



**California Urban
Streams Partnership**



CALIFORNIA
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



August 21, 2013

The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95819

ATTN: Ms. Tina Cannon Leahy
Principal Consultant

RE: Assembly Water Bond Framework and Green Infrastructure

Dear Chairman Rendon:

We commend the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on promoting a thoughtful and transparent public process for considering the essential elements that must be included in any revision to the water bond passed by the Legislature in 2009 that is currently slated for the November 2014 ballot. We believe the draft framework presented on August 15th shows tremendous promise and moves California away from some of the challenging issues the current bond faces relating to content and cost.

We are especially encouraged by references in both the Assembly Principles and Framework for the need to “Restore the health of California’s watersheds” and address stormwater management. Both are vital to building comprehensive water conservation, water quality, and climate preparedness sections within a bond and both encourage cost-effective and strategic opportunities through green infrastructure investment in both rural and urban areas of the state.

Last week, more than a dozen statewide nonprofits presented the Legislature with a list of guiding principles for a water bond complimentary to those drafted by the Assembly, but from the perspective of environmental and environmental justice groups. The principles include:

- building and supporting environmentally just and sustainable communities
- investing in “green infrastructure projects affecting urban waters, watersheds and other natural resources that conserve and restore these areas to promote improved water quality, stormwater management, and quality of life within California’s densely populated areas.”

We believe there is tremendous opportunity and necessity to specifically address these issues within the existing Assembly Framework by providing a modest allocation for urban greening projects that contribute directly to improving stormwater management in urban areas and supporting California’s urban watershed infrastructure.

The green infrastructure that comprises the primary natural resources of the State's densely populated areas – urban streams, local parks, green roofs, natural aspects of low impact development, urban forests, watershed gardens, and more – are all important water quality as well as water capture and conservation tools that significantly contribute these benefits through a variety of natural services delivery. For example:

- **urban forest watersheds and community forests** reduce the threats of flooding in areas with more impermeable surfaces by holding rainfall on the leaves and branches, with 100 mature trees able to catch about 250,000 gallons of rainwater per year
- **local parks** can be designed with permeable walking paths, stormwater ponds, bioswales, and community gardens that filter and capture stormwater, recharge groundwater and make local water supplies more reliable
- **revitalized urban streams** also reduce flooding and erosion, and re-contoured channels improve floodplain functionality
- **green infrastructure as low impact development** can be used to capture, clean, store, and replenish groundwater resources while also providing flood attenuation, is supported by the U.S. EPA

All of these examples, and more, also include tremendous community co-benefits, and are often connect directly to social equity and environmental justice as related to improved water quality.

Last year, the Assembly played a leadership role in recognizing the critical connection between water and green infrastructure by passing the Rainwater Capture Act of 2012, which was signed by Governor Brown. We are urging the Assembly to continue that leadership by integrating urban green infrastructure into the Assembly bill that will guide water bond discussions in this house over the next several weeks.

Thank you again for conducting an open, public process, and for your consideration of this critical urban waters issue.

Sincerely,



Greg Suba
California Native Plant Society



Nancy Hughes
California Urban Forests Council



Joe Liszewski
California ReLeaf



Rico Mastrodonato
Trust for Public Land

Michael Vukman

Michael Vukman
California Urban Streams Partnership

Cc: Mr. Alf Brandt, Legislative Director, Office of Assembly Member Anthony Rendon