September 9, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Caroline Thomas Jacobs
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, CA 95655

Subject: Request for Immediate State Action (Executive Order) to Protect California Communities Before the 2026–27 Winter Season

Dear Governor Newsom and Director Thomas Jacobs:

On behalf of the below signatories, we respectively request immediate state action to help local agencies prepare for the impending 2026-27 winter storm season. As of August 24, 2026, NOAA is predicting a 69% chance of a historic El Nino that would exceed the strength of previous El Nino events dating back to 1950. Further, NOAA and the European Climate Centers are also predicting increasing likelihoods of wet winter seasons across California.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts is predicting a greater than 50% chance that rainfall totals in most of California will be in the highest 20% of the climatological record for the December through February 2027 period (exhibit attached). The model also predicts a greater than 70% chance of extreme rainfall for much of coastal California. It is now very likely that California will experience stronger and more persistent storms, including repeated atmospheric river events across California.

We are aware of the letter submitted by the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency and its member agencies requesting an Executive Order to expedite urgent vegetation management, debris removal, sediment management, bridge scour protection and related flood-risk reduction activities within vulnerable river channels, tributaries, and flood-control corridors. **We support Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency's request and additionally request that such an Executive Order be extended to the entire state.**

Despite local agencies' best attempts with maintenance, waterways throughout California are grappling with persistent issues such as excess vegetation growth, sediment buildup, and debris emanating from devastating wildlands fires across California, heavy rains from the winters of 2022-23 and 2023-24, abnormally strong monsoonal rainfall in the deserts and Tropical Storms Kay and Hilary.

Order N-10-23, referenced in the Pajaro letter, underscored the importance of completing vegetation management, sediment removal, and debris clearing ahead of the rainy season, with the intent to minimize risks associated with subsequent high-flow events. At the same time, it ensured that appropriate environmental protections remained in place throughout these urgent activities.

Accordingly, we respectfully join and expand Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency's request that your Administration take statewide action to:

1. Issue an Executive Order authorizing expedited vegetation management, debris removal, sediment management, bridge scour protection, channel-capacity improvements, and related flood-protection activities in waterways presenting significant flood risks;

2. Provide statewide regulatory streamlining consistent with the emergency authorities exercised under Executive Order N-10-23, while maintaining appropriate environmental protections;

3. Temporarily suspend applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing regulations for specifically identified emergency and preventive flood-risk reduction projects, to the extent permitted by law, where compliance would delay the timely completion of essential work before

the winter storm season. Any such suspension should be narrowly tailored to urgent activities necessary to protect life, property, critical infrastructure, agricultural lands, and public safety;

4. Include preventive and response provisions for California Coastal Act and California Endangered Species Act, which were absent from N-10-23;
5. Direct state agencies to prioritize and expedite permitting, consultation, and technical assistance necessary to complete these projects before the winter rainy season; and
6. Direct the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services and other appropriate state agencies to provide all available funding, equipment, personnel, technical support, emergency-planning assistance, and other resources to help local communities prepare for a worst-case flooding scenario this winter.

We further request that Cal OES work directly with local jurisdictions to identify funding and resource gaps, strengthen evacuation and emergency-response planning, support community preparedness and public outreach, and pre-position critical state resources wherever feasible. Our most vulnerable communities, including low-income neighborhoods, farmworker families, rural residents, seniors, and individuals with limited transportation, must not be left unprepared.

The window for preventive action is rapidly closing. Taking decisive action now will help safeguard California communities, agricultural resources, transportation networks, and public infrastructure from potentially catastrophic flooding. Early intervention is far less costly, and far less disruptive to families, than emergency response and disaster recovery after flooding occurs.

We appreciate your continued leadership in advancing California's resilience to extreme weather. We stand ready to work collaboratively with your Administration, Cal OES, and other state and federal partners to reduce flood risks and protect California communities before the approaching winter season.

Sincerely,

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Legislative Advocate
California State
Association of Counties

Adam Borchard
Executive Director
California Central Valley
Flood Control
Association

Amanda Bloom
Executive Director
California Association of
Environmental Health
Administrators

Supervisor Bill Connelly
Chair, Butte County
Board of Supervisors

Brian Tisdale
Councilmember, City of
Lake Elsinore
Advocacy Committee
Chair, Western Riverside
County of Governments

Supervisor Doug Chaffee
Chair, Orange County
Board of Supervisors

Chris Sneddon
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Kam Bezdek
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of Supervisors
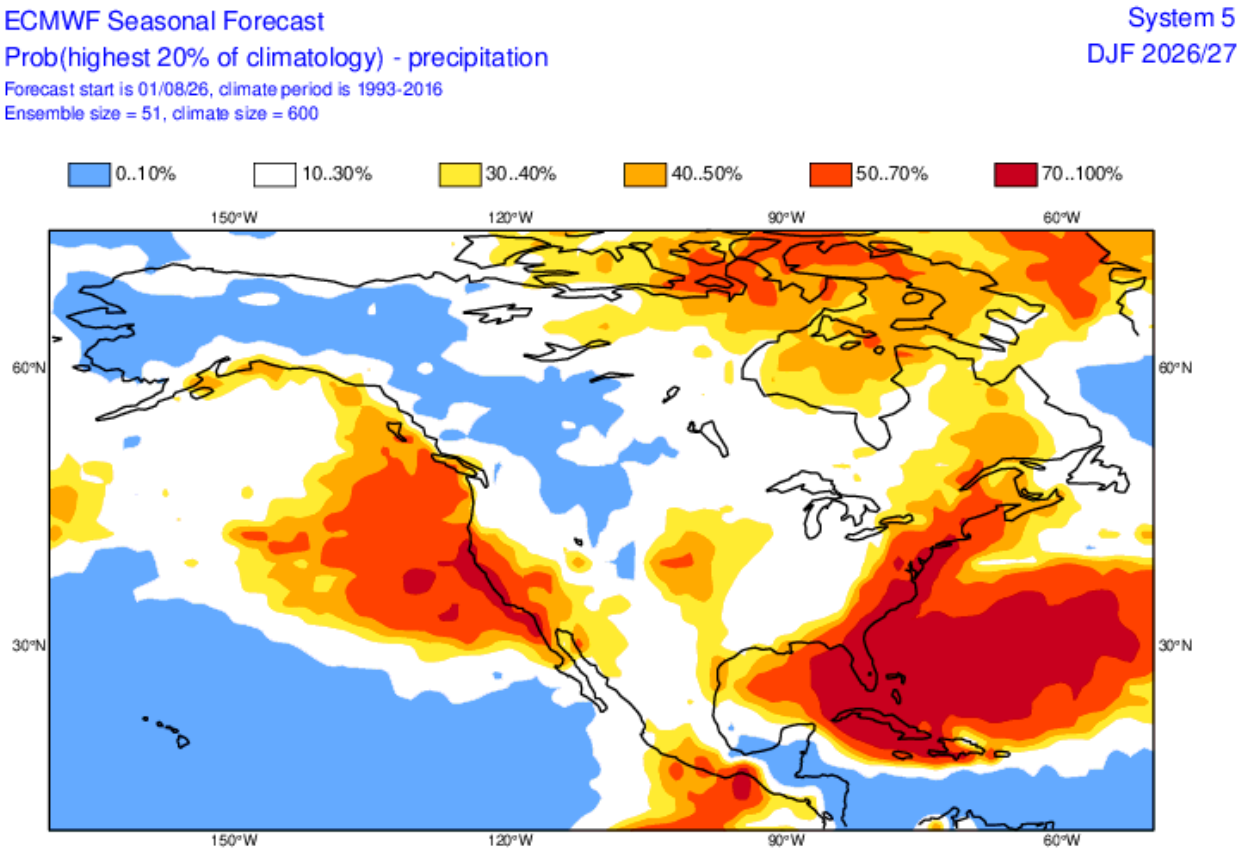
Exhibit: European Center For Medium Range Forecasts Season Forecast for Dec 2026 through February 2027 chance of rainfall totals in the highest 20% of climatology.