FRESNO STATE | California Water Institute

San Joaquin Valley WATER RESILIENCE SUMMIT

From Reports to Results

MAY 20 AND 21, 2026

Proceedings and Strategic Action Report

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES · STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Source note

This proceedings and strategic report is based on the summit agenda, two presentation decks, Day 1 and Day 2 live transcripts, graphic recording posters, gallery walk half-sheets, consensus workshop output, 2025-2030 roadmap worksheets, facilitation materials, and participant check-in list. Speaker names and titles were normalized using the published agenda where transcripts contained transcription errors.

Executive Summary

The San Joaquin Valley Water Resilience Summit was convened at Fresno State on May 20-21, 2026 by the California Water Institute to move the Valley from reports to results and from results to action. The summit brought together water managers, state and federal agencies, irrigation districts, universities, consultants, nonprofit organizations, community representatives, agricultural interests, environmental stakeholders, and other Valley leaders to synthesize major water studies, test shared understanding, and identify near-term priorities.

The central conclusion of the summit is that the Valley's water future cannot be solved through isolated decisions. Surface water, groundwater, flood management, conveyance, recharge, land use, infrastructure, ecosystems, community resilience, public health, and economic stability are parts of one interrelated system. A decision in one part of the system directly affects other parts of the Valley.

The technical foundation presented at the summit was clear. Climate change is reducing system reliability and increasing extremes. Subsidence is reducing conveyance capacity and threatening the Valley's ability to move water when it is available. Flood risk and groundwater overdraft are connected problems that require integrated management. The Unified Water Plan estimated a 2040 water supply-demand gap of approximately 2.5 million acre-feet per year and showed that local projects alone will not be sufficient without broader supply, investment, and policy alignment.

The summit therefore moved beyond a question of whether coordinated action is needed. The question is how the Valley, State, and Federal partners can build the funding, regulatory flexibility, data systems, pilot projects, incentives, and accountability structures needed to implement a resilient portfolio.

Unified message for State Leadership

The San Joaquin Valley should be treated as a statewide water resilience priority. The Valley's water issues are interconnected, and they affect the economy, public health, communities, ecosystems, food security, and infrastructure reliability. State leadership should prioritize the Valley for pilot projects, studies, data investments, and carefully designed regulatory-flexibility pilots that test alternative approaches without setting precedent.

Summit Outcomes at a Glance

Outcome	Description
Technical synthesis	DWR and UWP presentations established a system-level picture of climate risk, conveyance loss, overdraft, flood risk, recharge opportunity, supply-demand gaps, and implementation constraints.
Consensus priorities	Participants identified eight priority action areas: funding, regulatory effectiveness, people and environment, multi-benefit pilots, sustainable supply, incentives, storytelling, and data.
Roadmap development	Small groups developed the 2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap around the eight priorities.
State-facing recommendations	The proceedings should support a letter to state leadership identifying what the State can do to help the Valley move from planning to implementation.

Recommended Near-Term State Actions

1. Make the San Joaquin Valley a priority for integrated water resilience pilots and follow-up studies.
2. Create a state-supported regulatory pilot sandbox that allows carefully controlled testing of alternative approaches without setting precedent.
3. Establish sustained and dedicated funding for Valley water resilience, including infrastructure, recharge, data, land transition, community, and ecosystem outcomes.
4. Support watershed-scale FIRO-MAR/I-FIRM pilots that integrate flood management, groundwater recharge, ecosystem enhancement, and community benefits.
5. Align state, federal, and local agencies around implementation, not only planning.
6. Invest in shared data, monitoring, standards, accounting, and decision-support tools.
7. Support coordinated land repurposing and demand-management incentives that protect communities, farmworkers, ecosystems, and local economies.
8. Recognize and elevate a unified Valley voice through an ongoing workgroup and one-year accountability process.

Purpose, Design, and Methodology

The summit was designed as a structured leadership convening rather than a traditional conference. Day 1 focused on understanding and alignment. Day 2 focused on commitment, prioritization, and action planning. The summit agenda itself emphasized discussion and insight, synthesizing key report findings, setting collective priorities, aligning state and local efforts, and moving from reports to results.

Day 1: Understanding and Alignment

Day 1 opened with Fresno State leadership, Congressman Jim Costa, and CWI framing remarks. The technical sessions then presented major DWR studies, the Unified Water Plan, and panels designed to connect technical findings to Valley perspectives, implementation barriers, and the realm of possible action.

- Three Studies, One System: State Water Project Adaptation Strategy, San Joaquin Valley Conveyance Study, and San Joaquin Basin Flood-MAR Watershed Studies.
- Connecting the System: Valley perspectives on what the studies mean across agriculture, water supply, environment, and implementation.
- Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley.
- From Plan to Practice: conditions needed to implement what is possible.
- A Vision for the San Joaquin Valley and a panel on what the vision means across communities, agencies, and sectors.

Day 2: Commitment and Roadmap Development

Day 2 was intentionally participatory. The facilitation design moved participants from individual reflection to table conversation, group consensus, and roadmap development. Participants reviewed Day 1 graphic recordings through a gallery walk, used half-sheets to capture reactions, identified top priority actions, and then developed action worksheets for the 2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap.

The facilitation design asked participants to move from observation to action. The core consensus workshop question was: "What TOP PRIORITY ACTIONS can we take in the coming year to move our water initiatives forward?"

Process Step	Purpose
Gallery walk	Participants reviewed the Day 1 graphic recording charts, made individual notes, and marked ideas that stood out.
Focused conversation	Tables discussed words/images that stood out, sources of hope, remaining concerns, and central issues.
Consensus workshop	Participants identified top priority actions, selected their best ideas, discussed them at tables, and brought top actions to the wall.
Solutions workshop	Participants self-selected into priority groups and developed the roadmap worksheets, including why each item matters, key issues, possible actions, and 2-4 actions to implement.

Participation

Day 1 of the Summit on May 20th included 161 participants in person and May 21st included 120 participants representing approximately 120 organization. Participants included state and federal agencies, local and regional water districts, irrigation districts, counties, universities, environmental organizations, community organizations, tribal representation, agricultural interests, consultants, technical experts, and data/technology organizations.

Attendee segment	Approx. count
Water agencies / irrigation districts / GSAs	32
Consulting, engineering, and environmental services	23
State agencies	20
Nonprofit / conservation / community organizations	20
Agriculture / growers / food sector	19
Academic / research / extension	18

Private water technology / equipment / vendors	14
Local government / counties / cities	8
Legislative / policy offices	3
Independent professionals / media / facilitators	2
Federal agencies	1
Uncategorized affiliation	1
Total checked in	**161**

This breadth of participation matters because the summit's central premise was that no single agency, or sector can solve the Valley's water future alone.

The Core Message for State Leadership

The Governor's Office and state water leadership should understand that water issues in the San Joaquin Valley are interconnected. Surface water, groundwater, flood management, conveyance, recharge, land use, regulations, ecosystems, communities, and public health are not separate decisions. A decision in one part of the system directly affects other areas.

The summit also made clear that Valley water issues are not only water issues. They affect the regional economy, agricultural viability, food security, public health, drinking water, air quality, land use, farmworkers, disadvantaged communities, flood risk, ecosystem outcomes, infrastructure reliability, and the long-term social and economic stability of the Valley.

The State should therefore make the San Joaquin Valley a priority when selecting pilot projects, conducting studies, designing regulatory reforms, and testing implementation approaches. The Valley is an appropriate place to test integrated solutions because the pressures are concentrated, urgent, and systemwide.

Regulatory-flexibility pilot principle

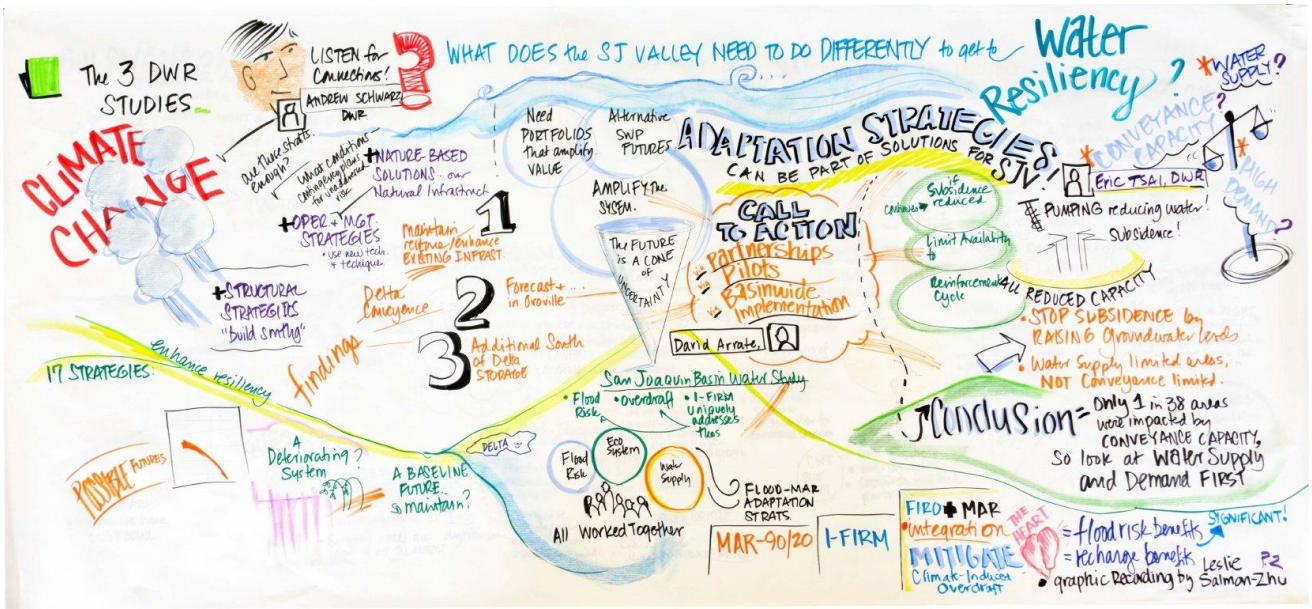
Participants emphasized that some projects should be tested under carefully controlled conditions that do not follow every current regulatory pathway, so that the State and local partners can learn whether alternative approaches could work. These pilots should be true tests, should include clear guardrails, should protect the public interest, should be monitored and evaluated, and should not automatically set regulatory precedent.

Day 1: Understanding and Alignment

Day 1 was defined by systems understanding: recognizing that the Valley's water challenges cannot be solved as separate issues, and using the technical studies, regional plans, and lived expertise in the room to see how surface water, groundwater, flood management, conveyance, land use, communities, ecosystems, and the economy are connected.

Technical Foundation: Three Studies, One System

The DWR presentation "Three Studies, One System: What We Now Understand About the Valley" provided the summit's technical backbone. The presentation did not simply describe separate studies; it showed how climate adaptation, conveyance capacity, subsidence, flood risk, groundwater overdraft, recharge, ecosystem needs, and implementation partnerships fit together.



Graphic recording of the Three Studies, One System session.

State Water Project Adaptation Strategy

The State Water Project Adaptation Strategy framed climate change as a systemwide reliability risk. The presentation stated that California could lose 10 percent of its overall water supplies over the next 20 years because of climate change, and that rapid climate changes could reduce State Water Project deliveries by as much as 25 percent.

The strategy includes 17 adaptation strategies organized into structural strategies, operational and management strategies, and nature-based solutions. Five strategies were quantitatively evaluated for future SWP reliability. The main takeaway was not that one solution is sufficient, but that a portfolio of strategies is needed because each responds to different climate stressors such as increasing drought frequency, more extreme precipitation, earlier runoff, and sea level rise.

- Maintain and restore SWP infrastructure as a first priority.
- Treat the Delta Conveyance Project as a major adaptation strategy that can also amplify other strategies.
- Implement Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations as soon as feasible in coordination with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approvals.
- Evaluate additional south-of-Delta storage as a drought resilience strategy, especially in combination with conveyance improvements.
- Recognize that forecasting and watershed management may be difficult to value precisely but can create real benefits and support future adaptation.

San Joaquin Valley Conveyance Study

The San Joaquin Valley Conveyance Study described the impacts of subsidence on major conveyance facilities and evaluated the need for improved or expanded conveyance throughout the Valley. The study's most important contribution to the proceedings is its distinction between two issues that are often conflated: lost conveyance capacity caused by subsidence and broader water supply limitations.

Subsidence is already reducing conveyance capacity in the California Aqueduct, San Luis Canal, Delta-Mendota Canal, and Friant-Kern Canal. If subsidence continues, the presentation warned, impacts could be catastrophic for the ability to supply water to support California's economy.

- Lost conveyance capacity reduces the system's ability to use and store wet-year high flows.
- Reduced use of wet-year flows increases reliance on groundwater.
- Increased groundwater reliance can worsen subsidence, creating a reinforcing cycle.
- The top conveyance priority is to minimize or stop subsidence by raising groundwater levels above critical head, especially near SWP and CVP conveyance facilities.
- Outside subsidence-impacted areas, many Valley areas are constrained primarily by inadequate surface water supply availability, not by conveyance capacity.

This finding is strategically important for state leadership. It suggests that restoring existing capacity, stopping subsidence, and increasing usable supply must be sequenced together. New or expanded conveyance alone will not solve the Valley's resilience problem if water supply and groundwater conditions remain unaddressed.

San Joaquin Basin Flood-MAR Watershed Studies

The watershed studies focused on five eastern San Joaquin Basin watersheds study areas: Calaveras, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, and Upper San Joaquin. The studies identified flood risk and groundwater overdraft as two of the largest threats in the basin and introduced I-FIRM - Integrated Forecast Informed Resource Management - as a strategy that can address both.

The I-FIRM concept builds on managed aquifer recharge by integrating FIRO, recharge, ecosystem management, targeted recharge, conveyance improvement, expanded recharge operations, and attention to disadvantaged communities, subsidence-prone areas, groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and in-basin retention.

- Flood-MAR and I-FIRM can turn some flood risk into a resource for recharge and drought resilience.

- I-FIRM was modeled to provide larger recharge and flood-management benefits than MAR-90/20 alone.
- The studies identified habitat opportunities, including off-channel habitat, wet-season baseflows, groundwater-dependent ecosystem support, seasonal shorebird habitat, and multi-benefit flow through basins.
- Implementation will be hard but not impossible if partnerships, pilots, permitting, landowner participation, reservoir operations, ecosystem protections, and Delta operations are addressed together.
- The studies called for watershed-scale partnerships, pilot projects, and eventual basinwide FIRO-MAR/I-FIRM implementation.

The System Logic Emerging from the DWR Studies

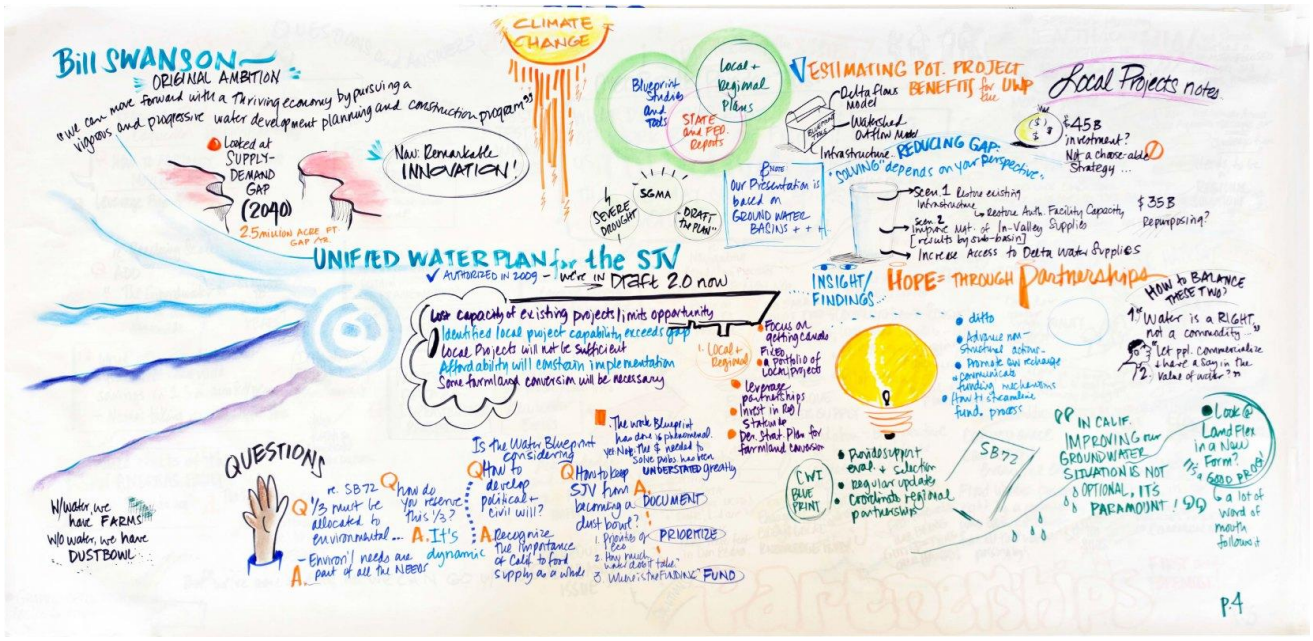
Taken together, the DWR studies show a connected causal chain. Climate change reduces reliability and increases extremes. Subsidence reduces the ability to move water. Lost conveyance capacity reduces the ability to capture wet-year flows. Reduced access to wet-year flows increases groundwater reliance. Greater groundwater reliance worsens subsidence. Therefore, resilience requires integrated surface water, groundwater, flood, conveyance, ecosystem, and land-use strategies.

Proceedings finding

The Valley's water resilience challenge is not a single-infrastructure problem. It is a connected system problem requiring coordinated portfolios, watershed-scale partnerships, and implementation across local, regional, state, and federal levels.

Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley

The Unified Water Plan presentation provided the planning, investment, and implementation frame for responding to the technical diagnosis. It situated the Valley at a planning crossroads similar to the original statewide planning choices described in the 1957 California Water Plan: coordinated development and shared progress, or fragmentation and each entity attempting to secure water with little regard to the needs of others.



Graphic recording of the Unified Water Plan session.

The Unified Water Plan was authorized in 2009 with Reclamation funding to the California Water Institute to coordinate and integrate sub-regional water management plans into a unified regional water management plan. The summit presentation emphasized that much has changed since 2009, including SGMA, climate stress, subsidence, infrastructure constraints, land transition pressures, and new regional planning needs.

Scale of the Planning Challenge

- Estimated 2040 water supply-demand gap: approximately 2.5 million acre-feet per year.
- Inputs considered: estimated overdraft from GSPs, reduced supply, increased demand, climate change effects, SJRRP and Healthy Rivers and Landscapes, groundwater replenishment needs, and refuge supply requirements.
- Planning base reviewed: more than 80 GSAs, 42 GSPs, 16 subbasins, and approximately 800 local projects and actions.
- The UWP relied on existing local and regional plans, Blueprint studies and tools, and state and federal reports.

Scenario Framework

Scenario	Purpose	Proceedings Interpretation
Scenario 1: Restore Existing Infrastructure	Restore authorized facility capacity and preserve baseline deliveries, flood protection, and ecosystem function.	Restoration is foundational. Other strategies depend on the ability of existing facilities to function.
Scenario 2: Improve Management of In-Valley Supplies	Improve watershed timing and inflow, reoperate reservoirs, increase non-structural Delta diversions, and implement local conveyance, recharge, storage, and other projects.	In-Valley management is necessary but not sufficient by itself.
Scenario 3: Increase Access to Delta Water Supplies	Modify Delta diversion facilities, increase storage north and south of Delta, and expand south-of-Delta conveyance.	Additional supply access is needed to reduce the remaining supply-demand gap and make local projects more useful.

Key UWP Findings

- Lost capacity of existing projects limits opportunity. Restoring design capacity of existing facilities preserves baseline deliveries and enables local projects.
- Identified local project capability exceeds the gap, but project selection will be driven by water supply, permitting, economic feasibility, and affordability constraints.

- Local projects will not be sufficient; additional water supplies from the Delta will be needed to serve local projects and reduce the supply-demand gap.
- Affordability will constrain implementation. State and federal funding and partnerships with urban entities are needed.
- Some farmland conversion will be necessary and should be strategically planned to provide environmental, community, and economic outcomes.

The UWP adds an important discipline to the proceedings: distinguishing potential water supply from realized water supply. Projects become real only when permitting, feasibility, affordability, funding, partnerships, and implementation capacity are addressed.

A Vision for the San Joaquin Valley: The Realm of the Possible for Surface Water and Groundwater

Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth provided remarks that were one of the central framing moments of the summit. Speaking after the technical presentations and the Unified Water Plan discussion, Director Nemeth elevated the conversation from individual studies and projects to a broader question: what is truly possible for the San Joaquin Valley if the region and the State are willing to confront conflict directly, organize it constructively, and take strategic risks together? Her comments reinforced that the Valley's future cannot be shaped by avoiding difficult issues. Instead, progress will depend on developing better ways to talk about conflict, test solutions, and move forward with enough trust to learn from implementation.

Director Nemeth emphasized that DWR's purpose in bringing together its related studies into a broader Valley vision was not to smooth over complexity, but to help organize it. The studies provide an unusually strong technical foundation for understanding how surface water, groundwater, conveyance, flood management, recharge, ecosystem needs, and community impacts interact across the Valley. She noted that DWR's work was intended to help the Valley see not only the scale of its challenges, but also the potential that becomes visible when those challenges are considered together. In that sense, the vision was not simply a planning document; it was an invitation to use technical information as a platform for more honest and productive decision-making.

A major theme in Director Nemeth's remarks was the need to acknowledge both crisis and capacity. She identified the San Joaquin Valley as one of the areas of greatest concern in California water, while also expressing hope because of the people, innovation, and leadership present in the room. She described the Valley's agricultural community as among the State's most persistent innovators and recognized that the region has the technical knowledge, lived experience, and institutional leadership needed to shape a more resilient path forward. This was a

critical shift in tone: the Valley was not described only as a place of scarcity or constraint, but also as a place with the expertise and urgency required to test the next generation of California water solutions.

Director Nemeth also called attention to the importance of specific, strategic projects that can demonstrate what is possible. Rather than allowing uncertainty or incomplete information to stall action, she encouraged the Valley and the State to identify projects that answer real implementation questions. These may include projects that test regulatory approaches, investigate groundwater-dependent ecosystem benefits, integrate flood management and recharge, or demonstrate how multiple benefits can be achieved at once. Her message was clear: California does not know everything it needs to know, but that cannot become a reason for inaction. Carefully designed projects can help answer specific questions, build confidence, reduce fear among stakeholders, and create a pathway toward action at scale.

Her remarks also reinforced the importance of state and federal partnership. Director Nemeth noted that moving solutions forward will require funding, legislation, and a stronger case for water as fundamental to both California's economy and its environment. She argued that water is inseparable from quality of life, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship, and that California must be willing to make that case more boldly. In a generational moment shaped by changing hydrology, the State must be prepared to invest consistently in water infrastructure and integrated resilience strategies.

For the proceedings, Director Nemeth's remarks served as a bridge between analysis and action. The technical studies describe the system; the Unified Water Plan outlines regional needs and investment pathways; but the vision conversation asks how the Valley and the State can use this information to move through conflict and into implementation. Her remarks helped set the stage for the second day of the summit by emphasizing that the Valley's next step is not simply to produce more reports, but to identify the projects, partnerships, funding, regulatory flexibility, and accountability structures that can test what is possible and build confidence for larger-scale change.

Panel and Discussion Themes

The panels translated technical findings into the realities of implementation. They brought forward the perspectives of local water managers, state and federal agencies, agricultural leaders, environmental organizations, community representatives, and researchers. Several themes emerged repeatedly.

1. Partnerships are not optional

Panelists emphasized that large water projects and multi-benefit implementation require partnerships at multiple levels. Local, state, and federal agencies have different tools, authorities, and constraints. The Valley needs frameworks that help those partners align around priorities rather than working in separate lanes.

2. Local capacity matters

Panelists pointed to local technical capacity as a limiting factor. Even if funding becomes available, projects must be planned, permitted, designed, managed, and monitored. The roadmap therefore needs technical assistance, shared data systems, and implementation support for local entities.

3. The hard stuff is the soft stuff

One of the strongest spoken themes was that implementation depends on relationships, trust, and storytelling. The most technically sound plan will not move if people do not understand it, believe it, or see their role in it. This became the basis for the later consensus theme "Tell Our Story."

4. Environmental protection and water supply resilience must be designed together

Environmental speakers emphasized that high-flow diversion, recharge, conveyance, refuge supply, habitat, and groundwater-dependent ecosystems must be integrated rather than traded off at the end of project design. Multi-benefit design should be part of the beginning of planning, not an afterthought.

5. Community and public health impacts are central

The vision discussion emphasized that water touches public health, drinking water, air quality, land transitions, communities, and economic stability. A Valley resilience strategy must therefore include disadvantaged communities, tribal voices, farmworkers, and land-transition impacts alongside water-supply goals.

6. The next five years matter

Day 1 closed with the recognition that the next five years will influence the Valley's trajectory for decades. This urgency became the foundation for Day 2, where participants were asked to identify priorities, pilot initiatives, regulatory adjustments, policy directions, and working groups that can carry work forward.

Graphic recording from the From Plan to Practice discussion.

Day 2: From Understanding to Commitment

Day 2 began by reframing the work from understanding to commitment. Participants were asked to be candid and practical. They were reminded that the Valley does not need generic priorities or abstract collaboration; it needs priorities specific enough to guide action and structures that clarify who will work on what, by when, and with what support.

Constructive urgency

The Day 2 tone was best captured as constructive urgency: acknowledging real constraints while using the expertise and authority in the room to turn capacity into a roadmap.

Collaborating Without Limits

The Day 2 keynote challenged the group to avoid fragmented, small, or technically insufficient asks. A recurring message was that the Valley must understand the scale of its challenge and speak with a unified voice about what is needed from the State and Federal partners. Local control alone cannot solve a system built on interconnected water imports, Delta operations, state and federal infrastructure, and shared economic consequences.

Gallery Walk and Focused Conversation

Participants reviewed the seven graphic recordings from Day 1. Individual half-sheets asked what words or images stood out, what inspired hope, what still concerned participants, what the central issue was, and what top priority action emerged. The half-sheets show a consistent pattern: participants saw urgency, interconnection, regulatory barriers, need for pilots, uncertainty, data gaps, funding gaps, and the importance of communities and land transition.

Consensus categories displayed during Day 2 prioritization.

Consensus Priorities for the Coming Year

The consensus workshop asked: "What TOP PRIORITY ACTIONS can we take in the coming year to move our water initiatives forward?" Participants worked individually, at tables, and then as a full group to consolidate actions into eight priority categories.

Priority	Workshop Output
Create Sustainable Funding	Reliable and dedicated water funding; sustained state budget funding with goals; private-sector and insurance funding; investment in Valley economic diversification and broader benefit-cost framing.
Restructure Regulations for Effectiveness	Regulatory accountability; agency-accountable project prioritization; regulatory change priorities; streamlining for water project types; modernization and enforcement to change the status quo.
Protect People & Environment	People first; health recovery over generations; focus on impacts to people and communities; coordinate land repurposing; save farms and farmworkers; multi-benefit outcomes.
Test Multi-Benefit Solutions	Accountable pilots and data; water-rights-free pilot sandbox; fast-track low-hanging pilots; infrastructure and regulations to make the San Joaquin Valley a state groundwater bank; Flood-MAR pilot projects.
Tell Our Story	Political will; hard truths at Valley, state, and federal levels; education and advocacy; SB 72; unified Valley voice; inter-tribal water agencies; consolidation and focus.
Allocate Sustainable Supply	Redo Delta regulations; move water through the Delta; regulations designed for more rain and less snow; plan for 3 MAF from the State.
Develop Effective Incentives	Carrots for cooperation; strategic long-term MLRP; technical assistance; creative incentives for partners to engage with demand management.
Gather Data to Inform Decisions	Monitoring; data standards and accounting; groundwater accounting and allocations; understanding supply/data gaps in the Tulare Lake region; finishing DWR watershed studies by working on the second half of the SJV next.

San Joaquin Water Resilience Summit **Consensus Workshop** May 21, 2026

What TOP PRIORITY ACTIONS can we take in the coming year to move our water initiatives forward?"

Create Sustainable Funding	Restructure Regulations for Effectiveness	Protect People & Environment	Test Multi-Benefit Solutions	Tell Our Story	Allocate Sustainable Supply	Develop Effective Incentives	Gather Data to Inform Decisions
Reliable funding Funding: Steady stream Private sector & Insurance funding Dedicated Water Funding Sustained funding in State Budget (with goals!) Invest SJV economic diversification + funding needs Benefits & costs are broader than Valley!	Agency Accountable project prioritization Regulatory accountability ID Regulatory change priorities Regulatory streamlining for water project types (similar to cutting green tape process) Advocate for regulatory reform Modernize & enforce regulations to change the status quo	Health recovery over generations People First! Focus on impacts to people & communities Saving farms saves farmworkers Coordinate land repurposing strategy Refill Tulare Lake; ^storage + purposeful land retirement Multi-benefit outcomes (water, community, etc.)	SJV accountable pilots + Data (including Sierra Nevadas) MOUs for water rights free pilot "sandbox" Fast-track "low-hanging" pilots/funding Infrastructure & regs to make SJ the State's GW bank Reliable & resilient infrastructure (old & new) Spend existing funding Projects: prioritize, implement, open barriers Comprehensive pilot of watershed study Pilot Projects: bigger studies,, adaptive mgmt, lessons learned Flood MAR pilot project	Political will to act Hard Truth: Valley, State, Federal **Advocacy:** Educate - Bottom-Up SB72 Regulations/ Policy Increase Support for unified SJ Voice (Blueprint) Inter-Tribal Water Agencies *Consolidation & focus Build	Redo delta regulations Move water through the delta Regulations designed for more rain, less snow Write plan for 3MAF from State	Carrots for Cooperation Strategic long-term MLRP Tech Assistance (Land valuation, land flex 2.0) Creative incentives for all partners to engage w/ demand managemen t	Monitoring data standards and accounting GW Accounting GW Allocations Understand supply / data gap Tulare Lake Region Finish DWR Watershed study

Documented consensus workshop output.

2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap

The roadmap worksheets took the consensus priorities one level deeper. The following synthesis preserves the participant-generated intent while translating it into a structured action framework suitable for workgroups, state leadership, and the one-year follow-up.

1. Create Sustainable Funding

Why it matters: Solutions exceed local budgets. Local agencies cannot implement the scale of infrastructure, recharge, land transition, data, environmental, and community actions required without sustained state and federal funding.

Key issues:

- Drinking water, water supply, environmental enhancement, and land repurposing all require funding.
- Funding should avoid health, welfare, and economic damage from unmanaged land and water transitions.
- Funding should be treated as a long-term public commitment, not a one-time grant cycle.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Build a coalition to support state budget and legislative funding for Valley water resilience.
- Pursue a dedicated water fund or guaranteed funding stream with clear goals.
- Frame benefits and costs as statewide, not only regional.
- Identify private-sector, insurance, and urban partnership opportunities.

State role: Create a sustained budget commitment and funding program for integrated Valley resilience projects.

2. Restructure Regulations for Effectiveness

Why it matters: Participants viewed some current regulatory processes as outdated, redundant, slow, and not always aligned with intended outcomes. Regulations should protect the public interest while allowing adaptive, timely, multi-benefit action.

Key issues:

- Redundancy and outdated requirements.
- Lack of agency accountability and alignment.
- Slow processes that discourage pilots and implementation.
- Need for flexibility under changing hydrology and climate conditions.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Audit current regulations for effectiveness and implementation barriers.
- Eliminate, update, or revise regulations based on audit results.
- Allow flexibility based on current conditions and adaptive management.
- Create public dashboards for permits and decision timelines.
- Establish a non-precedential regulatory pilot sandbox.

State role: Lead a multi-agency regulatory effectiveness review and authorize controlled pilot flexibility.

3. Protect People & Environment

Why it matters: Water resilience must sustain life long-term. The impacts of water decisions fall on communities, farmworkers, disadvantaged communities, tribes, ecosystems, farms, and local economies.

Key issues:

- Recharge and water-flow decisions affect people, ecosystems, and water uses.
- Land repurposing without coordination can create community, economic, and public health consequences.
- Multi-benefit outcomes need to be defined and measured early.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Create structured dialogue between environmental, community, agricultural, tribal, and water-management interests.
- Use data to evaluate human and ecosystem impacts of proposed actions.
- Coordinate land repurposing strategies with community and economic transition planning.
- Design projects for water, community, ecosystem, and economic benefits from the beginning.

State role: Require and fund integrated human and environmental outcomes in pilots, land-transition programs, and funding criteria.

4. Test Multi-Benefit Solutions

Why it matters: The Valley needs to reduce implementation risk by testing solutions before full-scale deployment. Pilots can answer practical questions, generate data, and build confidence across agencies and stakeholders.

Key issues:

- Pilot scope, location, partners, success metrics, accounting, Delta effects, water rights, cumulative impacts, and funding must be defined.
- Unwilling partners and incomplete funding can prevent a true test.
- Pilots need enough regulatory flexibility to test whether alternatives can work.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Define pilot candidates by what, where, who, how, public benefits, and evaluation criteria.
- Provide technical assistance and permit support.
- Align state and federal agencies with local partners before launching pilots.
- Fund all pilot elements, including monitoring, community engagement, and evaluation.
- Prioritize Flood-MAR/I-FIRM and other watershed-scale multi-benefit pilots.

State role: Prioritize the Valley for true pilot projects that test integrated approaches under defined guardrails without setting precedent.

5. Allocate Sustainable Supply

Why it matters: In-Valley supplies are not adequate to close the gap. Sustainable allocation and flexible operations are needed to maximize supply, reduce unmanaged demand reduction, and adapt to more rain and less snow.

Key issues:

- Delta supplies and Delta regulations.
- Groundwater allocations and accounting.
- In-Valley stormwater capture.
- Flow and storage management under climate, demand, and supply uncertainty.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Redo, revise, or distill Delta regulations for changed hydrology.
- Work with reservoir owners on flexible operations for future hydrology.
- Streamline voluntary transfers and agreements.
- Work with water purveyors on voluntary allocation adjustments.
- Enhance numerical models, data, and decision tools.

State role: Support operational flexibility, Delta and reservoir policy review, and data-driven allocation tools that reflect climate-changed hydrology.

6. Develop Effective Incentives

Why it matters: The Valley needs incentives that accelerate beneficial land-use change and balance water supply and demand while supporting people, economy, and environment.

Key issues:

- Human health impacts and historical inequities.
- Need for technical assistance to navigate funding, compliance, and permits.
- Need for incentives that address triple-bottom-line outcomes: people, economy, and environment.
- Need to support demand reduction while sustaining local economies and communities.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Provide technical assistance to project sponsors and landowners.
- Create financial benefits for adopters and participants.
- Educate partners on alternatives that can pay, such as solar, carbon markets, water banking, and mitigation.
- Provide public-benefit funding for open space, reduced subsidence, infrastructure, conservation, and restoration.
- Provide legal protections for participants where appropriate.
- Develop a prioritized map of MLRP areas for the San Joaquin Valley.

State role: Design incentives that make participation practical, attractive, and protective for landowners, communities, and public-benefit partners.

7. Tell Our Story

Why it matters: A unified story provides clear direction and messaging and helps calm the noise. The Valley needs political will and a common message that communicates urgency without fear.

Key issues:

- Need for simple, clear, unified, and common messages.
- Need for input from all, including tribal communities and young people.
- Need for champions, grassroots efforts, social media, education, and legislative understanding.
- Need to communicate early and often.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Develop curriculum and education materials tied to teaching standards.
- Provide water-issues training for legislators and advocates.
- Identify champions who can see the effort through.
- Use Water Plan and DWR studies to build consensus around shared values and a path forward.
- Support inter-tribal water agencies and broader community input.
- Use social media and repeated studies with a common message to amplify the Valley voice.

State role: Recognize and respond to a unified Valley message and support CWI-led convening that elevates shared priorities.

8. Gather Data to Inform Decisions

Why it matters: Data informs decisions, builds alignment and trust, supports learning and adaptive management, helps scale pilot efforts, and creates transparency for governance.

Key issues:

- Data gaps for supply and demand.
- Inconsistent standards and accounting approaches.
- Accessibility and interoperability.
- Funding and human capacity for data governance and management.
- Need to modernize and leverage new tools and technologies.

Actions for the roadmap:

- Reinvest in and use existing data programs that already exist, including airborne remote-sensing and monitoring programs.
- Implement or reinforce existing monitoring and data programs while ensuring scalability and interoperability.
- Identify critical data gaps across the Valley, including completion of watershed studies and the Tulare Lake region data gap.
- Invest in state-level data architecture, portals, and decision-support tools.
- Coordinate on data governance, standards, sharing, and accountability.
- Create a data governance champion or workgroup.

State role: Fund shared data infrastructure and require common standards, accounting, interoperability, and transparency across state-supported pilots and programs.

Suggested Timeline

Timeframe	Recommended Milestones
0-90 days	Finalize and send letter to state leadership; confirm CWI workgroup structure; identify workgroup leads; define success metrics; select initial pilot concepts for review.
3-6 months	Launch workgroups; create issue briefs for state leadership; complete regulatory barrier inventory; create data-gap inventory; identify funding package options.
6-12 months	Advance pilot designs; establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks; identify agency approvals needed; align state and federal partners; publish a one-year progress dashboard.
2027-2028	Implement first pilots; evaluate regulatory-flexibility tests; update UWP and data systems; advance funding and permitting reforms.
2029-2030	Scale successful pilots; institutionalize data and accountability systems; update the roadmap; hold follow-up summit to assess outcomes and next-phase needs.

Recommendations to State Leadership

The summit proceedings should support a letter to state leadership and the Governor's Office. The following recommendations reflect the unified message that emerged from the presentations, panels, participant priorities, and roadmap worksheets.

Recommendation	State Leadership Action
1. Treat the Valley as an integrated system	Direct state agencies to evaluate water decisions through a Valley systems lens that includes surface water, groundwater, flood management, conveyance, land use, community health, ecosystem outcomes, and economic stability.
2. Prioritize the Valley for pilots and studies	Make the San Joaquin Valley a state priority for integrated pilot projects, applied studies, and implementation support because the Valley's challenges are urgent and interconnected.
3. Create a regulatory pilot sandbox	Authorize carefully designed, non-precedential pilots that test whether alternative regulatory pathways can produce better multi-benefit outcomes while protecting the public interest.
4. Fund implementation, not only planning	Create sustained state funding for infrastructure restoration, recharge, data, land transition, community protection, environmental enhancement, and pilot evaluation.
5. Restore and protect backbone infrastructure	Support restoration of subsidence-impacted conveyance and groundwater-level recovery near critical facilities.
6. Advance integrated Flood-MAR/I-FIRM pilots	Support watershed-scale pilots that combine FIRO, recharge, flood-risk reduction, ecosystem enhancement, conveyance, and community benefits.
7. Modernize data and accounting	Invest in monitoring, standards, groundwater accounting, supply-demand data, interoperability, and transparent decision tools.
8. Align incentives with public benefits	Create incentives for landowners, communities, districts, and partners to participate in demand management, land repurposing, recharge, habitat, and infrastructure projects.
9. Support a unified Valley voice	Recognize the CWI-convened process and support workgroups that translate the summit priorities into accountable state-local-federal action.
10. Commit to one-year accountability	Participate in a one-year follow-up process to assess progress, unresolved barriers, pilot status, and state action taken.

Recommended Message for the State Leadership Letter

The letter to state leadership should not read as a list of isolated requests. It should carry one unified voice: the Valley is ready to move from reports to implementation, but it needs state partnership at the scale of the challenge. The State can help most by enabling pilots, aligning regulations, funding implementation, investing in data, and treating the Valley as a system whose water future affects California's economy, food security, public health, and environment.

Recommended Workgroup Structure

- Funding and Investment Workgroup
- Regulatory Effectiveness and Pilot Sandbox Workgroup
- Multi-Benefit Pilot Projects Workgroup
- Sustainable Supply and Infrastructure Workgroup
- People, Environment, Land Transition, and Incentives Workgroup
- Data, Monitoring, Standards, and Accounting Workgroup
- Unified Valley Story and State Leadership Engagement Workgroup

One-Year Follow-Up

A one-year follow-up should assess whether the summit moved from alignment to action. The follow-up should report on the state leadership letter, workgroup formation, pilot project status, regulatory sandbox feasibility, funding progress, data investments, and unresolved barriers.

Conclusion: From Reports to Results

The summit confirmed that the Valley has moved beyond the question of whether water resilience requires coordinated action. The technical work is clear, and the participant priorities are clear. Climate change, subsidence, overdraft, flood risk, conveyance constraints, land transition, ecosystem needs, and community impacts are connected.

The next step is implementation: a unified, state-supported agenda that aligns funding, regulations, supply, data, incentives, pilots, and accountability. The Valley does not need another conversation that ends at the meeting room door. It needs a structure for constructive urgency, shared responsibility, and measurable progress.

The 2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap provides that structure. The work now is to turn it into a set of funded, tested, monitored, and accountable actions that make the San Joaquin Valley a model for integrated water resilience.

Appendices

Appendix A: Summit Agenda Summary

The summit took place May 20-21, 2026 at the Resnick Student Union at Fresno State. The agenda was organized around the theme From Reports to Results. Day 1 focused on discussion, insight, and synthesizing report findings. Day 2 focused on setting collective priorities, commitment, and building the 2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap.

Day	Major Sessions
May 20	Welcome, Congressman Jim Costa remarks, Summit Purpose and Intent, Three Studies One System, Connecting the System panel, Unified Water Plan, From Plan to Practice panel, Karla Nemeth vision remarks, From Vision to Action panel, closing wrap-up.
May 21	Welcome and recap, Collaborating Without Limits, Gallery Walk and Focused Conversation, Setting Collective Priorities, Building the 2025-2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap, closing remarks, next steps.

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Wednesday May 20, 2026

8:30 AM	**Welcome**	**Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval,** President, Fresno State
8:45 AM	**Opening Remarks**	**Congressman Jim Costa** CA-21
9:00 AM	**Summit Purpose and Intent**	**Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
9:15 AM	**Three Studies, One System: What We Now Understand About the Valley**	
	State Water Project Adaptation Strategy **San Joaquin Valley Conveyance Study** **San Joaquin Basin Flood-MAR Watershed Studies**	**Andrew Schwarz,** DWR **Eric Tsai,** DWR **David Arrate,** DWR
10:25 AM	**Break**	
10:45 AM	**Connecting the System: A Valley Perspective on What These Insights Mean**	**Michael Cooke,** Turlock Irrigation District **Aysha Massell,** Sustainable Conservation **Chandra Sekhar Chilmakuri,** SWP Contractors **Taylor Broadhead,** Audubon California **Moderator: Tim Godwin,** Department of Water Resources
11:45 AM	**Lunch**	
12:30 PM	**Unified Water Plan for the San Joaquin Valley**	**Bill Swanson,** Stantec
1:15 PM	**From Plan to Practice: What Do We Need to Do Differently?**	**Joel Metzger,** DWR **Levi Johnson,** U.S. Bureau of Reclamation **Geoff Vanden Heuvel,** Water Blueprint for the SJV **Moderator: Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
2:15 PM	**Break**	

2:35 PM	**A Vision for the San Joaquin Valley: The Realm of the Possible for Surface Water and Groundwater**	**Karla Nemeth,** Department of Water Resources
3:00 PM	**From Vision to Action: What This Means Across the Valley**	**Karla Nemeth,** Department of Water Resources **Eddie Ocampo,** Water Blueprint for the SJV **Sarah Woolf,** SJV Water Collaborative Action Program **Caitlin Peterson,** PPIC Water Policy Center **Tekoah Kadara,** Allensworth Progressive Association **Moderator: Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
4:15 PM	**Closing Remarks and Wrap-up of the Day**	**Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
4:30 PM	**Social Hour**	

Thursday May 21, 2026

8:30 AM	**Welcome**	**Dr. Xuanning Fu,** Provost, Fresno State
8:35 AM	**Recap & Framing: From Understanding to Commitment**	**Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
8:45 AM	**Collaborating Without Limits**	**Jason Phillips,** Irrigation Leader, HDR Inc.
9:15 AM	**Gallery Walk and Focused Conversation**	**Everyone**
10:15 AM	**Break**	
10:30 AM	**Setting Collective Priorities**	**Everyone**
12:00 PM	**Lunch**	
1:00 PM	**Building the 2025–2030 Near-Term Action Roadmap**	**Everyone**
2:30 PM	**Closing Remarks**	**Aaron Fukuda,** Tulare Irrigation District
2:50 PM	**Next Steps**	**Laura Ramos,** California Water Institute
3:00 PM	**End of Program**	

Appendix B: Source Materials

Report and resource links:

- San Joaquin Valley Conveyance Study
- State Water Project Adaptation Strategy
- DWR Flood-MAR Watershed Studies
- Unified Water Plan documents
- A Vision for the San Joaquin Valley: A Realm of the Possible for Surface Water and Groundwater

Appendix C: Facilitation Methodology

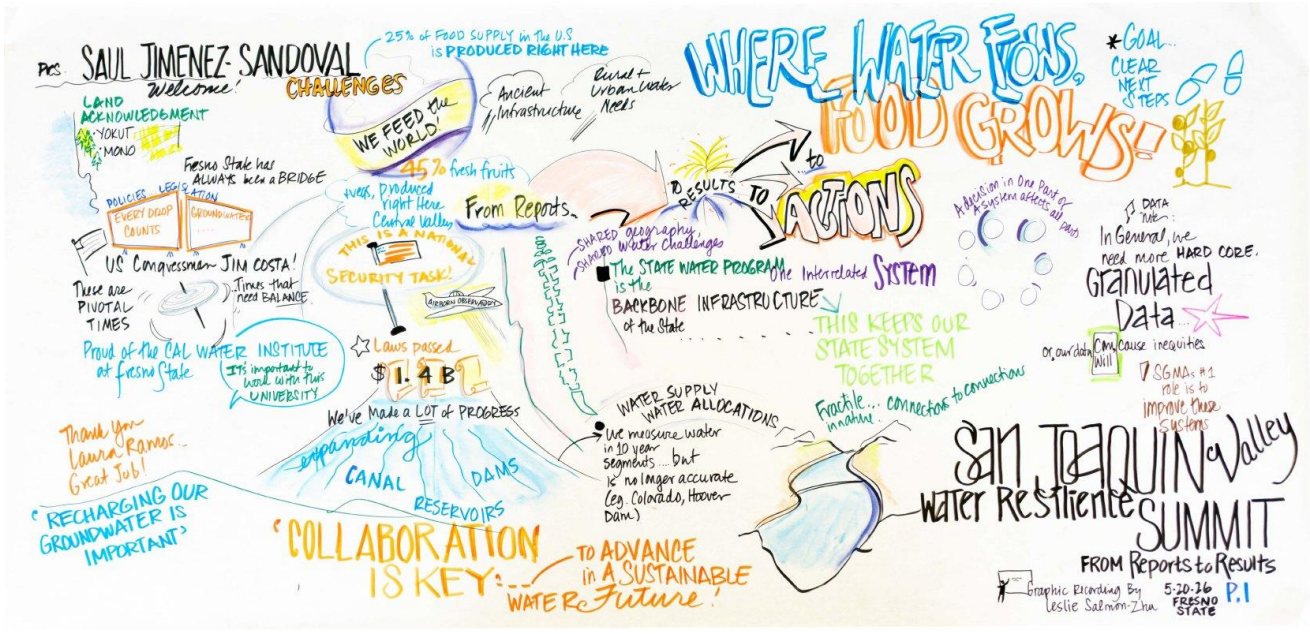
Day 2 used a structured facilitation model. Participants began with a gallery walk, used individual worksheets, discussed observations in focused conversations, and then moved into a consensus workshop and solutions workshop. The design moved from individual reflection to table-level synthesis to whole-group consensus and finally to action development.

- Gallery walk: participants started at assigned charts, reviewed the graphic recordings silently, added notes, and placed stars by comments they agreed with.
- Focused conversation: tables discussed words/images that stood out, sources of hope, concerns, and central issues.
- Consensus workshop: individuals wrote top five priority actions, starred their two best actions, shared at tables, and selected table priorities.
- Group consolidation: priority actions were placed on the wall, grouped into categories, and named by the group.
- Solutions workshop: participants signed up for priority action groups and developed roadmap worksheets.

Appendix D: Graphic Recording Posters

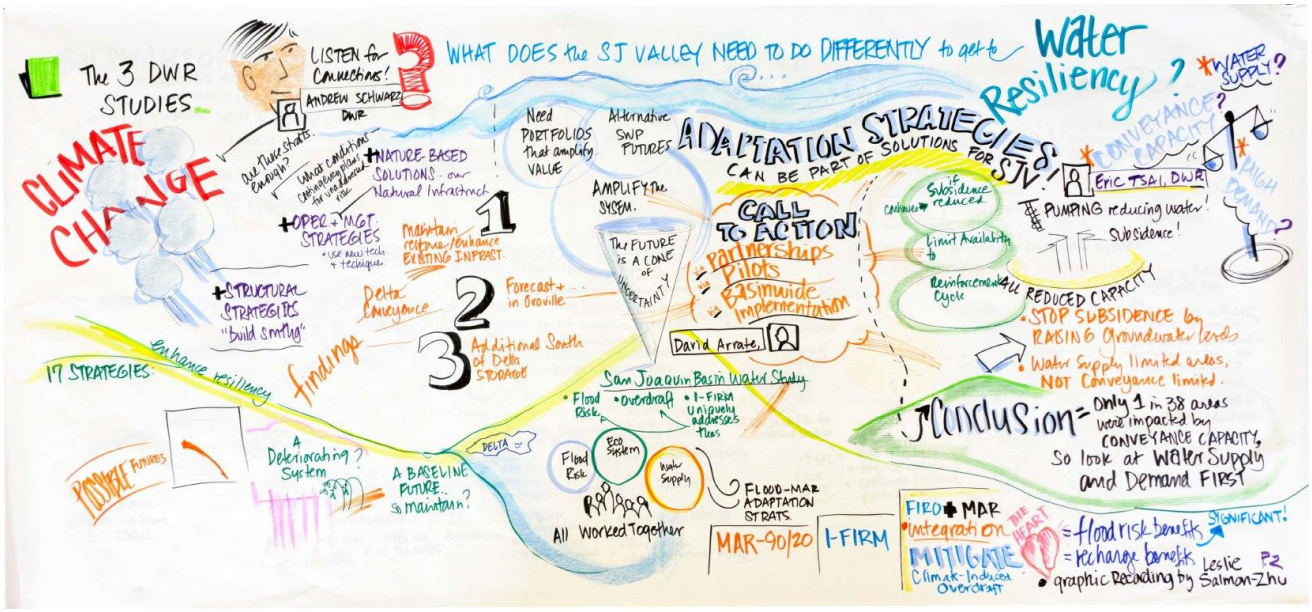
The following graphic recordings visually synthesize the summit. They are included as reduced-size images for reference.

Graphic Recording 1



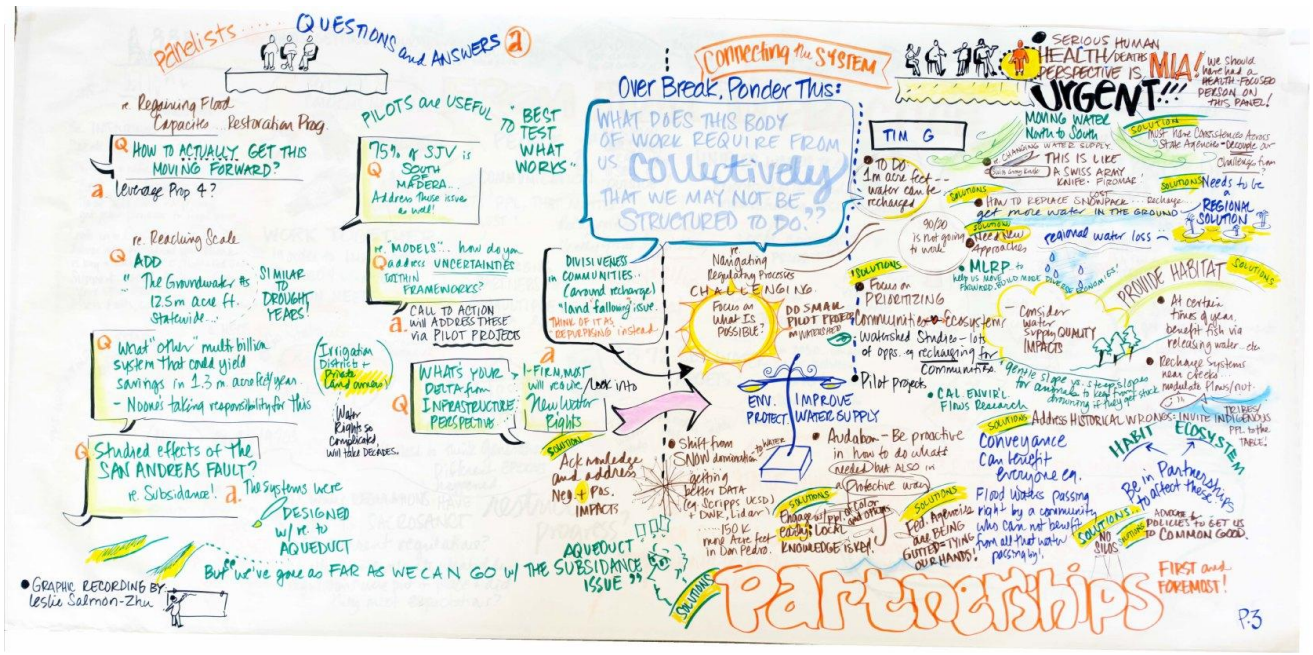
Opening framing: where water flows, food grows; reports to results to action.

Graphic Recording 2



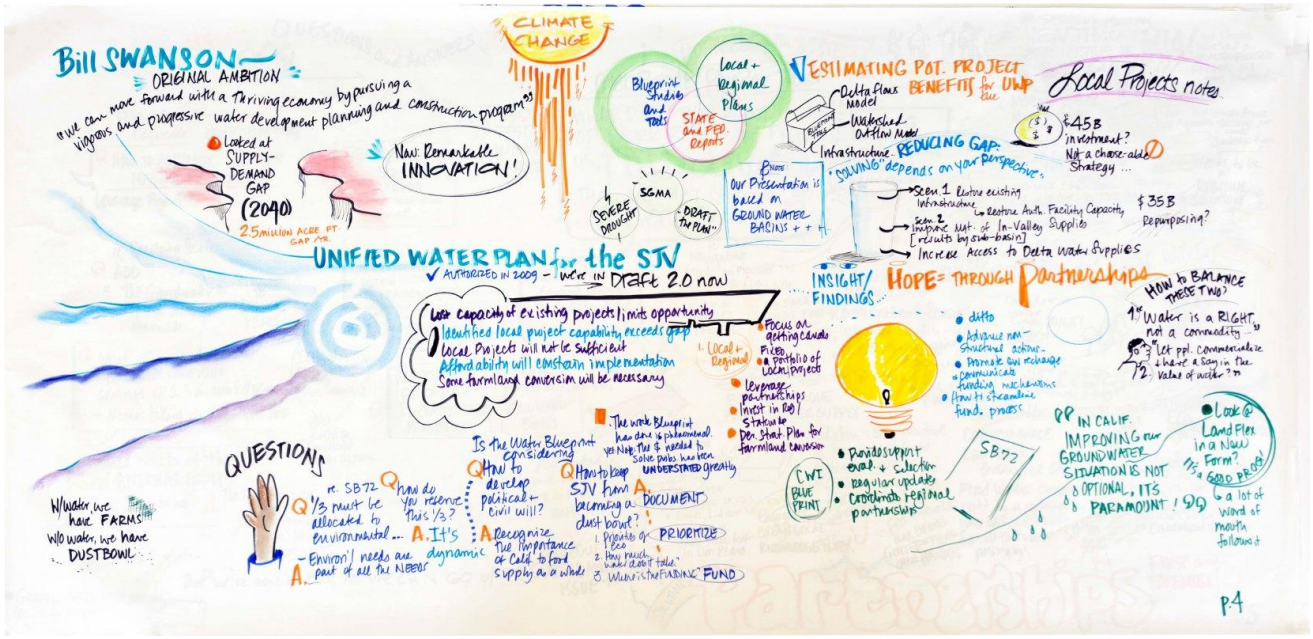
Three DWR studies: climate change, adaptation strategies, conveyance, subsidence, Flood-MAR, and I-FIRM.

Graphic Recording 3



Connecting the system: partnerships, pilots, communities, ecosystem issues, and the collective implementation challenge.

Graphic Recording 4



Unified Water Plan: supply-demand gap, project evaluation, partnerships, and prioritization.

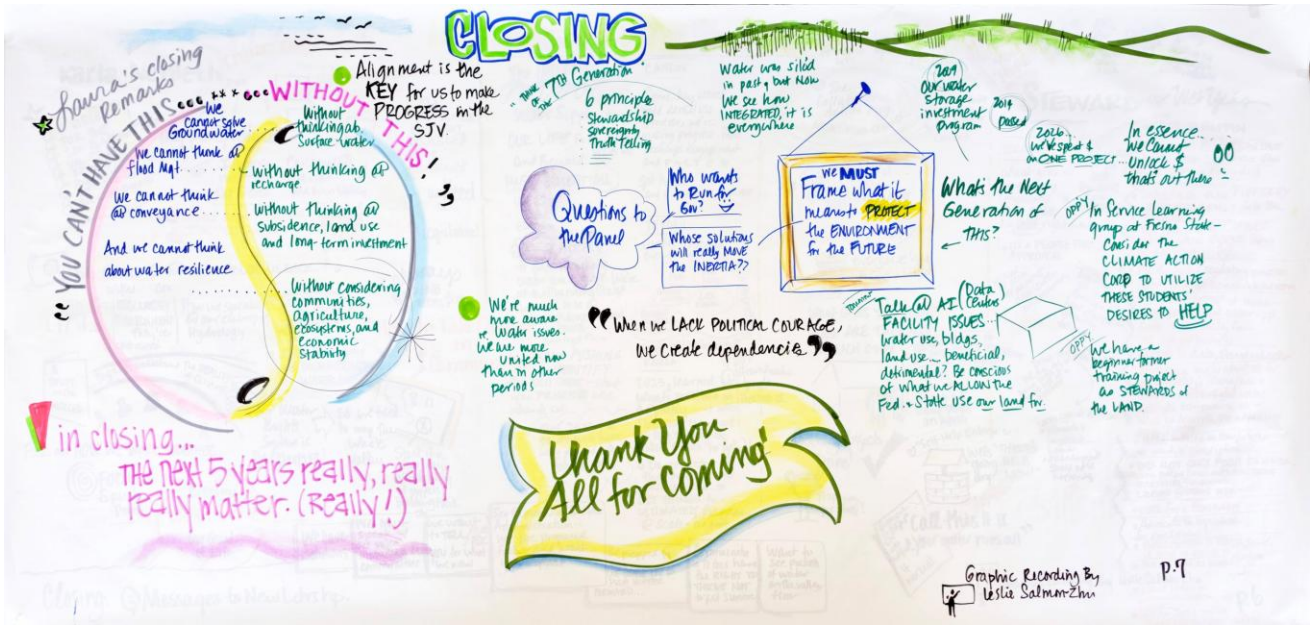
Graphic Recording 5

From Plan to Practice: work together, reliable funding, local consensus, SB 72, and big-picture implementation.

Graphic Recording 6

Vision to Action: leadership, stewardship, one voice, local-state alignment, and what needs to happen.

Graphic Recording 7

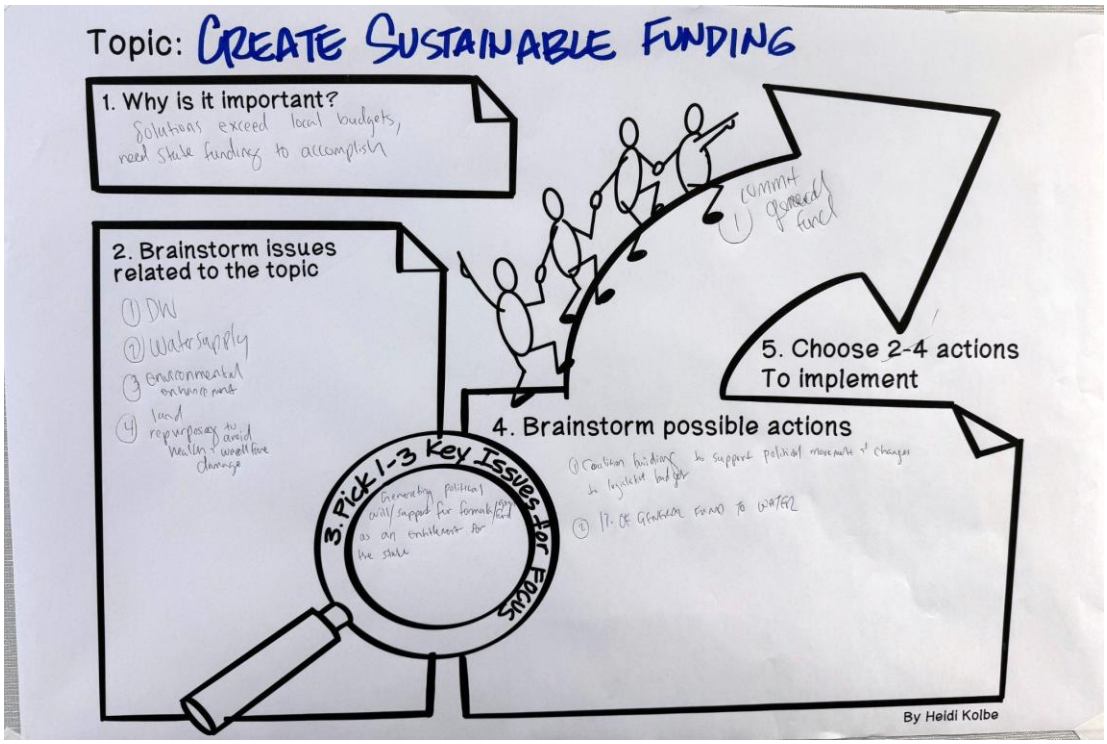


Closing synthesis: alignment, political courage, environment of the future, and the importance of the next five years.

Appendix E: 2025-2030 Roadmap Worksheets

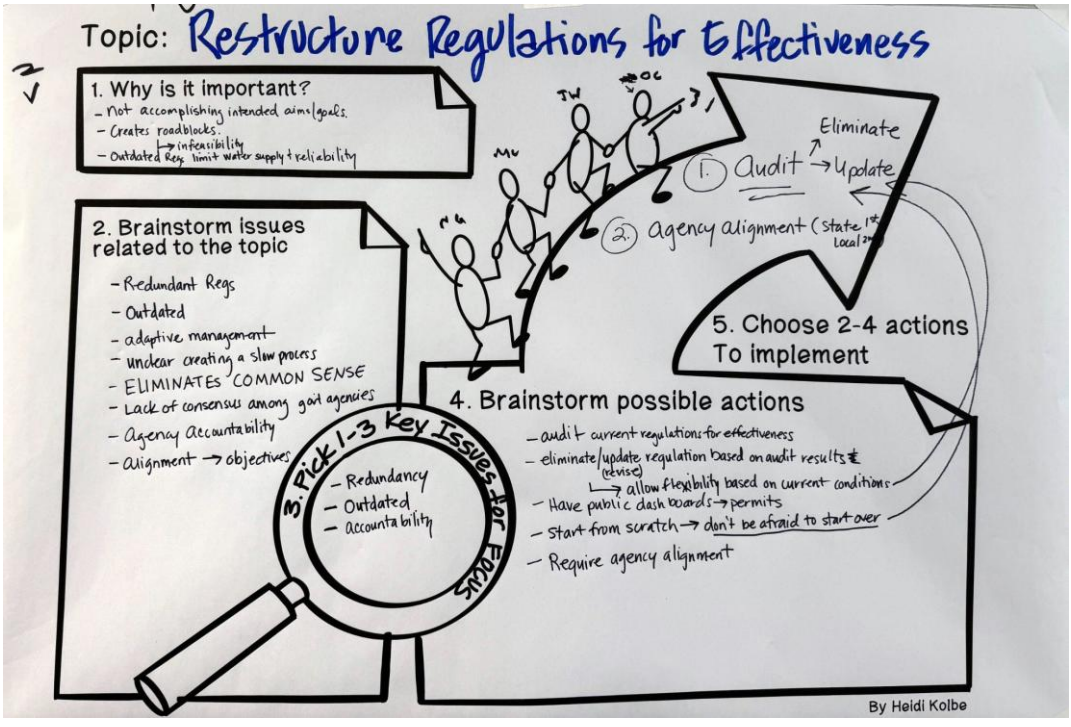
The following worksheet images document the roadmap development process. The written roadmap in the main body synthesizes these outputs.

Create Sustainable Funding



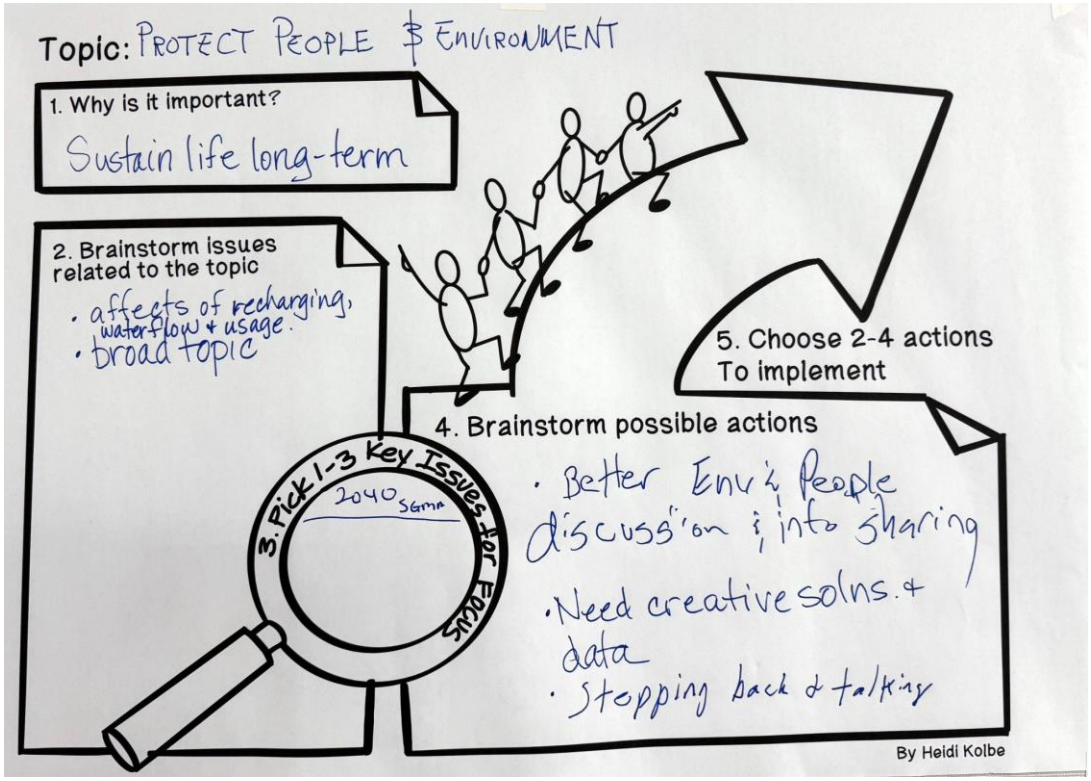
Roadmap worksheet: Create Sustainable Funding.

Restructure Regulations for Effectiveness



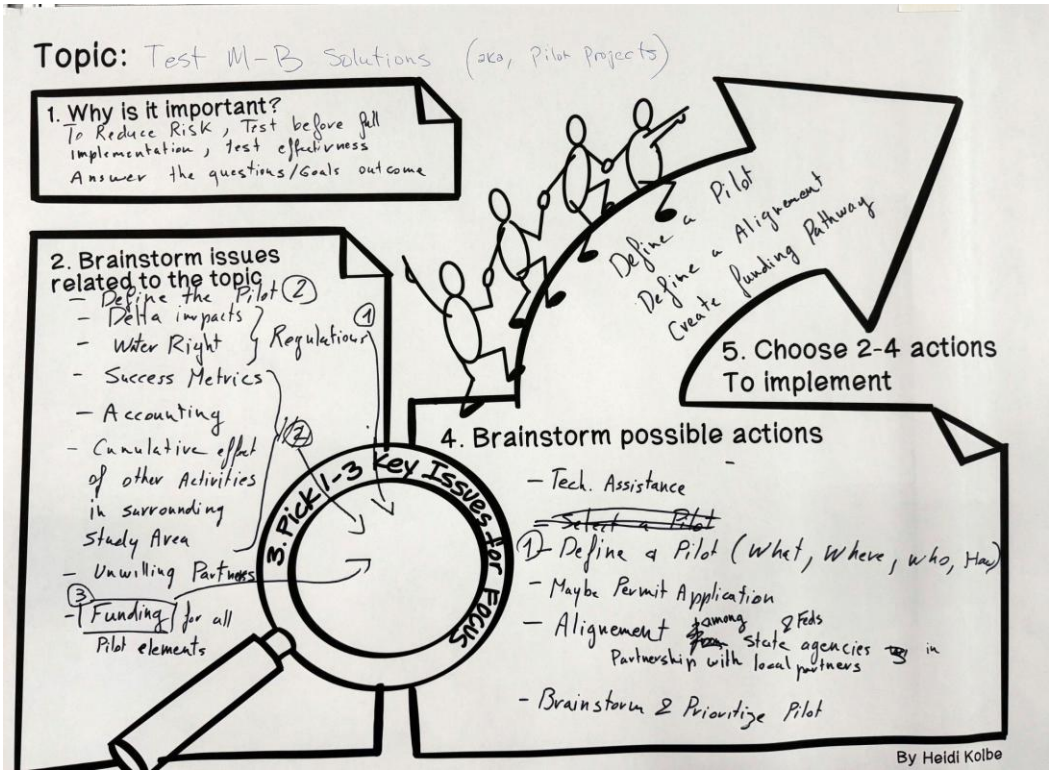
Roadmap worksheet: Restructure Regulations for Effectiveness.

Protect People & Environment



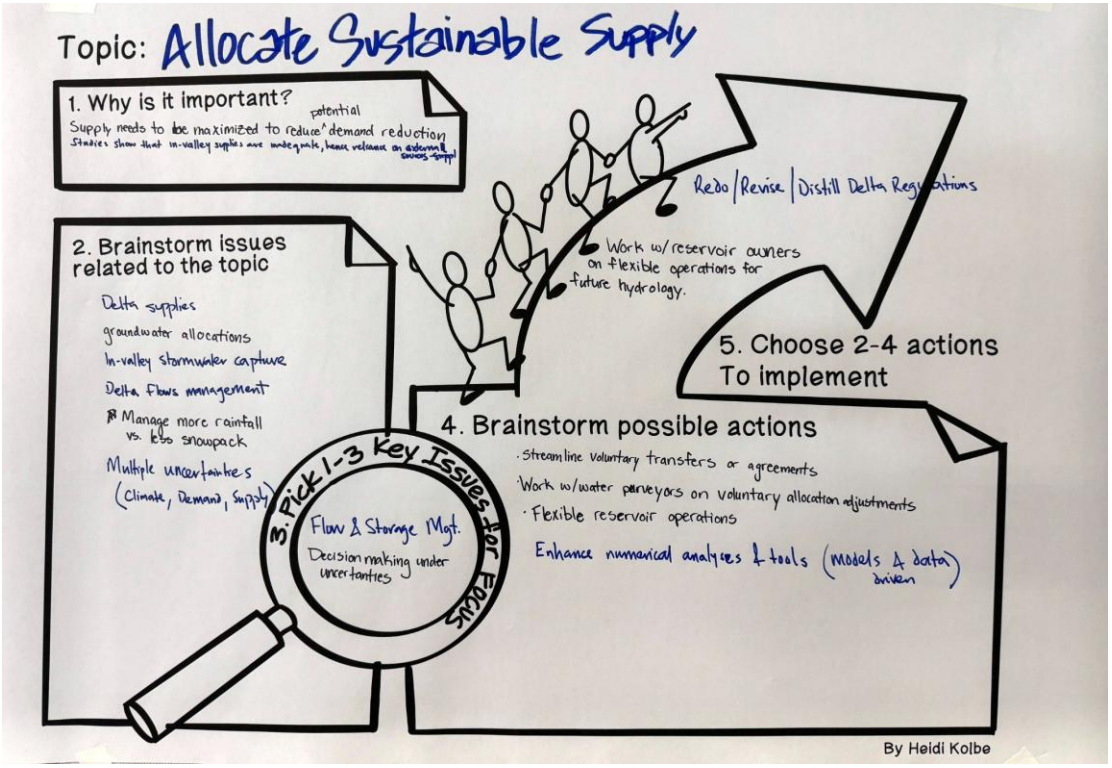
Roadmap worksheet: Protect People & Environment.

Test Multi-Benefit Solutions



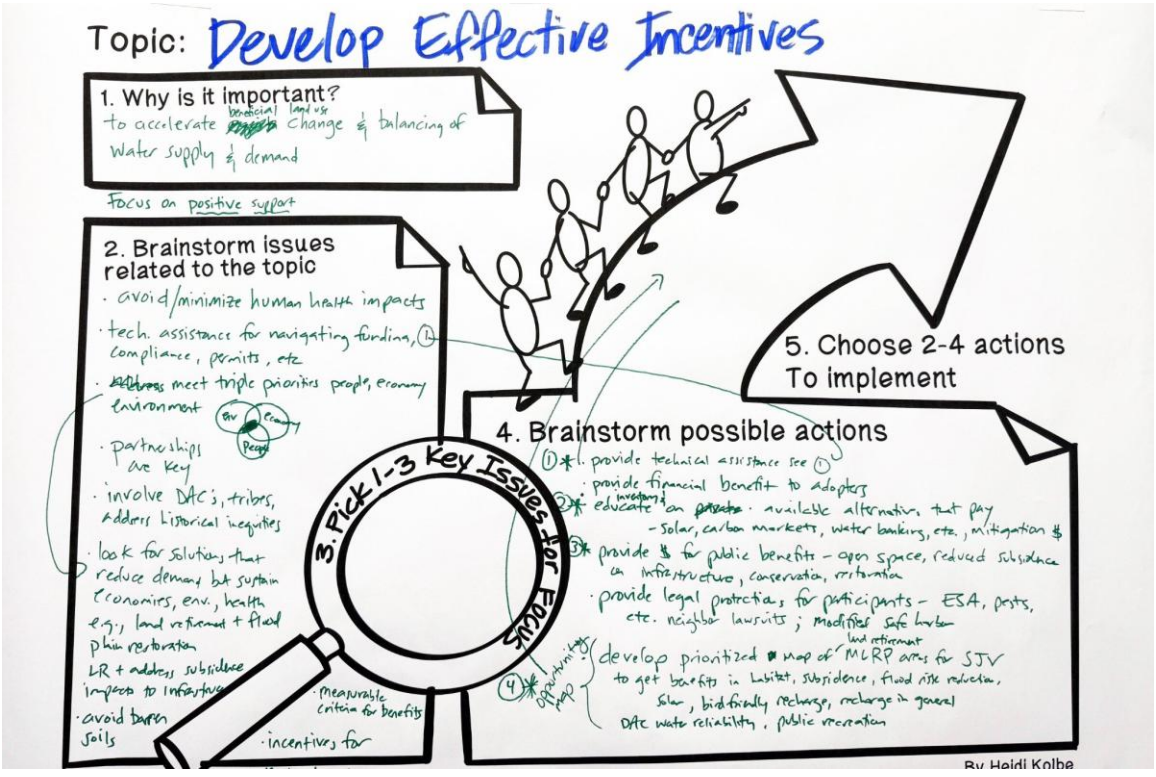
Roadmap worksheet: Test Multi-Benefit Solutions.

Allocate Sustainable Supply



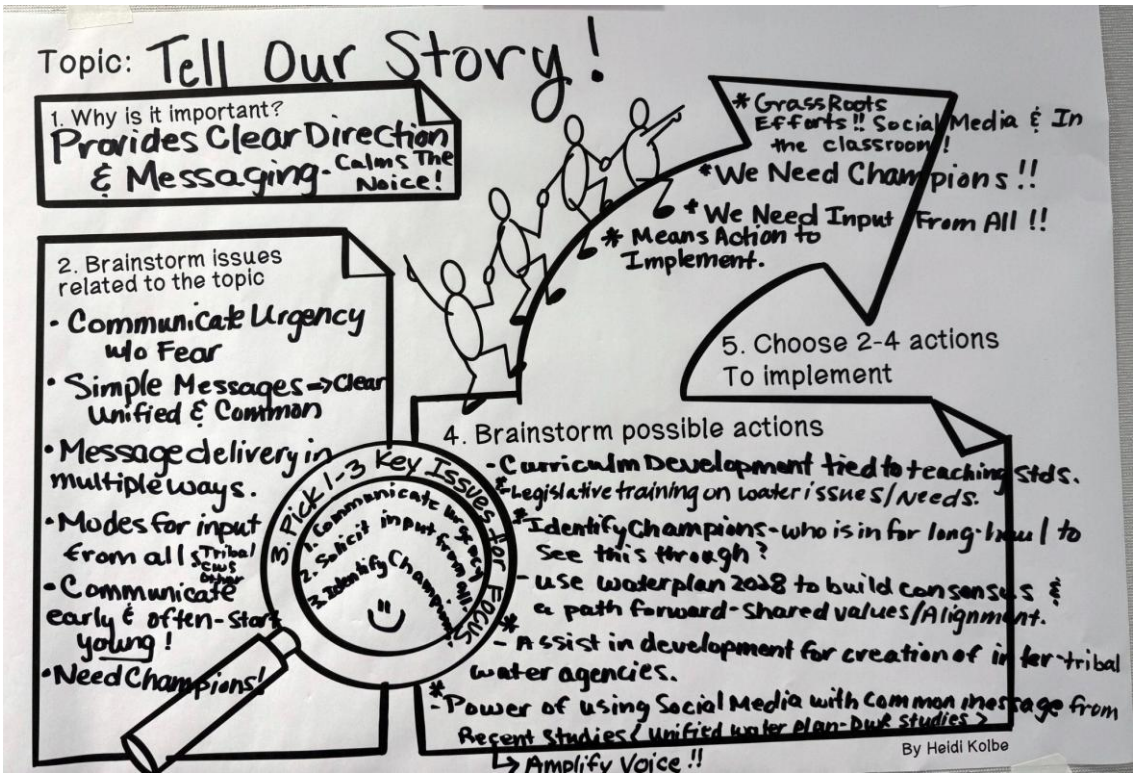
Roadmap worksheet: Allocate Sustainable Supply.

Develop Effective Incentives



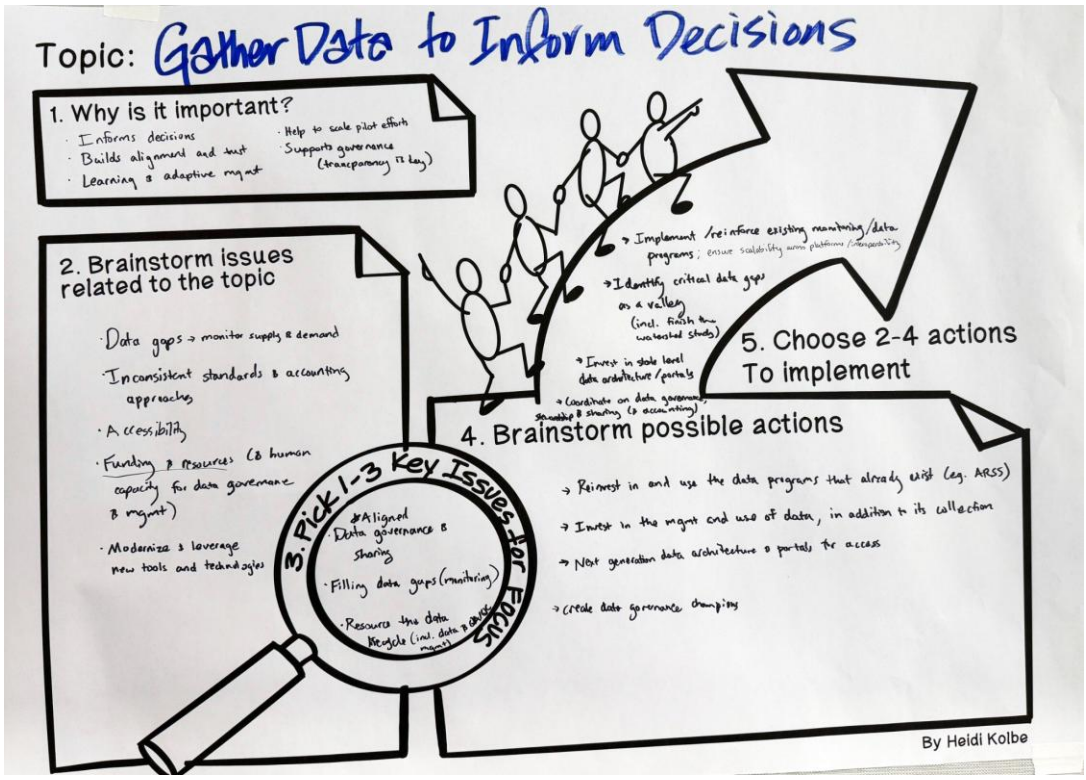
Roadmap worksheet: Develop Effective Incentives.

Tell Our Story



Roadmap worksheet: Tell Our Story.

Gather Data to Inform Decisions



Roadmap worksheet: Gather Data to Inform Decisions.

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