EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS in the past several years, California has experienced increasingly severe and destructive storms, including atmospheric river events that have caused widespread flooding, mud and debris flows, landslides, high winds, power outages, road and highway closures, evacuation orders, damage to homes and critical infrastructure, and disruption of essential services; and

WHEREAS climate change is intensifying these weather and hydrologic extremes in California, contributing to increasingly severe swings between drought and flooding, and heightening the risks that extreme storms pose to communities, infrastructure, natural resources, and the economy; and

WHEREAS California is entering the 2026–2027 wet season amid the ongoing development of a strong and likely historic El Niño event in the Pacific Ocean; and

WHEREAS the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center, in its August 13, 2026, diagnostic report, found that the El Niño event is strengthening, with a greater than 90 percent chance of a very strong event during Northern Hemisphere fall and winter of 2026–2027; and

WHEREAS the Climate Prediction Center projected a 69 percent chance that the event will reach historic strength during the October through December 2026 season, defined as a three-month Relative Oceanic Niño Index, and exceeding the strength of all prior El Niño events in the historical record beginning in 1950; and

WHEREAS the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center has found that atmospheric conditions over the tropical Pacific are consistent with a strengthening El Niño, including changes in equatorial winds and an eastward shift in enhanced convection and rainfall toward the central and eastern Pacific, making it more likely that at least some parts of California will experience stronger storms in coming months; and

WHEREAS elevated baseline coastal water levels, combined with high tides, large waves, high surf, and coastal storms, can increase risks of coastal flooding, beach erosion, bluff erosion, transportation disruption, and damage to public and private infrastructure; and

WHEREAS California has already begun to experience effects attributed to this El Niño event, including unusual precipitation and significant coastal flooding; and

WHEREAS historical experience demonstrates that very strong El Niño events do not produce uniform statewide outcomes, but can be associated with exceptionally wet and destructive winter conditions in California; and

WHEREAS California's recent experience with atmospheric rivers, debris flows following wildfires, flash flooding, coastal erosion, inundation, and damage to transportation and flood-control infrastructure demonstrates the importance of procuring and positioning resources, clearing waterways, and taking additional actions to prepare before severe storms arrive; and

WHEREAS areas affected by recent wildfires are particularly susceptible to flash flooding, mud and debris flows, erosion, sediment transport, and road closures during high-intensity rainfall; and

WHEREAS in light of that experience, local governments, local water agencies, and local flood control authorities have requested action now to enable them to move quickly to begin preparations for preventing and responding to the impacts of potential flooding; and

WHEREAS low-income communities, farmworker families, rural residents, seniors, persons with disabilities, residents with limited transportation access, people experiencing homelessness, and communities in flood-prone, coastal, or post-fire areas may face disproportionate risks; and

WHEREAS the demonstrated potential for a very strong or historic-strength El Niño event to cause elevated coastal water levels and high-impact storms in California warrants early, coordinated, and targeted preparedness actions to protect Californians, critical infrastructure, agricultural lands, natural resources, and the State's economy; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8558(b), I find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist due to the developing El Niño event; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8558(b), I find that the developing El Niño event is likely to cause conditions that, by reason of their magnitude, are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of any single local government and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to appropriately respond; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8625(c), I find that local authority is inadequate to cope with the magnitude of the extreme peril posed by the developing El Niño event; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of Government Code section 8571, I find that strict compliance with various statutes and regulations specified in this Proclamation would prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the developing El Niño event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes, including the California Emergency Services Act, and in particular, Government Code section 8625, **HEREBY PROCLAIM A STATE OF EMERGENCY** to exist statewide due to the developing 2026–2027 El Niño event.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. All agencies of the state government are to utilize and employ state personnel, equipment, and facilities for the performance of any and all activities consistent with the direction of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the State Emergency Plan. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall coordinate statewide preparedness activities for potential severe weather, flooding, coastal flooding, erosion, mud and debris flows, and related impacts associated with conditions resulting from the El Niño event, including atmospheric rivers and other severe storm systems. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall work with local and tribal governments to support emergency planning, resource coordination, and requests for state assistance. To protect their safety, all residents are to obey the direction of emergency officials with regard to this emergency.

2. As necessary to assist local governments and for the protection of public safety and the environment, state agencies shall enter into contracts to arrange for the procurement of materials, goods, and services necessary to quickly assist with the response to and recovery from the impacts of this emergency. Applicable provisions of the Government Code and the Public Contract Code, including but not limited to travel, advertising, and competitive bidding requirements, are suspended to the extent necessary to address the effects of this emergency.

3. The California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency, including boards, departments, and offices within those agencies, are directed to prioritize work to help local agencies prepare for anticipated impacts from the El Niño event. In particular, those state agencies are directed to prioritize permitting, consultation, and technical assistance to support local efforts to prevent or mitigate impacts from anticipated or potential flooding, landslides, and mud and debris flows, including local efforts to expedite levee and other flood management infrastructure repairs, vegetation management, debris removal, sediment management, bridge scour protection, and channel-capacity improvements. State agencies are directed to work with local agencies to issue any necessary permits or other approvals for such efforts as quickly as possible, including by identifying and invoking existing emergency authorities or other pathways for streamlined review. On or before October 16, 2026, the Secretary for Environmental Protection and the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency shall submit a joint recommendation to my office as to whether further action or emergency suspensions are necessary to support and expedite this work.

4. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services shall coordinate the State's preparation for and response to the developing El Niño event, including by working with the Department of Water Resources and other appropriate government agencies to prepare to pre-position personnel, equipment, supplies, commodities, and other resources based on forecast conditions, local needs, and identified risks. In particular, this work shall draw on the Department of Water Resources' guidance regarding flood-risk-reduction activities.

5. The Department of Water Resources shall take appropriate action to procure, maintain, stage, pre-position, distribute, and replenish flood-fight supplies, equipment (including, but not limited to, sandbags, riprap and other rock materials, plastic sheeting, and pumps), and other materials necessary to support statewide flood preparedness, response, and protective actions in connection with the El Niño event. The Department of Water Resources shall coordinate with appropriate government agencies to identify priority areas for flood-fight material staging and plans to make these materials available where they are needed, when they are needed.

6. The Department of Water Resources, through its Division of Safety of Dams, shall conduct outreach to owners of jurisdictional dams regarding potential severe conditions during the El Niño event and shall reiterate to dam owners their responsibilities to inspect, operate, maintain, repair, and safely manage their dams and appurtenant structures in accordance

with applicable law, permit conditions, emergency action plans, and directives of the Division of Safety of Dams.

7. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with the Department of Water Resources, shall conduct outreach to counties, cities, and relevant local agencies that are responsible for levees, flood-control facilities, and associated structures that may be vulnerable to impacts of the El Niño event to take appropriate actions to procure, maintain, stage, pre-position, distribute, and replenish flood-fight supplies, commodities, equipment, and materials necessary to support flood preparedness, response, and protective actions.

8. The Department of Water Resources, in coordination with the State Water Resources Control Board, shall conduct outreach and education to advance groundwater recharge projects and to use flood flows to recharge groundwater aquifers under existing law with the goal of reducing flood impacts and strengthening local water supplies.

9. Consistent with Paragraph 3 of this Proclamation, the Coastal Commission is directed to expedite review and action on proposed development by coastal communities to prepare for the impacts of this El Niño event. Coastal communities are encouraged to submit permit applications, as appropriate, to facilitate timely Coastal Commission review, technical assistance, and other support for El Niño preparations. After an application is received, the Commission shall respond with notification of any incomplete items within five days. After an application is complete, it shall be scheduled for hearing at the next Commission meeting. For emergency permit requests, the Commission shall accept both written and oral requests to its district offices. When necessary to address an urgent need related to this emergency, the Commission shall take action on emergency permit requests as quickly as possible and within twenty-four hours of receipt.

10. The California Department of Transportation and California State Transportation Agency shall identify those state highways, bridges, culverts, drainage facilities, slopes, and other transportation infrastructure most at risk of flooding, erosion, debris flows, rockslides, mudslides, or other significant impacts from severe storms caused by the El Niño event, and transmit to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services a prioritized list of projects to address such risks within 30 days of this Proclamation.

11. The California Department of Transportation shall develop plans to pre-position personnel and materials (including directional signage, traffic-control devices, road-closure devices, warning signs, delineators, emergency communications equipment, and other resources) at or near locations that may be identified as at risk of severe impacts from the El Niño event. This shall include plans to prepare and pre-position snow-removal, snow-control, and ice-control equipment as appropriate, including snowplows, snow blowers, graders, loaders, chain-control equipment, salt, sand, and other materials necessary to maintain safe travel and restore access on state highways during the El Niño event.

12. The Adjutant General and the California Military Department shall, in coordination with the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency

Services, identify California National Guard personnel, equipment, and capabilities that may be available to support state and local emergency operations, if activated or tasked, in relation to this El Niño event. Such planning shall include readiness for high-water vehicle operations; aviation operations, including reconnaissance, search and rescue, transport, and heavy-lift support, as appropriate; engineering support; emergency communications; transportation and logistics; evacuation support; flood-fight activities; debris removal and route clearance; commodity distribution; shelter support; and other life-safety and emergency-support missions.

13. California Volunteers, in coordination with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and other appropriate agencies, shall prepare to mobilize volunteers and trained service members, consistent with their training, mission, safety requirements, and applicable law, to support state and local preparedness, response, and recovery activities in connection with the El Niño event.

14. The California Conservation Corps shall prepare to deploy Corpsmembers, consistent with its statutory mission, training, available resources, safety requirements, and applicable law, to support severe weather preparedness and response activities in connection with the El Niño event.

15. The California Energy Commission, the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, and the State Water Resources Control Board and regional water quality control boards are directed, and the California Public Utilities Commission is requested, to coordinate, consistent with their respective authorities, with electrical, natural-gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications, transportation, and other critical-service providers to enhance readiness and support timely restoration of essential services following storm impacts.

16. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services, in consultation with relevant state agencies, shall expand accessible, multilingual public preparedness communications related to severe weather, flooding, emergency alerts, evacuation readiness, power outages, safe travel, disaster assistance, and household emergency planning.

17. Agencies under my direct authority shall cooperate in their response to this emergency. Other agencies are requested to assist in responding to this emergency, as appropriate.

18. The restrictions set forth in Penal Code section 396, which are automatically triggered upon proclamation of a state of emergency, are suspended, and no such restrictions are imposed, with respect to this El Niño event, at this time.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this Proclamation be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this Proclamation.

This Proclamation is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 21st day of September 2026.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

SHIRLEY WEBER, PH. D
Secretary of State