

Stormwater Funding

Why is This Important to Local Government?

An Assembly or Senate Constitutional Amendment would approve a ballot measure and allow the California public the opportunity to decide if "stormwater" infrastructure and services should be funded similar to the way Wastewater Districts and Water Districts fund their infrastructure and services. Currently, water and wastewater districts can raise revenue through a noticed public hearing, resulting in their vital systems working well today and into the future. The ballot measure would change the process stormwater agencies use to fund stormwater services to a process currently used by drinking water and wastewater districts.

General Fund at Risk. When a storm drain pipe fails in a busy street or when the Regional Water Board issues a new permit requirement it must be addressed. If cities and counties do not have adequate revenue to fund their stormwater infrastructure or stormwater quality services, then General Fund revenue would have to be used.

Groundwater Recharge. Water is prevented from re-entering underground aquifers from a variety of activities including: evaporation from watering crops, livestock, and landscaped areas. Additionally, man-made soil coverings, such as roads, parking lots, patios and roofs, can present an impediment to recharging groundwater storage. A higher volume of stormwater now flows out of our watersheds at a higher rate, reducing groundwater available for drinking, food production, and the environment. Underground storage will provide a local source of water that will benefit farmers, the environment and all people. We need to increase infiltration, capture and reuse of stormwater, our most valuable resource.

Economic Protection. Flooding from large storms can destroy business districts, schools, and other institutions essential to a community's prosperity and well-being. Flood Control Districts have flood protection facilities on many of the State's iconic rivers and streams. These facilities must be maintained and replaced when necessary to enhance habitat value, improve water quality, and increase stormwater infiltration while protecting communities from flooding.

Water Quality. In many areas stormwater is polluted and must be cleaned up. Advisory notices are posted in many Rivers and Bays to not eat the fish and beaches are closed due to pollutants. Cities and counties are the lead agencies to clean up stormwater, which has become a very costly enterprise and strain on local government budgets.

Old Drainage Pipes. Each city and unincorporated County community has miles of stormwater drainage pipes that drain their streets and adjacent properties. Many of these pipes are over 50 years old and need replacing. With each year the list of pipes to be replaced and the budget necessary to do the work grows, increasing the demand on general fund revenue.

Environment. Stormwater is the lifeblood of all living plants and species in the watershed, including humans. Improving the quality of stormwater and increasing stormwater infiltration in watersheds is critical to establishing a healthy environment, a stable stream system and viable riparian habitat.

Local Control. If California voters approve a ballot measure on stormwater, each city, county, community will decide how to implement the ballot measure to fund stormwater services through a public process. After conducting public hearings, some communities may decide to fund all aspects of their stormwater needs, some may only fund a portion or certain elements of their needs, and others may decide to not implement any funding measures.

Cities and counties throughout California face many funding challenges and needs that involve stormwater. A ballot measure approved by the legislature can provide funding to local government to meet these challenges and needs. For more information, please contact Karen Keene, California State Association of Counties at 916-327-7500 (ext. 511), or Mitch Avalon, County Engineers Association of California at 925-313-2203, or go to www.cccounty.us/stormwaterinitiative.