

Water rights are a form of property that entitles someone to use water from a specific source like a stream. In this case, the state has provided far more rights to the use of water than is naturally provided by nature or human engineering.

California's water code has evolved over a period of more than 150 years through prior practices, lawsuits, legislation, and water projects. The current over allocation of water rights reflects that evolving jumble. Human promises of water exceed Nature's provisions, which results in creation of "paper water."

This over allocation is similar to "clouded titles" for real estate and leads to the continuous disputes and pressures on water agencies to "produce" more water that doesn't exist. The water rights allocated on these river systems far exceed the water available in most years by a ratio of five or more, as shown in the following chart.

River Basin	Annual Flows	Water Rights***	Ratio
Sacramento R. Basin*	21.6 MAF	120.5 MAF	5.58
San Joaquin R. Basin**	6.2 MAF	32.7 MAF	5.28
Trinity R. Basin*****	1.283 MAF	8.725 MAF	6.70