

A drone provides a view of water pumped from the Harvey O. Banks Delta Pumping Plant into the California Aqueduct at 9,790 cubic feet per second after January storms. The facility is located in Alameda County and lifts water into the California Aqueduct.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

### What is the governor actually proposing?

Details are still sparse, but his executive order, a summary of 11 bills released by his office, a separate report put out by administration infrastructure adviser Antonio Villaraigosa and Newsom's remarks speak to the following goals:

- Streamline environmental planning by coordinating among different local, state and federal agencies
- Limit the amount of time courts have to weigh environmental challenges to nine months
- Provide more funding to agencies to speed up reviews
- Cut back on the number of documents that each review requires
- Carve out more exemptions in the law to allow favored projects to skip

The recently completed Cedar Viaduct in Fresno, part of the California High Speed Rail project. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY



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certain environmental reviews

Some of these changes would broaden provisions already included in state law. The nine-month limit on environmental litigation, for example, already applies to renewable energy projects, certain housing and even major sports stadiums.

"I love sports," Newsom said. "But I also love roads. I love transit. I love bridges ... why the hell can't we translate that to all these other projects?"

### Is Newsom's "CEQA reform" plan a big deal?

To hear Newsom say it, this is a very big deal.

"If we get nothing else done in the next three years, this may be one of the most consequential things that we can actually deliver," he said on Thursday.

For decades, California's deliberate—or as critics argue, glacially slow and unpredictable—permitting process has been a hallmark of its environmental policy. At the heart of that process is the California Environmental Quality Act.

California lawmakers passed the law in 1970, riding a new public consciousness of environmental conservation and protection. It was a bipartisan sentiment. The governor who signed the law was Ronald Reagan while President Richard Nixon signed its federal counterpart that same year.

At the time, the chief environmental concerns were local and growth-related: The incursion of development into green spaces and sensitive ecosystems; the widespread use of pesticides; the pollution of rivers and the befouling of oceans; littering.

Business interests have decried

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