

# CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

## FEBRUARY 1, 2023

### Current Conditions

- As a result of nine atmospheric river storms in late December and early January, the Oroville and San Luis reservoirs have gained a combined 1,620,000 acre-feet of water. That is roughly enough to provide water to 5.6 million households for a year.
- Statewide snowpack is 205 percent of average for this time of year. In the past three weeks of storms, the Sierra snowpack water content increased by 21.2 inches of water, which is 80 percent of the water contained in a full seasonal snowpack. This data comes from the state's automated snow sensor network, and we will get a clearer picture of the statewide snowpack in the weeks ahead with aerial snow survey flights and manual surveys.
- These storms have not ended the drought. While the winter season has started impressively, an important measurement will be April 1 when the snowpack is typically at its highest. This is a time for cautious optimism, as uncertainty remains about what the remainder of the season may bring. A return to dry weather could wipe out some of the recovery we've had this year.
- Conditions may yet change dramatically, as we saw last winter. October and December 2022 brought powerful storms, but the bounty of those storms was offset by weather in January, February, and March that was the driest for those months on record.
- California is taking advantage of the runoff of nine atmospheric rivers that reached California in late December and early January to raise storage above and below ground. Those storms built the Sierra Nevada snowpack to above-average levels, which should also improve water storage levels when the snow melts this spring.

*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 <https://drought.ca.gov>. For tips and resources for conserving water, please visit [www.saveourwater.com](http://www.saveourwater.com). The update will be provided every two weeks.*

## Current Conditions (cont.)

- “California’s Water Supply Strategy, Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future” aims to expand supplies by 1.6 million acre-feet by 2030, in addition to creating more than 3 million acre-feet of new storage. The strategy intensifies state focus on supply actions in the 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio and also invites the Legislature to help modernize regulatory processes to deliver projects faster.
- As of February 1, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 41 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in Tehama County.

## Recent Events and State Actions

**Snow Survey at Phillip Station (Feb. 1):** The Department of Water Resources (DWR) conducted the second snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 85.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 33.5 inches, which is 193 percent of average for this location. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of DWR’s water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 205 percent of average for this date.



### **State Water Project allocation increase following recent storms (Jan. 26):**

Recent storms will allow the State Water Project (SWP) to boost deliveries to 29 public water agencies serving 27 million Californians. Based on the amount of water captured and stored in recent weeks, DWR now expects to deliver 30 percent of requested State Water Project supplies – 1.27 million acre-feet – in 2023, up from the initial 5 percent announced on December 1. The allocation increase is the direct result of extreme weather in late December and nine atmospheric rivers in early January that helped fill reservoirs and dramatically increase the Sierra Nevada snowpack.



**Groundwater Recharge permits issued (Jan. 26):** The State Water Board issued its fifth temporary groundwater recharge permit since the beginning of the year, bringing the total number of permits issued to 22 since the state prioritized seizing the opportunity of storm events to increase groundwater supplies in 2015. Since that time, the board has accelerated its regulatory process by redirecting staff to the temporary permitting program, lowering fees, and streamlining approval timelines. Currently, there are only three recharge permit applications pending, all of which are undergoing their public notice period.

### **Drought interagency task force developed (Jan. 20):**

As the State continues to prepare for a return to dry conditions amid climate-driven extremes in weather, DWR, the State Water Board and other relevant state agencies developed the Drought Resilience Interagency and Partners Collaborative. The collaborative will facilitate state planning and coordination for pre-drought emergency response, and post-drought management, and will include members of the public. Community members and water users are encouraged to apply. DWR is accepting letters of interest until February 24, 2023 and will announce selected members of the collaborative later in the spring. Interested parties can visit the [DWR website](#) for more information on how to submit Letters of Interest.



## Recent Events and State Actions (cont.)

### Five ways California is harnessing winter storms to boost water supplies

**(Jan. 19):** California is taking urgent action to protect communities from climate-driven extremes in weather and expand the state's capacity to capture storm runoff in wet years. Governor Newsom and the Legislature have committed more than \$8.6 billion in the last two budget cycles to build water resilience across the state and protect communities on the front lines of extreme weather. [This budget funding](#) includes \$500 million that will be provided in 2025-26 to help ensure strategic water storage projects can be completed. In the 2023-24 state budget, Governor Newsom is proposing an additional \$202 million for flood protection and \$125 million for drought-related actions.



To harness winter storms, the state is:

- Advancing clear, ambitious targets to build drought and flood resilience, including increasing annual groundwater recharge capacity by 500,000 acre-feet
- Fast-tracking groundwater recharge efforts by streamlining permits
- Maximizing stormwater capture through new projects
- Supporting reservoir repair and expansion to boost water storage above and below ground
- Modernizing water conveyance Infrastructure across the state, including the Delta Conveyance Project

### 2023 - 2024 drought response and water resilience budget includes new water supply investments

**(Jan. 10):** On January 10, Governor Gavin Newsom introduced his 2023-24 state budget proposal that maintains the state's unprecedented investments in Californians while fortifying the state's strong fiscal foundation amid economic and revenue uncertainties ahead. The 2023 - 2024 climate change budget includes [new strategic investments](#) to continue supporting the state's drought response, accelerate implementation of the state's water supply strategy, and increase flood preparedness and response.

**Curtailment adjustments (ongoing):** The State Water Board continues to monitor six critical watersheds where conditions may threaten water supplies. Due to precipitation in late December and early January, curtailments have been suspended in all watersheds. Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change. Water rights holders should closely monitor their email and [watershed drought webpages](#) for curtailment updates.

## 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, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, 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.

## 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://sgma.water.ca.gov/CalGWLlive/>
- Information on state drought actions and assistance: <https://drought.ca.gov/>
- Conservation tips and resources for consumers: <https://saveourwater.com/>