



## EVALUATING THE USE OF DATA PLATFORMS FOR WATER MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

California has a fragmented water governance structure, hindering the state's ability to make effective, timely water management decisions. While open water data and decision support tools have the potential to improve water management, little documented evidence to inform potential end users on whether, when and how open data can improve water management decisions exists.

A new report published by researchers from Stanford University's Water in the West Program titled *Evaluating the use of data platforms for water management decisions*, analyzes multiple existing water management tools. Report findings highlight the legal, technical and governance challenges of developing tools to support water management decisions. While identifying and mitigating these challenges is not easy or fast, the report finds that it is possible.

### Who Should Read the Report

- Tool funders
- Tool developers
- State and federal agency representatives
- Others involved in water management tool development

### KEY FINDINGS...



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### Key Findings

- Prior to creating a water data platform, the tool development team should establish clear objectives – identifying the problem the team is working to solve, as well as the decision-making process used.
- Finding tool development “champions” is crucial for tool success and adoption.
- The development process should include manager-level end users, as well as high-level decision makers and clearly defined project milestones.
- Decisions about where the tool will be housed, ongoing funding and long-term maintenance should also be resolved prior to initiating development. If the entities being targeted for tool development are unwilling to commit to these obligations, the project may need to be reconsidered.
- Successful water management decision tool scoping and development takes time, ongoing financial support and personnel commitments to ensure long-term use. Tools that have actively been used for more than 10 years had scoping phases ranging between 1 to 5 years and development phases of 2.5 to 5+ years.
- Agencies may be reluctant to make data publicly available for a variety of reasons. In cases where open and transparent data are critical for tool development, legal or regulatory steps may need to be taken to make data publicly available.
- Tools that have been adopted and continue to be used for water management decisions are generally supported by legislative processes, have a clear governance structure with engaged advisory boards and have long-term, stable funding sources.

The full report and supplementary materials are available here: <https://bit.ly/waterdatatool>

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