

Maven's Notebook Weekly Water Blast for August 4

Your guide to the best of last week and what to look for this week in California water

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Good morning! Welcome to this week's Water Blast.

Delta Watermaster & State Water Board chair discuss federal funding cuts (briefly)

At the conclusion of his quarterly update to the State Water Board,

Delta Watermaster Jay Ziegler briefly addressed the federal funding cuts. Here's what they had to say.

"We're seeing an unprecedented series of cutbacks in science programs at the federal level," **said Delta Watermaster Jay Ziegler.** "The Bureau has absorbed a 20% cut in its Western Region office, and Cal EPA has absorbed a 23% cut, in its budget. There's been a \$99 million cut in the Pacific salmon Restoration Fund. \$126 million have been cut from flood projects in the Greater Sacramento-Central Valley watershed, and \$140 million cut proposed in the water SMART program, including elimination of loan based programs and the cut in NOAA's Oceanic Atmospheric Research Program, which is proposed to be eliminated. What we're seeing just within the budget framework is alarming."

"We've also become aware in the last week that the Bureau has proposed contracting out the 55 station gage network in the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta, I've been endeavoring to talk with stakeholders across the spectrum about their reaction to this. I've been somewhat encouraged that critical Central Valley customers recognize the importance of reliable data that is based in continuity of data, QA/QC methodologies that are accepted by all parties and specifically the metrics that specific flow conditions, temperature, turbidity, turbidity bridges, and salinity data from specific gaging stations as well as the other places in the network to ensure reliability, let alone OMR flow dynamic."

"What I am hearing from water agencies is that they are also concerned that the lack or the questionability of critical data that we have seen and that which the board needs to evaluate compliance with the water quality control plan, and it represents a threat to their interests. The

absence of quality scientific data is really a phenomenon that is almost abhorrent to digest at a moment where our ability and scientific instrumentation and integration of both field data and satellite data, and where all of this information can provide a much better picture for real time conditions, but if we believe that understanding and pretend that rolling back a monitoring network and our sophisticated integration of data can actually lead to better water management decisions, we are on an unpredictable fools errand that could adversely impact all stakeholders in the Delta.”

“I think it's important for the board to continue to exercise a level of due diligence to ensure that the scientific data standards that the board has adopted to ensure compliance with the board's responsibilities continues to be foremost in your mind. We are currently working with the WEMA (?) to really discern the data standards that the board has previously adopted, and how those standards affect continuing evaluation, especially with regard to water quality control plan compliance.”

“So we look forward to continued dialog with you and but we're certainly in an alarming moment, I think, in which all of us need to think creatively about how we sustain, protect, engage and creatively partner with others to avert a rollback in our scientific and data and monitoring programs in the Delta.”

Chair Joaquin Esquivel responded, “To your concern, and one that we share deeply, it's something that we've been tracking, certainly the continued rollback of what our long standing federal investments in data, in science, let alone other federal pots that we have on the drinking water side. So we've been doing our best to monitor. We have ongoing conversations at Department of Water Resources as well,

where the absence and withdrawal of these federal resources that are so dependent on our decision making is going to likely mean that we here within the state will have to find those resources, because it is so critical to our decision making, and we can't afford to go backwards at this time.”

“We're moving in the wrong direction when it comes to the rollback of these federal investments, at a time when we continue to hear from those in the ag sector and the conservation side that we want to see real time management of the resource. We want to see adaptive management, as it's so often called out. But without that data, without that information, you can't have real time management. You don't have anything to adaptively manage with. So it is foundational. It is critical.”

“I think of the California-Nevada River Forecast Center and our dependence on their tools for even administering water rights and having relied on them heavily in this last turn of the drought, where absent those tools, we wouldn't have been able to manage as well as we did.”

“It can feel a bit overwhelming at times - the magnitude of and amount of activity and withdrawal that the feds are currently engaged in, but we'll continue to do our part to monitor and importantly, ensure that it doesn't harm our interests here within the state and our decision making ability.”

Supply & Demand Assessments dashboards for selected watersheds now available

The State Water Board's response to drought conditions during the 2020-2023 drought underscored the need for better tools to evaluate

water supply and demand and improve water management. In 2022, the Division of Water Rights established the Supply and Demand Assessment Unit (SDA) to develop water supply models and refine demand data for select California watersheds.

The SDA Unit focuses on creating hydrologic models to assess surface water availability; refining water use data, including annual reports from water right holders, to evaluate demand across different water years; and enhancing water allocation tools to analyze how various water use scenarios affect supply.

State Board staff have published new interactive surface water demand visualization dashboards for [Butte Creek](#), [Gualala River](#), [Mattole River](#), [Napa River](#), [Navarro River](#), [Putah Creek](#), [Russian River](#), [Salmon Creek \(Sonoma County\)](#), and [Tomaes-Drakes Bay](#).

Scroll down to the bottom of the page and you'll see the dashboard, similar to the Butte Creek example shown above. Note: the dashboard is embedded in a box that looks similar to when I embed PDFs onto a post on the Notebook. The dashboard is active in that window, but I found it a bit laggy on my computer, which confused me at first. Expanding to full screen seemed to improve performance on my system.

More information on the State Water Board's Supply & Demand Assessments is available at www.waterboards.ca.gov/sda.

Making Conservation a California Way of Life: Upcoming webinars for variance and temporary request templates

On January 1, 2025, the *Making Conservation a California Way of Life* regulation went into effect, establishing a new framework for urban water management. Urban retail water suppliers must annually calculate and comply with an urban water use objective, implement commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) performance measures, and submit progress reports.

The urban water use objective is the sum of standard-based budgets for efficient residential indoor and outdoor use, CII landscapes with dedicated irrigation meters (DIMs), and real water losses. Suppliers may request variances to their objective for additional water for unique, ongoing uses like livestock, seasonal populations, wildlife ponds, or evaporative coolers. Temporary variances can be used for time-limited water for beneficial uses like establishing climate-ready trees or construction of infrastructure projects.

Suppliers can request variances or temporary provisions using the State Water Board's new Excel-based Variance Request Template, available on the *Making Conservation a California Way of Life* webpage. In addition, State Water Board staff will host two webinars covering the variance and temporary provision submission process and use of the Variance Request Template.

The presentation will be the same for each webinar. Registration is required. Webinar dates and times:

- Webinar 1: Monday, August 11, 2025, 2–3:30 p.m. [Register online.](#)
- Webinar 2: Tuesday, August 12, 2025, 10–11:30 a.m. [Register online.](#)

More information on the Making Conservation a California Way of Life at [the Board's webpage](#) and [FAQ](#).

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Thank you, as always, for your incredible support—Maven's Notebook runs entirely on the generosity of readers like you. If you find the Notebook useful (or at least mildly entertaining), please nudge a colleague, friend, or even your neighbor's dog to chip in and keep us going. Times are tight, and while I can't pay my bills with good vibes alone, your contributions make all the difference. Wishing you a fantastic summer filled with sunshine, laughter, and just the right amount of air conditioning. And remember, every little bit helps—because even Mavens need snacks!

Warm regards
