice.
- iii. For years, instead of putting money into protecting communities against inevitable flooding, we tried to control nature. Now, California has a flood plan that uses the best science to make us stronger today and for generations down the line. By using proven solutions together, we are lowering flood risk and building resilience against climate change. These solutions include: levee reinforcement, floodway expansion, reservoir reoperation, flood insurance, building codes, emergency response, and land use planning to limit new development in floodplains.

e. Prioritize multi-benefit projects:

- i. In places like Hamilton City, X, and Y, we are already using multi-benefit flood projects to make communities safer and protect fragile ecosystems. These types of projects can also provide other benefits like recreation spaces and recharged groundwater supplies. In other words, multi-benefit projects provide health and ecological benefits while protecting public safety.

- ii. Taking an integrated approach to flood management, like projects that utilize natural processes and provide multiple benefits, increases public benefits for every dollar spent.
- iii. A multi-benefit approach is necessary to fully realize the value of our rivers and floodplains.

Draft Vision Statement (Long Version)

*The intent is to lay out to decision makers, agency people, and everyone else our FSG might talk to, what our **positive** vision for the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys is: how we think it can be done right and what right looks like.*

We have a vision of the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers and valleys that are resilient to the larger and more frequent floods anticipated for the coming decades. This means safe communities, thriving populations of salmon and steelhead, opportunities for fishing, swimming and boating in the clean cool waters, and healthy riverside lands that provide habitat for wildlife, and opportunities for people from urban and rural communities to connect with nature.

This vision includes cities along the San Joaquin, such as Stockton, Firebaugh and Fresno, and its tributaries, such as Modesto (Tuolumne), Oakdale and Ripon (Stanislaus), and Merced (Bear). These cities have popular riverside parks with walking and bike paths, businesses and homes situated well above but turned to face and enjoy the river, and where needed, robust levees to protect the constructed landscape during high flows. We envision a thriving agricultural economy, with farmers being compensated to grow lower value crops, such as alfalfa and pasture, along the river corridor so that these lands can double as floodplains, calming and dissipating high flows. We envision these floodplains serving as a rich nursery for juvenile salmon migrating towards the Golden Gate. Thousands of acres and acre-feet of accommodation space are provided by these expanded and working floodplains, including Paradise cut just upstream of Stockton. Many of the multiple use lands within the river corridor are adjacent to one another, forming long and wide swaths of land that greatly reduce downstream stage height during storm events. Over decades, we see exhausted groundwater reserves refilling through the expanded floodplains; with these recharged aquifers contributing late season flows to the river and providing clean drinking water for rural communities in the Valley.

This vision extends up the Sacramento river and its tributaries as well. We see the more water-rich Sacramento Valley with rice fields flooded each winter and spring providing habitat for migrating birds and enriching the aquatic foodweb to feed Chinook salmon and steelhead, whose populations are large and robust. We see residents and visitors along the upper and lower Sacramento enjoying birding, hunting and fishing on private and public lands along the

river. We envision high winter and spring flood flows that are ushered onto thousands of acres of rice fields and the Sutter Bypass to bring peak river stages dramatically down before the river flows through the city of Sacramento. As with the San Joaquin, we envision the Sacramento Valley cities, including Sacramento and Red Bluff, with expanded, clean and well used urban parks along the rivers, with tall riparian trees that support recreation and provide important wildlife habitat. With decreased high flow stage heights, resources are focused on fewer levees and these levees are robust and well maintained. We see high winter and spring flows moving across an expanded Yolo Bypass that lowers the river stage near West Sacramento and provides vast and rich habitat for out-migrating salmon.

This vision is possible. Getting here requires courage, persistence, imagination, and collaboration. We are committed to making this vision a reality.

2019-2020 “HOOK” CALENDAR: Opportunities for flood communications

October 2019

- **Pre-Flood Season:** Set the stage for flood season -- what can CA learn from US floods in 2019/how should that inform our future investments? Are any projects newly up and running that can help protect CV residents during a future flood and provide health, environmental, and safety benefits?
- **Newsom Administration Water Resilience Portfolio:** Leverage and highlight portfolio content that aligns with FSG recommendations – how can the FSG respond to the draft portfolio and amplify the parts it has already helped inform?
- **Water Bond:** What should the FSG talk about now to make sure there’s a strong bond in January?

November 2019

- **Newsom Administration Water Resilience Portfolio:** Cont.
- **Water Bond:** Cont.
- **Reservoir Releases early November:** *More setting the stage for flood season*
- **Flood Season:**
 - Be prepared with tight, shared messaging that connects to values and clearly defines the problem, choice/action, and vision
 - Rapid response activities related to CA and US floods – does every FSG member know what to do as part of a shared comms program if there’s a flood in the Central Valley, in CA, in the US? Should we reaffirm those roles and plan?

- Showcase multi-benefit projects in action
- **Nov. 5 PPIC Water Conference:** Are any FSG members speaking? How else can we use remarks and key findings from the conference over social media, in talking points to legislators, and more?

December 2019

- **Flood Season:** Cont.
- **Newsom Administration Water Resilience Portfolio:** Cont.
- **Water Bond:** Cont.
- **Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (exact timing TBD):** How is the FSG engaging with the flood board and state agencies on the 2022 plan update? What is the state's timeline? How can we support new and underrepresented voices in the valley who need better protections built into the next plan?

January 2020

- **Flood Season:** Cont.
- **Central Valley Flood Protection Plan:** Cont.
- **Water Bond:** What is the political strategy for the water bond? Communications tactics can layer in to support that and use the water bond as another hook to talk about how multi-benefit flood projects double/triple/quadruple value of taxpayer dollars.
- **SGMA:** Build on analyses from Groundwater Leadership Forum and other groups to talk about how GSAs can use multi-benefit flood projects and floodplains for groundwater recharge to achieve sustainability goals

February 2020

- **Flood Season:** Cont.
- **Central Valley Flood Protection Plan:** Cont.
- **Water Bond:** Cont.
- **SGMA:** Cont.
- **Oroville Dam Emergency Anniversary**

Other Potential News/Attention Generators (to be put into calendar on ad hoc basis):

- New studies on flood frequency, flood intensity, flood damage predictions, particularly in era of changing climate
- Evergreen and new content from FSG members, such as videos, fact sheets, and graphics – what is the best way to ensure everyone has and is using this content?
- Project updates and developments, including photos, videos, community perspectives – especially for projects already listed as current or future projects on multibenefitproject.org

- How are local communities in the Central Valley, such as Stockton, thinking about flood risk and floodplain restoration? Are there local events we can support/organize? How can we help amplify the voices of people working on these issues locally and/or who see the need for more funding, stronger flood plan?
- NOAA analysis of rainy season, including tracking wettest months
- UC Davis flood researchers have been visiting communities dealing with floods – are they still doing this? Can we connect them with other CV communities?
<https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/news/small-towns-big-flood-waters/>