



SB 19 – DODD STREAM GAGES

Summary

SB 19 would require the Department of Water Resource, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to develop a plan to deploy a network of stream gages that includes a determination of funding needs and opportunities for reactivating existing gages.

Background

Stream gages provide essential information about one of California's most precious resources - water.

There Are Twelve Ways Water Managers Use Stream Flow Information:

- 1 Allocating water during drought
- 2 Predicting floods and managing floodplains
- 3 Ensuring dam and reservoir safety
- 4 Protecting California's ecosystems and species
- 5 Verifying water diversions and use
- 6 Meeting water quality standards
- 7 Supporting enforcement actions against illegal diversions
- 8 Deciding whether to permit a new water right
- 9 Monitoring groundwater-surface water interactions for SGMA compliance
- 10 Understanding and calculating basin water balance
- 11 Identifying water infrastructure needs
- 12 Revising water management plans to meet changing conditions.

Gaps in the stream gage network make it difficult to ensure that both people and nature are getting water when and where they need it.

The state is famous for its highly engineered water system, which moves millions of gallons of water from north to south and east to west. Thirty-nine million people and our \$47 billion agricultural industry rely on that water, not to mention wildlife from the Sierra to the sea. And yet we have surprisingly little data about how much water is moving through our streams at any given time. There are over 3,600 locations in California where stream gages have been active at some point, but only 54% have been active recently. And even fewer of those provide the kind of rich, real-time reporting needed to manage what is arguably our state's most precious and contentious resource.

Comprehensive data on gages does not exist in California. Despite the various efforts to assemble gage data, there is no single authoritative database on gage locations. Although there is a large quantity of data available about gages in California, that data is challenging to harmonize and analyze if one wants a complete survey of California's gage network.

California must prepare for extreme climate change-related events including increases in both droughts and floods, and for more effective water management across all year types to maximize the benefits of its limited water supply. Understanding the state of our stream flows is critical to such preparedness,



but our current gage network is inadequate to address this challenge.

Contact

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Existing Law

Pursuant to the Open and Transparent Water Data Act (2016), the Department of Water Resources (DWR), in conjunction with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and the Calif. Water Quality Monitoring Council is developing a Water Data Platform that will integrate local, state and federal water data and make that information available to water managers and others throughout the state.

Existing law also authorizes the SWRCB to administer a water rights program, and requires the Water Quality Monitoring Council to undertake various actions relating to water quality data collection.

This Bill

The bill would require the Department of Water Resources, in consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board, to prioritize the deployment of stream gages based upon gaps in the existing system of gages and the ability to provide data to help protect fish and wildlife and benefit water management strategies. The bill would also require the SWRCB to assess the funding needs to implement a stream gage network.

Support

The Nature Conservancy (Sponsor)
Northern Calif. Water Assn.
Groundwater Resources Assn.
Sonoma Water Agency

Opposition

None on file