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Institutional/Educational Membership

Groundwater Resources Assn of CA
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Legislative Advocate

Rosanna Carvacho
Clear Advocacy

May 2, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee 2
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Budget Request, Department of Water Resources Atmospheric Rivers Research Program

Dear Chairs Skinner and Wieckowski:

On behalf of the California Groundwater Coalition (CGC), I write to request \$10 million be included in the 2022-23 Budget Act for the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program (AR Program).

Thank you for including \$10 million in the 2021-22 Budget Act for the AR Program to support the study and implementation of forecast-informed reservoir operations (FIRO) at three pilot project sites. The State's investment in this drought resilience tool is critical to ensure FIRO expansion, strengthen California's drought resilience, and secure continued federal funding across multiple agencies. Your leadership is sincerely appreciated.

The \$10 million requested in the 2022-23 budget will advance operational AR forecast tool integration with DWR water supply management, align AR Program results and products with FIRO to increase water management flexibility, and continue innovations that improve AR, precipitation, and snow level prediction capabilities.

FIRO effectiveness is dependent on forecast accuracy and timing. Continued DWR investment in improving forecasts for water management is necessary to operationalize FIRO across California. Expanded use of improved forecasts and FIRO implementation will help Californians better manage water supplies with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. These programs will enable water managers to improve their respective water operations, and to diversify their supplies – improving the regional capacity for groundwater recharge and stormwater capture.

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California has successfully advocated for significant federal investments in FIRO and improved precipitation forecasting. DWR's AR program leverages on-going funding from several federal agencies. As California continues to be regularly impacted by chronic and severe drought followed by extreme rain events, providing California water managers better forecasting tools will improve water management. FIRO benefits were demonstrated during Water Year 2020, the third driest water year on record, where Lake Mendocino's water supply increased by 20 percent. Skills in predicting ARs over one week in advance have been enhanced, including a 20 percent improvement in the five-day forecasts – an unprecedented forecast skill improvement that typically requires decades of development.

With improved precipitation and snow-level forecasting, full implementation of FIRO could allow the conservation of an additional 500,000 acre feet of water in some years throughout the state, significantly enhancing California's water supply reliability while also mitigating flood risk. These promising water supply benefits would enhance community drought preparedness, including for natural ecosystems.

The DWR AR Program's enhanced observations, modeling, tailored forecasting, and FIRO implementation will save lives, protect property, and enhance water management. CGC respectfully encourage you to include \$10 million for this valuable program in the 2022-23 Budget Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ann DuBay
President, California Groundwater Coalition