Water Solutions Network

Collaborating for California

INAUGURAL CHARTER, 2019

I.   Who We Are:

The Water Solutions Network (WSN) is comprised of leaders who have the courage to take bold action to bring about more integrated, equitable, and resilient water management in California. Network members serve as change agents, story-tellers, and bridges, ready to tackle the State's most pressing water challenges by fostering a healthy water system.

II. Network Vision: Towards a Healthy Water System

Water is essential for life, and we are all connected by it. It makes up most of our bodies and covers most of the earth's surface, it is the bulk of the food we eat, it is in the air we breathe; it shapes the landscapes we inhabit; it drives the weather patterns we bask in and shelter ourselves from; it fuels our economies; it shapes our laws and regulatory structures, and it is at the center of some of our most intense political conflicts. Because water is so essential, a healthy water system necessitates holistic approaches and must be cultivated across the diverse range of scales that water touches, from individuals and communities, to built and natural landscapes, to laws, economies, policies and politics.

The WSN is dedicated to sowing, nurturing, and tending *health* across the interconnected, multi-scale life systems dependent on water. In our collective work to support and model a healthy water system, we have identified *Equity, Integration, and Resilience* as essential qualities integral to our conceptualization of health.

- ☐ *Equity* necessitates (a) sufficient awareness of and attention to all parts of the system to allow for their respective needs, interests, and values to reveal themselves and for common interests to emerge, as well as (b) trust in and acceptance of the value of all parts of the system as core to system health, independent of the extent of our understanding of their specific roles.

  Equity at multiple scales:

  - o *Interpersonal equity* requires practices for cultivating both awareness of self and awareness of others in order to understand, value, and learn from different perspectives and modes of being, build trust, cultivate connection and experience a shared sense of belonging. (e.g. cross cultural outreach and conversations; active decolonization of mind; diversity training; compassion, and forgiveness)

o *Community equity* necessitates space for the needs of all communities to be heard, understood and addressed. As different communities have different histories, values, and needs, community level equity often requires looking beyond top down, one size fits all solutions in favor of greater attention to seeking understanding and empowering communities to identify and realize the structures and conditions that support their own needs and values. (e.g. diverse representation, community forums, community coalition lead initiatives)

o *Societal equity* involves the deconstruction of the externality; a system that relies on some element or portion being treated as external or separate is not equitable. For this reason, the pursuit of equity in economic or political spaces involves the practice of viewing the system from as inclusive a place as possible, and orienting around trends, opportunities, or values whose significance is emergent from that inclusive space. (e.g. truth and reconciliation work, the development of water and habitat markets, economic approaches with multiple bottom lines, local nutritious food food access for communities, human right to water, community access to clean water, and other inclusive, place based processes to balance diverse societal values and priorities)

o *Environmental equity* recognizes that we are a (very small) part of the vast and dynamic networks of nature. Many components and relationships in our natural systems have co-evolved over periods of time far greater than that which humans have inhabited the planet, are extensive and complex, and are critical not only for our own survival but the survival of many other expressions of life. Environmental equity invites an orientation towards ourselves as a small part of a large and diverse whole and a practice of looking to the larger patterns, movements, and expressions of natural systems to guide our movements and expressions. (e.g. rights of nature, resources devoted to address environmental inequity and justice, providing people access to nature, human right to water,)

☐ **Integration** is the outcome of different parts of a system recognizing their connections to the others, functioning as though they are connected (as opposed to isolated), and constantly seeking to optimize those connections and functions. Integration creates and reveals synergies, making the capacity of the system greater than the sum of its parts. Integrative actions support, benefit and leverage multiple parts of the system AND the system itself, simultaneously.

Integration at multiple scales:

o *Interpersonal and community* integration seeks to build stronger connections between people, to learn from each other and grow through relationship, to share tools, and to make efficient use of common resources. (e.g. shared water collection, treatment, and conveyance facilities)

o *Societal integration* involves planning, design, and implementation for multiple benefits (e.g. sustainable groundwater management to recharge depleted aquifers, floodplain reactivation to reduce danger to communities, provide wildlife habitat, recharge groundwater, and revitalize soils for seasonal flood-friendly

crop types) and the diversification of learning, approaches, and opportunities that is possible when systems combine.

☐ ***Resilience*** is the capacity of a system to maintain dynamic equilibrium and recover it after a disturbance. The *diversity* and *connectivity* of the system are its cornerstones. In resilient systems, diversity and connectivity work together, enabling the system to draw on the breadth of its diverse resources, individually and in combination for maximum adaptability and flexibility. Connectivity allows the diverse system to draw strength from parts that are thriving and healthy to support the regeneration and recovery of parts that are dying or sick. Systems that lack diversity are inherently vulnerable. Systems that are diverse, but lack connectivity cannot draw on their diversity.

Resilience at multiple scales:

o *Personal resilience* is grounded in human health and the conditions necessary to support it. (e.g. access to clean water, clean air and healthy food; access to nature, access to affordable healthcare, supportive personal relationships)

o *Community resilience* rests on the integrity of the familial and social structures which support diversity, connectivity, and mutual understanding among people of different ages, backgrounds, and cultures. (e.g. families remaining connected, access to education, community designs that support diverse interactions)

o *Societal resilience* hinges on the physical and biologic functionality of dynamic natural landscapes and systems and the flexibility of human, built landscapes and systems to adapt to and leverage natural dynamism. (e.g. increased water retention and improved downstream supply through improved forest management and health and the restoration of mountain meadows, the integrated operation of water and flood systems to supply water to people, provide flood safety, recharge aquifers, and support thriving ecosystems)

In this work, we take inspiration from the model and movements of water itself, to soften, to dissolve, to path-find, to cleanse, and to heal.

III.   Network Principles: Values and Practices for a Healthy Network Culture

The network was initially envisioned with a goal to amplify the capacity for rising water leaders to act from a systems perspective, providing both individual tools grounded in a leadership framework and building networks strong enough to transcend boundaries and differences in order to develop trust. The aim is to develop leaders who have the courage to challenge the status quo and work collaboratively across sectors to achieve results.

- Self-governance is an essential part of the way we work.
- We build bridges, act as liaisons, form unexpected alliances, and develop deeper connections among water leaders, stewards, educators, workers, scientists, advocates and others across multiple generations, backgrounds, perspectives, jurisdictions and geographic scales.
- Courage to address water issues is best expressed through transformative, disruptive, collaborative, experimental, emergent, multiple-benefit, convergent, and fluid actions.

- We cultivate thoughtful, authentic dialogue built on trust, compassion, equity, and transparency.
- Tools for transformative change include education, creative financing, science and data, engagement, art and beauty, and incentives.

III.   Network Governance: Initial Guidelines

While we're starting out, initiatives or activities will be led by those interested in pursuing them. A Governance Committee has been formed for the purposes of developing this Charter, seeking integration opportunities between existing and future cohorts, and better defining the relationship between participants and the Advisory Council (AC).

In the first year, in addition to the Governance Committee, initial committees are organized around WSN core activities, including the following:

- Meetings Committee: Coordinate logistics for annual, regional, and virtual meetings, with the intention for two annual whole network meetings; arrange for virtual gatherings such as webinars, zoom meetings.

- Solutions Committee: Advance the objectives of the network in deepening dialogue and engaging in public policy and education; undertake an Issues Forum and agreed upon WSN Projects, and foster the engagement of cohort members and the public.

- Communications Committee: Grow the network and share the message, by using social media, developing a WSN podcast, and/or or publishing a newsletter to highlight member stories, water issues, WSN events, cohort-related news, and issues and conclusions from the Solutions Committee.

- Finance Committee: Help make decisions regarding WSN financing; evaluate funding guidelines for cohort members, focus on long-term budgeting and funding needs, assist with fundraising activities, and recommend funding priorities.

Committees shall be self-nominated and chosen by Cohort members on a consensus basis. It is also envisioned to have interested AC members participate in committee activities.

Other decisions will be made by recommendations from individual members and these committees, and approved by consensus.

Committees will be revisited on an annual basis and can be modified as desired through open discussion and vote of the Cohort members, preferably by consensus.

We value transparency and open communication, and any conflicts will be mediated within the network; we will ask for design team support as needed.

Cohort members and staff from Coro, Dig In, and WELL, and AC are members of the WSN. Cohort members and AC members can recommend additions to the AC to broaden the expertise and reach of the WSN.