A Sustainable Water Future For California

California has a large and growing gap between the amount of water available and the amount that people use. This gap can be illustrated by the large and ongoing shortfall in the state's two primary water sources: the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and California's groundwater basins, which are collectively overtapped at the rate of about 6–7 million acre-feet per year. But California can fill this gap. Four simple solutions have the potential to generate 11–14 million acre-feet of water in new supplies and demand reductions. That's enough water to restore a thriving Delta and replenish depleted aquifers with millions of acre-feet to spare to support population and economic growth.

The following four solutions can generate 11-14 million acre-feet per year for California.

14 million acre-feet (total potential savings) =

- enough to serve 20 cities the size of Los Angeles every year

- enough to fill Shasta Lake—California's largest reservoir—three times

Agricultural Efficiency:
Agriculture, which uses about 80 percent of California's developed water supply, could reduce water use by **5.6–6.6 million acre-feet per year**, while maintaining current acreage levels and crop mix. This is a savings of about 17–22 percent of agricultural water use.

6.6 million acre-feet (potential agricultural efficiency savings) =

- enough to irrigate 2.5 million acres of fruits and nut trees

- enough to fill Lake Oroville—the state's second-largest reservoir—twice

Urban Efficiency:
Urban areas, which encompass residential and business uses and account for the remaining 20 percent of California's developed water use, could reduce water use by **2.9–5.2 million acre-feet per year,** or by about 32–57 percent.

5.2 million acre-feet (potential urban efficiency savings) =

- enough to supply 7 cities the size of Los Angeles every year

- equivalent to 100 ocean desalination plants, like the one being constructed in Carlsbad

Water Reuse:
Californians can stretch water supplies further by treating, where necessary, and reusing water for multiple purposes. The current water reuse potential, beyond what has already been achieved, is **1.2–1.8 million acre-feet per year.**

1.8 million acre-feet (potential water reuse savings) =

- enough to supply more than 2 cities the size of Los Angeles every year

- enough to irrigate 400,000 acres of vegetables

Stormwater Capture:
Capturing rainwater and storing it for later use instead of sending it to sewers and out to sea can increase water supplies and reduce pollution and treatment costs. Improving stormwater capture in just the Bay Area and urban Southern California can increase supply by **420,000–630,000 acre-feet per year.**

630,000 acre-feet (potential stormwater capture savings) =

- nearly enough water to supply Los Angeles every year

- enough water to fill about 300,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools

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