



Securing a Water Resilient Future

PACIFIC INSTITUTE STRATEGIC PLAN THROUGH 2026





Water: A Critical Issue

Water is one of our most precious natural resources. Yet, we are over-exploiting and degrading our water resources at an alarming rate — with impacts to people, nature, and economies. Climate change is only intensifying the crisis.

PEOPLE

Today, more than 2.2 billion people — nearly a quarter of the world's population — lack access to safe drinking water. By 2030, nearly half of the world's population is expected to live in regions suffering from severe water stress.

NATURE

The growing water crisis also threatens nature. Today, nearly 1/3 of all freshwater fish species are facing extinction. More than 60% of the world's wetlands — crucial for biodiversity and flood protection — have disappeared since 1900.

ECONOMIES

The water crisis also has deep economic implications. Worldwide, the cost of water insecurity to the global economy is estimated at US\$500 billion a year.



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 assesses how well the world is addressing our water challenges. Unfortunately, progress toward SDG 6 targets is alarmingly off track.

“

Climate change has radically intensified our water challenges. We need bold and immediate action to ensure our water systems are resilient for current and future generations.

— Jason Morrison,
President, Pacific Institute

CLIMATE CHANGE: INTENSIFYING THE WATER CRISIS


Many of the worst impacts of climate change are on water. As temperatures rise, the entire water cycle has been disrupted.

Today, the availability of water is more variable and uncertain. We face increased risks to water quality and safety. And, there are more frequent water-related disasters.

As record-breaking floods and droughts top news headlines, water-related disasters now account for more than 90% of all disasters on Earth. Human deaths from these disasters have doubled during the past 10 years.

The water-related impacts of climate change are often felt most severely by frontline communities. People of color, Indigenous groups, and low-income communities often experience climate change impacts first and worst. They also often have the fewest resources to adapt.

The water crisis is also a crisis of human dignity and equity.



Urgent action is needed to build water resilience — so that all people, including those on the frontlines, can thrive. The Pacific Institute is proud to be leading a global effort to achieve this vision.

The Pacific Institute: Transforming Global Water Solutions

For nearly 40 years, the Pacific Institute's experts have created and advanced solutions to the world's most pressing water challenges. Many of the leading water solutions being implemented today have been informed or influenced by the Pacific Institute's work.

Our leading-edge, nonpartisan research, pioneering solutions, and global outreach lead to on-the-ground change. The ultimate impacts can be seen around the world — from the drought-stricken Colorado River Basin in the U.S. West to rural communities in India.

Much of the Pacific Institute's work happens somewhat behind the scenes, influencing large-scale shifts. The ultimate impacts of our work, though, have likely already improved the state of water in a community near you — perhaps without you even knowing it.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ The Pacific Institute's work influenced the United Nations' decision to establish the Human Right to Water as international law. Our work has also influenced more decisions and investments to ensure the Human Right to Water is realized for more people.
- ◆ The Pacific Institute has influenced widespread shifts in water policies at the state, federal, and global level.
- ◆ Our work has contributed to water being used more efficiently and more water being reused, while also influencing more investments in nature-based solutions.
- ◆ The Pacific Institute has galvanized hundreds of companies across 140 countries to improve the water resilience of their operations and supply chains. Our work has contributed to large-scale impacts by these companies around the world:
 - ◇ Billions of gallons of water saved through more efficient use or reuse of water
 - ◇ Widespread reductions in water pollution
 - ◇ Trillions of gallons of water returned to nature
 - ◇ Thousands of square miles of natural water-protecting ecosystems restored or protected
 - ◇ More than 100 million people gaining access to safe water and sanitation



Thought Leadership on Water Resilience

More than 30 years ago, the Pacific Institute conducted groundbreaking research linking climate change with detrimental impacts on water systems. Our experts issued some of the earliest warnings to policymakers. This happened long before the water-related impacts of climate change were recognized by mainstream media or policy discussions.

Following decades of thought leadership at the intersection of water and climate, the Pacific Institute released a foundational issue brief in 2021 with a forward-looking focus. This brief provided a definition of water resilience that is now used around the world:



Water Resilience: The ability of water systems to function so that nature and people, including those on the frontlines and disproportionately impacted, thrive under shocks, stresses, and change.

This definition and related Pacific Institute research have helped advance the understanding of water resilience by businesses, governments, NGOs, policymakers, and other levers of change. It also informs the Pacific Institute's 2030 ambition.

OUR BOLD 2030 AMBITION

Informed by decades of thought leadership on water and climate issues, the Pacific Institute has adopted a bold organizational goal:

By 2030, we aim to catalyze the transformation to water resilience in the face of climate change.

Strategic Plan Through 2026

With few years remaining until 2030, this moment serves as a critical turning point. To accelerate the transformation to water resilience, the Pacific Institute has developed a new strategy through 2026 to lead the way.

IMPACT AREAS FOR ACCELERATED ACTION

This strategy focuses our work on four Impact Areas:

 **Water Equity**

 **Water Efficiency and Reuse**

 **Nature-Based Solutions**

 **Corporate Water Stewardship**

These areas have the potential to accelerate action for the greatest impact — to solve the water crisis and build water resilience. They are also areas where the Pacific Institute is globally recognized for our expertise.

MULTIPLIER EFFECT

At this critical moment in time, the Pacific Institute is uniquely positioned to scale water resilience solutions like few other organizations can. In this way, our strategy provides a multiplier effect of influence and impact.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

For nearly four decades, the Pacific Institute has led groundbreaking and actionable research. This unbiased, evidence-based research will always comprise our core.

Given the urgency to act, we will now also expand our work to ensure the most powerful and viable solutions are implemented and rapidly scaled — on the ground in the real world. We will do this in two ways:

- 1 We will increase our direct engagement with groups that have the power to implement the solutions we recommend to build water resilience. These groups include water utilities, NGOs, frontline communities, businesses, and others.
- 2 We will increase our work to promote systems-level change. This will involve evidence-based advocacy and influencing policies that can reduce barriers and create opportunities to scale water resilience solutions. We will also champion a broader movement toward water resilience by collaborating with an extensive network of partners.

In all of this work, the Pacific Institute will continue its deep commitment to equity and equitable solutions. We will continue to strive to ensure diverse voices inform our thought leadership and strategies to scale solutions.

WHY

Water is vital for survival. It impacts the health of people, ecosystems, and economies. Yet, we are degrading water resources at an alarming rate. Climate change only accelerates these problems. Today, billions of people lack access to safe water. **By 2030, the demand for freshwater may outstrip supply by 40%.** Together, we must take bold, immediate, and sweeping action.

OUR 2030 GOAL

Catalyze the transformation to water resilience in the face of climate change.

WHAT

We focus on four Impact Areas to accelerate action on water resilience.

Water Equity

Water Efficiency & Reuse

Nature-Based Solutions

Corporate Water Stewardship

HOW

For nearly 40 years, our experts have conducted **groundbreaking research** and pioneered **water resilience solutions**. We expand the impact of our work through **extensive outreach**.

INFORM

Build actionable knowledge through evidence-based research and analysis.

ENGAGE

Facilitate the adoption of water resilience solutions by working directly with key partners.

INFLUENCE

Drive systems change by influencing policy and partnering with collaborative networks.

WHO

We **convene and collaborate** with diverse partners around the world. Through these networks, our work creates **meaningful and lasting changes** in practices, policies, and funding.

Water Utilities

NGOs

Frontline Communities

Policymakers & Governments

Businesses

United Nations Partners

WHERE

We work in the United States and globally. We are **catalyzing action** in 100 specific water-stressed basins around the world.

OUR WORK INFLUENCES GLOBAL CHANGE AND ACTION TO ENSURE:

- People, nature, and economies have the water they need to thrive.
- Water systems are more resilient in the face of climate change.

Impact Areas



Water Equity

PROBLEM

Around the globe, billions of people lack safe drinking water and sanitation. Even in the United States, more than 2 million people do not have running water or basic plumbing, while water is unsafe or unaffordable for tens of millions more.

Climate change is worsening inequities in access to clean, reliable, and affordable water and sanitation. Frontline communities typically don't have a seat at the table when it comes to decisions around water, yet they are often the first and worst impacted.

OPPORTUNITY

Water resilience strategies must address the needs of frontline communities. Efforts to meet water and sanitation needs must consider climate change impacts.

More than 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water, and 3.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation.

EXPERTISE

The Pacific Institute has more than 30 years of commitment to integrating social equity into our work. Our experts have extensively published on issues of human rights. This research helped lay the groundwork for the United Nations to declare water as a human right in 2010. The Human Right to Water is now recognized by international law. In 2022, the Pacific Institute launched a research report series focused on equity issues at the intersection of water and climate change.

STRATEGY

Our strategy toward 2026 will help equip frontline and rural communities with the research, tools, and resources they need to help more people have access to safe water and sanitation. We'll also support these communities to ensure their water practices and policies are resilient to climate change. The Pacific Institute will also support utilities, corporations, and others to integrate water equity issues into their own work.

Together, these actions will help ensure more people have their Human Right to Water and Sanitation fulfilled.



Water Efficiency and Reuse

PROBLEM

By 2030, total global water demand is projected to outstrip water supply by 40%. The world's water supply is finite. But, demand for it continues to increase. All water comes from nature. But many major rivers — including the Colorado River in the western United States and the Yellow River in China — no longer reach the sea in most years.

OPPORTUNITY

Water efficiency and reuse are powerful strategies to enhance water sustainability and resilience. They promote water reliability. They also reduce reliance on over-tapped water sources, leaving more water for natural ecosystems. These approaches can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions — essential for mitigating the impacts of climate change.

They are often less expensive than alternatives, while also offering social and environmental benefits. Yet, these strategies are vastly underutilized.

EXPERTISE

Groundbreaking Pacific Institute research has identified significant untapped potential to expand water efficiency and reuse approaches. This leading-edge research is contributing to regional, national, and global discussions about the potential for water efficiency and reuse to enhance broader water resilience. It is also informing and influencing policies and infrastructure investments.

STRATEGY

The Pacific Institute's strategy through 2026 will focus on increasing the recognition of water efficiency and reuse as foundational water resilience strategies. We will continue to develop leading-edge research and solutions, sharing them with utilities, businesses, frontline communities, and others capable of driving change. By expanding strategic partnerships across the private and public sectors, we will influence increased investments in water efficiency and reuse across the United States, while influencing broader global dialogues.

Recent groundbreaking research from the Pacific Institute found California could reduce urban water use by up to 48% through investments in water efficiency measures.





Nature-Based Solutions

PROBLEM

The world's natural ecosystems have experienced rapid loss, with negative impacts to water. It is estimated that more than half of the world's wetlands have been lost since 1900. In nearly every water basin around the world, the quality and quantity of water is in decline.

OPPORTUNITY

Nature-based solutions use or mimic natural processes to meet societal and environmental needs. By restoring, protecting, and managing key ecosystems, including forests and wetlands, we can provide more water for local communities and improve the quality of that water. Investments in nature-based solutions can also provide more and higher-quality water for communities, while building resilience to the impacts of floods and droughts.

For instance, wetlands are often described as nature's sponges because they absorb and store water. They naturally protect communities from the impacts of flooding and can reduce the impacts of droughts.

Nature-based solutions also increase biodiversity and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

EXPERTISE

The Pacific Institute has developed a range of strategies and tools making it easier for key partners to invest in nature-based solutions. Today, these are used by hundreds of businesses, utilities, and governments. They are also influencing policies at the regional, state, national, and global level.

STRATEGY

The Pacific Institute's strategy through 2026 aims to further increase the recognition of nature-based solutions as critical pathways to build water resilience in the face of climate change. We will continue to develop leading-edge tools to make it easier for businesses, utilities, communities, and other groups to invest in these solutions. Our work will also influence policies at the local, regional, and national levels.

During Hurricane Sandy — one of the largest Atlantic hurricanes in history — natural wetlands were credited with reducing the impacts. They helped avoid more than \$625 million in damages.



Corporate Water Stewardship

PROBLEM

Businesses are major water users through direct operations and across value chains.

OPPORTUNITY

Businesses are a key stakeholder in helping solve the water crisis. Due to the scale at which some corporations operate, a single pivotal change by a global business can result in significant improvements in water resilience.

EXPERTISE

The Pacific Institute is the leading global force informing and convening the private sector to take water action.

Since 2007, the Pacific Institute has convened the CEO Water Mandate. Working in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, the CEO Water Mandate unites more than 350 companies to address urgent water challenges.

The Pacific Institute also directly engages CEOs from major companies to elevate water action on corporate agendas. Launched in 2020, the Water Resilience Coalition convenes some of the world's most influential companies and CEOs to build water resilience in their operations and supply chains, and to take collective action in basins around the world.

STRATEGY

The Pacific Institute's strategy through 2026 increases recognition for the role corporate water stewardship can play in building water resilience in the face of climate change. We will continue to conduct research and develop innovative tools to inform and inspire business decisions.

We will also focus significant effort reaching the 2030 goals of the Water Resilience Coalition:

- ◆ Catalyze collective action across 100 high-priority basins identified by the Pacific Institute.
- ◆ Contribute to water security for 3 billion people.
- ◆ Enable equitable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) for more than 300 million people.

In addition, we'll identify and influence key shifts in public policy that can unlock opportunities for corporate water stewardship to help solve the water crisis.

"Through our partnership with the Pacific Institute...it's visionary that we have corporate commitments at the highest level."

— Sanda Ojiambo, CEO and Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact



Other Key Initiatives

In addition to the four Impact Areas, the Pacific Institute will also continue its research and solutions work across several key initiatives to build water resilience.

Water and Conflict

There is a long history of conflicts over freshwater resources, going back thousands of years and continuing to the present. The Pacific Institute is a leading research center and voice addressing water, conflict, and security challenges, through both analytical work and the development of policy options for addressing water conflict risks.

The Pacific Institute maintains the world’s most comprehensive database on conflicts over water resources, the Water Conflict Chronology.

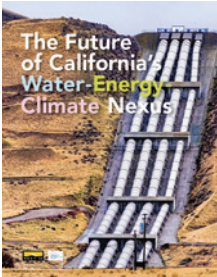
STRATEGY

As part of the Pacific Institute's strategy through 2026, we will continue to raise awareness and promote solutions to water-related violent conflict at local, national, and global levels.



Water and Energy

For nearly 40 years, the Pacific Institute has played a lead role in analyzing and communicating the connections between water, energy, and climate change. As climate change impacts on water intensify and greenhouse gas concentrations continue to rise, the Pacific Institute is dedicated to being a leading voice for creating and advancing viable solutions for simultaneously meeting water and climate goals.



STRATEGY

The Pacific Institute’s strategy through 2026 will continue to build evidence-based research to inform and influence related policies. In this way, we’ll unlock opportunities for water to help reach climate goals.



Strategic Communications and Outreach



The Pacific Institute’s strategy through 2026 highlights the critical role strategic communications and outreach play in connecting our work with the real world. Ultimately, we can scale water resilience solutions most powerfully by ensuring key stakeholders — those who have the most pivotal power to implement solutions — have access to them.

Each year, our work is mentioned thousands of times by media outlets — from the *Financial Times* to National Public Radio. The Pacific Institute is also highlighted for its thought leadership at national and global convenings — from the World Economic Forum to the United Nations General Assembly. By making our thought leadership accessible to key audiences, our research, tools, and recommendations have been downloaded millions of times during the past decade.

STRATEGY

We will harness this power of strategic communications and outreach to build awareness of water challenges, drive the urgency to act, and connect key levers of change with our recommended solutions. We will also expand our capacity to influence public policy changes that can increase opportunities and reduce barriers to implement solutions.



Help Us Secure a Water-Resilient Future

At the Pacific Institute, we’ve spent nearly 40 years addressing global water challenges. Now, with climate change placing additional pressures on threatened water systems worldwide, accelerated action is crucial.

You play a vital role. When you support the Pacific Institute, you strengthen water resilience, protect resources for people and nature, and build a just future.

JOIN US IN CREATING A WATER-SECURE WORLD FOR ALL.

“ For nearly 40 years, the Pacific Institute has written the book on water. Now, it’s building a movement toward water resilience. I invite others to support this critical work at this critical time — by investing in the organization at the epicenter of solutions so deeply needed.

— Sally Liu, Philanthropist & Pacific Institute Board Chair



PACIFIC INSTITUTE

REIMAGINING WATER FOR A CHANGING WORLD

pacinst.org

