

Projects to Increase Summer Streamflows in Coastal California

There are several types of projects that landowners can implement to reduce the impacts of their water use and increase streamflows during the driest months of the year, when flows in coastal California streams are lowest. These projects also create more secure water supplies, and public grant funds are often available to help implement them.

Storage and Forbearance – Tanks

- These work best for domestic water supplies (homes, campgrounds, etc.)
- The goal is to store enough water during the rainy season to allow forbearance of diversion during the dry season
- These require a new water right from the State Water Board to authorize the storage



Storage and Forbearance – Off-stream Ponds

- These are similar to tank projects, but are more appropriate for farms and other larger-scale non-potable water uses
- Ponds tend to be more cost effective for storing larger volumes of water



Efficiency

- The goal is to reduce overall water use by installing low-flow plumbing fixtures, drip irrigation, drought-tolerant turf, irrigation sensors, etc.
- These measures can be used in conjunction with other project types; for example, to reduce the size and cost of storage tanks



Rainwater Catchment

- These systems collect and store rainwater runoff from an impervious surface such as a roof, and use it to offset summer diversion
- They are most appropriate for non-potable water uses such as outdoor irrigation
- No water right is required to collect and store rainwater from rooftops



Infiltration

- Measures to slow and spread runoff during the rainy season, so it sinks into the ground
- Water is “stored” on the landscape, and is naturally released to streamflow over the course of the dry season



Flow Releases

- Water is released into to a stream during the dry season, typically from an existing pond
- Provides the most direct augmentation of streamflow
- Water quality can be an issue, and requires consultation with regulatory agencies

