

# CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

MAY 16, 2022

## Current Conditions

- January, February, and March 2022 were the driest on record dating back over 100 years, with just six inches of precipitation observed across the Sierra Nevada.
- Statewide precipitation for the water year to date is 74 percent of average. Sierra-Cascades snowpack for the water year to date is 18 percent of average, down from 21 percent last week. Statewide reservoir storage is 76 percent of average for this time of year.
- All of California's 58 counties are under a drought emergency proclamation. Californians are being asked to reduce their water use by 15 percent over 2020 levels to protect water reserves and help maintain critical flows for fish and wildlife wherever possible.
- As of May 16, the state's voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 83 dry wells in the past 30 days. Fifty dry wells were reported in Fresno County alone.

The California Drought Update is a weekly roundup of conditions, state actions and upcoming developments. It is produced by an interagency team that includes the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Resources Control Board and the Department of Public Health. For the latest on drought, please visit [www.drought.ca.gov](http://www.drought.ca.gov). For tips and resources for conserving water, please visit [www.saveourwater.com](http://www.saveourwater.com).

## Recent Events and State Actions

### **Governor proposes \$2 billion in water investments (May 13):**

Governor Gavin Newsom announced adjustments to his proposed budget that would invest \$2 billion in drought response and water resilience. The proposal includes an additional \$1.3 billion for drought resilience and response designed to help communities and fish and wildlife avoid immediate negative impacts while continuing to advance projects and programs that prepare the state to be more resilient to future droughts. This funding is proposed for acceleration into the 2021-'22 fiscal year given current availability of resources. Significant investments include:



- \$530 million to support water recycling and groundwater cleanup; advance drinking water and clean water projects that leverage significant federal infrastructure funds; and continue aqueduct solar pilots.
- \$553 million to provide grants to urban water districts and smaller community water suppliers for drought-relief projects; support data, research, and public education campaigns; support local technical assistance emergency drinking water response, including the purchase and pre-positioning of water storage tanks; enhance water rights enforcement and modernization tools; and support food assistance programs for farmworkers impacted by drought.
- \$280 million to address fish and wildlife impacts associated with drought and climate change, and to build aquatic habitat and water resilience projects to support implementation of voluntary agreements with water suppliers.
- \$187 million to support agricultural water conservation practices; incentivize farmers to install more efficient irrigation equipment and provide on-farm technical assistance; provide direct relief to small farm operators; and support additional water conservation projects.

**Draft water conservation regulations released (May 13):** The State Water Board released an updated proposed emergency water conservation regulation that fulfills water conservation directives in Governor Newsom's March 28 Executive Order. If the proposed regulation is adopted by the board on May 24, it would contribute to water savings starting in June. The proposed regulation would require suppliers to implement conservation actions required under Level 2 of their own Water Shortage Contingency Plans that corresponds to water shortages of up to 20 percent. (The proposed regulation does not prevent utilities from taking additional actions.) About half of the state's water supplies have not yet activated this level. These "Level 2" actions often include things such as:

- Increasing communication about the importance of water conservation
- Limiting outdoor irrigation to certain days or hours
- Increasing patrolling to identify water waste
- Enforcing water use prohibitions

The regulation would also ban the irrigation of lawns not used for recreation or other community purposes, such as grass in front of or next to large industrial or commercial buildings. The regulation would not ban the irrigation of residential lawns, community spaces, or sports fields and other turf spaces used for recreation or events. It also would not ban the thoughtful irrigation of trees or other non-turf plantings. The proposed regulation would give utilities and cities new options to reduce water waste, if they choose to use them. A violation of the non-functional turf irrigation provision, for example, would be an infraction and subject to a fine of up to \$500.



## Recent Events and State Actions

### **Workshop held on emergency regulations to curtail water rights in the Delta watershed (May 12):**

The State Water Board's Division of Water Rights held a [workshop](#) to receive public input on proposed changes to the emergency regulation to curtail unauthorized water diversions in the Delta Watershed and changes to the water unavailability method used for curtailments. The Board is tentatively planning to consider readoption of the emergency regulation in mid-July, before the current emergency regulation expires in August 2022. More information is available at the Board's [Delta Drought Website](#).

**Water use rose across California in March (May 10):** Urban water use jumped nearly 19 percent in March 2022 compared to March 2020, according to data gathered by the State Water Board. Water consumption increased everywhere except the North Coast, where water use declined 4.3 percent compared to March 2020. The Colorado River and South Coast regions consumed 26.9 percent more in March 2022, which was historically dry, than in the relatively cool and wet March 2020. The March 2022 water consumption was the highest for March statewide since 2015.

### **Emergency regulations adopted to curtail water rights in the Russian River watershed (May 10):**

The State Water Board readopted an emergency regulation authorizing the Division of Water Rights to curtail diversions in Sonoma and Mendocino counties to protect threatened drinking water supplies and migrating fish. Per the renewed regulation, curtailment orders will be issued based on water supply shortage or when insufficient flows imperil fish in the Lower Russian River watershed. As of May 5, both Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma were below 60 percent of storage capacity. Approximately 2,000 right holders are expected to receive the orders although some might not be directed to curtail their diversions until later in the summer.



**Order Approved on Delta Reporting and Curtailments Emergency Regulation (May 9):** The State Water Board's Executive Director approved an Order addressing Petitions for Reconsideration of the Emergency Regulation for Enhanced Water Use Reporting and Curtailment of Diversions due to Lack of Water Availability in the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Watershed and associated curtailment orders issued pursuant to the regulation. The Order denies the petitions for reconsideration and responds to the substantive arguments in the petitions. More information is available at the Board's [Delta Drought Website](#)

**Drinking water needs assessment released (May 5):** The State Water Board released the second annual wells across the state. New this year, the report estimates the cost of infrastructure requirements and predicts the risk of groundwater contamination issues and supply shortages for small systems and rural communities related to drought. Among the report's sobering findings is the reality that, for reasons exacerbated by a third consecutive year of drought, over half of California's 1,300 state small water systems (serving fewer than 25 people) and 312,000 domestic wells are at risk or potentially at risk of experiencing drinking water shortages and failing to meet water quality standards.

**Sacramento River salmon passage (ongoing):** Late April showers increased flows in upper Sacramento River tributaries, which aided spring-run chinook salmon and other native fish. Irrigation diversions on many tributaries are ongoing, but current flows reaching the Sacramento River are sufficient for spring run passage based on video counts. Periodic small rain events and cooler weather aided in conserving cold water reserves in the month of April and early May.

## Recent Events and State Actions

**Curtailments adjustments (ongoing):** As drought conditions persist, the State Water Board continues to monitor six critical watersheds where worsening conditions may threaten water supplies. Curtailments remain in effect in the Delta watershed, two sub-watersheds of the Delta, and in the Shasta River watershed. Based on current conditions and available forecasts, curtailments in the Russian River watershed are temporarily suspended through the end of May, and curtailments in the Scott River watershed are temporarily suspended through May 20. Water Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change.

### **Save Our Water content available in multiple languages (ongoing):**

Multi-lingual Save Our Water ads communicate the urgent need to save water and provide actionable steps Californians can take.

The Save Our Water campaign is reaching Californians with helpful videos and tips for fixing leaks and reducing outdoor watering.

Visit [www.saveourwater.com](http://www.saveourwater.com) for more.



## Tribal / Local Actions

- **Tribal governments:** Tribal emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, Karuk Tribe, Resighini Rancheria, Tule River Indian Tribe, Yurok Tribe, Wiyot Tribe.
- **Local government:** Local emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Madera, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo.

## Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

**Curtailments in the Scott and Shasta River watersheds:** The Board's Division of Water Rights plans to release draft updates to its emergency regulations to curtail unauthorized water diversions in the Scott and Shasta River watersheds on **May 16**. The Board is tentatively planning to consider readoption of the emergency regulation in mid-June, before the current emergency regulation expires in August 2022. The Division plans to hold a public workshop to discuss the proposed regulation at the end of May. More information is available at the Board's Scott and Shasta River Watersheds Drought Website.

**Groundwater trading white paper:** The California Water Commission on **May 18** will consider finalizing a white paper containing findings around how to shape well-managed groundwater trading programs and proposed next steps for State engagement. The white paper synthesizes the information the Commission gathered for its consideration of well-managed groundwater trading programs to support Water Resilience Portfolio Action 3.6.

## Key Data Points and Resources

- Daily Hydrological & Climate Information summary: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/reportapp/javareports?name=DLYHYDRO>
- Statewide water conditions: [http://cdec.water.ca.gov/water\\_cond.html](http://cdec.water.ca.gov/water_cond.html)
- Daily Reservoir Storage Summary: <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/reservoir.html>
- Water Year Forecast and Monthly Distribution: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/reportapp/javareports?name=B120DIST>
- Monthly water supplier reports on water production and conservation: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/conservation\\_portal/conservation\\_reporting.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/conservation_reporting.html)
- Latest groundwater conditions and information: <https://sgmatest.water.ca.gov/CalGWLIVE/>
- Information on state drought actions and assistance: <https://www.drought.ca.gov>
- Conservation tips and resources for consumers: <https://saveourwater.com/>

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