

Major Findings

The gaming process resulted in various conclusions on the part of the group.

A simple credit approach did not work as well as water account approach in effectively balancing benefits to water quality, water supply, and the environment. Gallon-for-gallon water account approach provided more opportunities, more synergies, and more flexibility. Both approaches offer improvements over existing prescriptive standards that have minimal flexibility to adjust to specific circumstances and needs.

There are many possible strategies for applying an EWA. The best strategy would likely have a capability of adjusting to the specific circumstances. Factors that vary include fish distribution and abundance, environmental factors, etc. These factors would change circumstances and vary need for protection.

There are many options or alternatives for performing functions like In-Delta storage. All have different degrees of flexibility, feasibility, and implementation constraints.

The best way to meet program objectives using the EWA may be to work out water quality, water supply, and environmental objectives concomitantly.

There are opportunities for synergies that would provide long-term benefits to water quality, water supply, and the environment. Each can borrow or count on the resources of the other to help meet objectives within a highly variable and unpredictable system.

Opportunities are limited because the water supply is limited. Resources are gained by shifting water supply among years through new storage that captures "surplus" water in wetter years and periods, and distribution facilities that shift transfer water among facilities. Water supply for some users is also gained at the expense of other users through sharing and reimbursement.

Because the water supply within and among years is so stochastic (unpredictable and variable), an EWA approach provides a much needed buffering system not only for protection of the environment, but also for water quality and water supply. The EWA provides the collateral to take on risk. In the end, costs are lower than anticipated, because in some years things work out - rain falls. This ability to take on risk benefits everyone.

Sharing water supply generated by new facilities and the risks associated with water supply, along with a flexible management approach like EWA, should provide for mutual incentives for long-term benefits for the environment, water quality, and water supply in the future. Flexibility and "extra" resources and facilities will hopefully minimize short-term risks.