

TOP 2025 PRIORITIES

The year is off to an inauspicious and unsettling start. The Los Angeles fires, Trump's Executive Orders attacking California's water policy with outright lies, and the severe pullback of federal funding and expertise has left many of us in a tailspin as we scramble to address these uncertain times. In 2025, CCKA has already adjusted our workplan priorities to resist the federal government's attacks on California water policy. We will not sit idle and allow our state's water quality protections to go backwards. We also cannot allow these federal attacks to prevent us from moving forward. Critical policies to prevent our ocean from dying from ocean acidification, addressing historic inequities in water rights and safe drinking water, and ensuring we have enough water in our streams and rivers to prevent the extinction of salmon and steelhead trout must push ahead. CCKA has always prided itself on providing solutions to daunting problems – this year will be no different.

- 1. Protect California from federal attacks on clean water protections.** The 2023 U.S. Supreme Court *Sackett v. EPA* decision stripped many California streams and wetlands of federal Clean Water Act protections, leaving state waters highly vulnerable to pollution. The Trump Administration has already issued several Executive Orders putting California water policy at risk while interfering with state authority. CCKA will defend California's water quality protections by introducing The Right to Clean Water Act. Our legislation will protect California's water by providing the state with the same Clean Water Act tools it had before Trump and *Sackett*.
- 2. Develop water quality standards to prevent ocean acidification dead zones and harmful algal blooms.** Top scientists have demonstrated that nutrient pollution from sewage wastewater discharges causes acidic hot spots and toxic algal blooms along the Southern California coast - creating inhospitable 'dead zones' for marine life. CCKA is working with state decision-makers to develop an Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Policy that will set water quality standards to stop nutrient pollution and prevent further exacerbation of hot spots along the California coast.
- 3. Regulate commercial stormwater pollution by incentivizing co-operative stormwater capture projects with the local government.** The state has failed to regulate stormwater pollution from commercial properties, leaving an unfair playing field for other responsible parties like industrial and municipal stormwater permittees.

Commercial sites amass pollution from every car that uses their parking lots and are major contributors of pollutants such as heavy metals, oil, and grease, yet commercial facilities are allowed to discharge their pollution to communities with impunity. CCKA is working to establish a statewide commercial stormwater permit that will stop this pollution and encourage large commercial properties to pay for green space in urban communities.

- 4. Save threatened steelhead trout from going extinct.** Steelhead are a keystone species within San Luis Obispo County, which once supported some of the largest runs of Southern steelhead in the state. Today, however, it is rare to see Southern steelhead in the wild. For thirty years, the County of San Luis Obispo has violated the Endangered Species Act by operating Lopez Dam in a manner that threatens to wipe out the region's steelhead population entirely. CCKA is working to ensure the County changes its operations to release sufficient flows of water from Lopez Dam at specific times of the year and commits to other essential habitat enhancements to protect steelhead trout.
- 5. Work to ensure the golf courses do not pollute pristine ocean habitat along the California coast.** The California coast boasts iconic and scenic golf courses, but those well-manicured greens come at a cost. The pesticides and fertilizers used to maintain golf courses flows into the ocean where it pollutes some of California's most protected ocean habitat, like the National Marine Sanctuary. CCKA is working to establish the first ever Clean Water Act permit aimed to control golf course pollution and protect our ocean.
- 6. Reform California's water rights system to be more equitable.** California's water rights system is based on the "first in time, first in right" principle, yet has historically overlooked the true first inhabitants of this land and original water users: California Native Americans. This complete oversight, coupled with state-sponsored actions that removed Native Americans from their lands and their waters, has systematically excluded Tribal Nations from crucial decision-making processes concerning our state's waterways. CCKA will work with Tribal Nations to introduce legislation that addresses the state's historic racism and ensures sufficient water flows to protect cultural resources.
- 7. Protect California's ocean habitats from polluted stormwater through enforcement, accountability, and establishing new water quality protected areas.** Nearly 50 years ago, the state set water quality protections that prohibited polluted runoff into pristine ocean areas off the California coast. But in 2012, the state provided an

exception allowing stormwater pollution in these areas. Now, more than ten years after the exceptions were granted, we are witnessing widespread pollution while the state turns a blind eye. CCKA is actively challenging those that continue to pollute our most precious marine ecosystems, while advancing new water quality protections for the state's marine protected areas.

8. **Protect instream flows and public trust resources from excessive groundwater pumping.** The state and local governments have historically failed to acknowledge the interconnection of surface and ground waters. Counties give out permits to pump groundwater with impunity, lacking any oversight to protect surface flows. To-date, California's Groundwater Sustainable Groundwater Management Act has failed to ensure groundwater management adequately protects streams from being depleted. CCKA will enforce existing public trust laws, analyze the need for counties to better protect streams when issuing groundwater pumping permits, and watchdog the government's approval of Groundwater Sustainability Plans.
9. **Protect environmental justice communities from the disparate impacts that agriculture has on their drinking water and safe access to waterways.** For decades, California has allowed farmers to excessively fertilize, which poisons local communities' drinking water. In 2023, the state stripped the first and only agricultural permit of requirements for farmers to apply a responsible amount of fertilizer to their crops. CCKA is working to require the state to put back enforceable fertilizer limits to protect farming communities' drinking water.
10. **Save California salmon and steelhead from 6PPD exposure caused by tire-wear from highways.** 6PPD is a chemical used in motor vehicle tires. Once tire particles coated in this chemical wash into the environment, 6PPD and its reaction product, 6PPD-q, interact with salmonids and compromise their blood-brain barriers, killing or severely injuring exposed fish within hours. Due to the ubiquity and toxicity of this chemical, it is imperative that California control both the source and pollution pathways for 6PPD and 6PPD-q.