



QuenchCA
Building Water For You

Reducing Flood Risk & Replenishing Groundwater Supply for Central Valley Communities

In no other year were the effects of California's weather whiplash more apparent than 2023. Following three of the driest years on record, this wet winter brought historic levels of rain and snow to the state. Though this water was much needed after extended periods of drought, it strained our state's water infrastructure systems, creating an increased threat of flooding to California communities. To counter this threat, Governor Gavin Newsom issued [Executive Order R N-4-23](#) which authorized the diversion of flood water without the drawn-out permit process to recharge groundwater basins. For water agencies across the state, this presented a unique solution to manage the influx of water and reduce flood risk to surrounding communities. With the recent passage of [Senate Bill \(SB\) No. 122](#), the ability to divert flood water to adapt to extreme weather events in California has been extended for an additional five years.

California's weather whiplash is here to stay. Come drought or high water, our water infrastructure systems need to be prepared for it. This year's back-to-back storms revealed that our water infrastructure systems couldn't capture enough water in time, leaving many areas vulnerable to flooding. The Governor's Executive Order helped state water agencies direct floodwater away from local communities and into key groundwater basins, reducing flood risk while supplementing California's groundwater supplies.

These groundwater basins are important, as groundwater makes up nearly half of all water consumed in California. For years, the McMullin Area Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MAGSA) and other agencies have been working to upgrade our water infrastructure systems to capture and replenish these vital groundwater resources. MAGSA's On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project is one such infrastructure upgrade – diverting floodwater onto surrounding farmland to reduce flood risk and increase groundwater supply for local communities. Thanks to the Governor's Executive Order, floodwater was diverted from Kings River to Terranova Ranch fields and basins, reducing the risk of flooding for the Firebaugh and Mendota communities, and restoring nearly 20,000 acre-feet of water to the local groundwater supply.

With the passage of SB 122, California has made it easier to adapt to extreme weather events like what we've experienced this year. The bill authorizes the diversion of floodwater, reducing flood risk and replenishing depleted groundwater supplies throughout the state. For water agencies like MAGSA who are building critical infrastructure projects to maintain and improve our water supply, SB 122 ensures our state makes the most of increasingly intense weather extremes, so we can plan for floods during times of drought and plan for drought during times of flooding.

To learn more about the McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Expansion Project, visit <https://www.mcmullinarea.org/ofr/>.