

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION**

**STAFF SUMMARY REPORT: Xavier Fernandez
MEETING DATE: February 12, 2025**

ITEM: 7

**Public Policy Institute of California Water Policy Center: Priorities for California's
Water – Are We Ready for Climate Change? – Informational Item**

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DISCUSSION

In 2021, when California was in the grips of one of the driest periods on record, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) held an event to discuss how to make needed changes. During the event, research fellow Alvar Escriva-Bou addressed the elephant in the room: “Is climate change outpacing us?” Karla Nemeth, director of the California Department of Water Resources, reframed the question slightly. “Are we ready?” she asked. “The answer to that is: not yet.”

Three years later, Director Nemeth’s words still ring true. California faces many immediate challenges around water management, but as the record-breaking heat of 2024 makes clear, temperatures are rising—and Californians are contending with the consequences. Dangerous heat waves, extreme droughts and floods, water quality challenges, and increasing wildfire risk are impacting the lives of Californians everywhere. Further, climate change is exacerbating ecosystem impacts from past and current water and land use decisions and will continue to do so into the future.

To help address this crisis, Public Policy Institute of California’s Water Policy Center prepared the [*Priorities for California’s Water: Are We Ready for Climate Change?*](#) report to recommend policy approaches to address critical challenges today while also preparing for an uncertain albeit different future under climate change. The report emphasizes an adaptation planning approach that considers a suite of potential actions triggered by thresholds to prepare for multiple future scenarios. It also recommends approaches to address the risk climate change poses to water supply, flood management, freshwater and estuarine ecosystems, and headwater forests.

Letitia Grenier, the Director of Public Policy Institute of California’s Water Policy Center, will provide an overview of the *Priorities for California’s Water: Are We Ready for Climate Change?* report with a focus on the conclusions of the report.