

A few months from now, state and federal officials will make some of the most important decisions in decades to modernize California's water system.

For Southern Californians, the stakes could not be higher. About one-third of the water we use comes from Northern California via the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

A plan called California WaterFix would improve our aging water system by building three new intakes in the Northern Delta and two tunnels to convey water to the start California Aqueduct in the southern Delta. A companion plan, California EcoRestore, would make important investments to improve the Delta's ecosystem. Why do we need these plans? Here are five reasons.

#1 The Big One

Scientists say that earthquakes and rising sea levels could cause these levees to fail, putting our fresh water supply at risk from saltwater contamination. The new tunnel pipelines would more safely transport supplies to the 25 million people, farms, businesses that depend on this water.

#2 Groundwater

Groundwater is Southern California's single largest local water source, but groundwater managers actually depend primarily on imported supplies from Northern California to help replenish those basins.

#3 Big Storms

A modernized system could reliably capture enough water to refill reservoirs after big storms because it would have multiple locations in the Delta to divert supplies, providing flexibility and reducing conflicts with migrating fish species such as salmon.

#4 Drought

Nearly all of the water that is stored in Southern California for drought and emergency needs comes either from Northern California or the Colorado River. An improved statewide water system helps us better prepare for extended drought.

#5 The Highest Quality Equals More Local Supplies

Sierra snowmelt is pure enough to recycle again and again, promoting more recycling projects in the region's future. And this supply has been good enough for Metropolitan to enter into international water tasting competitions – and win.

Making these improvements would cost about \$15 billion, with the share for Metropolitan Water District of Southern California likely about 25 percent.

Yet consider the benefit of protecting water reliability from the state's single largest supply, the Sierra snowpack. This investment breaks down to less than a tenth of a penny per gallon of supply delivered, protecting the supply for decades to come.

California Water Fix is a science-driven upgrade to our aging water system. It will provide clean, reliable water to California businesses, farms and residents while protecting our environment.