



# CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

## DECEMBER 12, 2022

### Current Conditions

- The state's new water year began October 1, and with it came fresh concerns about a fourth year of extreme drought. The three-year period from 2020 to 2022 is now the driest on record going back to 1896.
- Despite some rain and mountain snowfall in early November and early December, long-range forecasting suggests warmer and drier-than-average conditions will persist.
- Right now, California's snowpack is 223 percent of normal for this date (Dec. 12). But, for every day it does not snow, that number will tick down. Last year, California experienced a great December and ended 2021 with 157 percent of average snow for that time of year. But that bounty disappeared following the driest January, February, and March on record.
- To replace and replenish the water that thirstier soils, vegetation, and the atmosphere will consume under hotter and drier conditions, Governor Newsom in August released "[California's Water Supply Strategy, Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future](#)" with actions to recycle, de-salt and conserve more water and expand water storage capacity.
- 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 December 12, the state's voluntary [household dry well reporting system](#) received reports of 57 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in Tehama county.

*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).*

## Recent Events and State Actions

**Fallowing program (*LandFlex*) to protect domestic wells (Dec. 9):** The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced a 14-day public comment on draft guidelines for a \$25 million grant program called *LandFlex* that would provide funding to local groundwater sustainability agencies to pay growers to immediately fallow land as a one-year drought-relief measure. All groundwater overdraft allocations on acres enrolled in the program would also be permanently retired. The proposed program would target operators of small and medium-sized farms in areas where agricultural pumping reductions would help keep household and small community water system wells from growing dry. The purpose of *LandFlex* is to free up water in the event of a fourth consecutive dry year, accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and prevent drinking water supply problems in 2023. The new program was developed in coordination with the Department of Food and Agriculture, farm commodity groups and environmental justice organizations. Large farm operations are not eligible for the program, and no enrollee may receive more than \$2.5 million through the program.



**State and local officials encourage residential lawn replacement program (Dec. 8):** Save Our Water joined leaders in Fresno to highlight available local resources to encourage Central Valley residents to transform their yards with water-wise landscaping. California State Water Resources Control Board Member DeeDee D'Adamo, City of Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer and others gathered at a local residence to spotlight how one family took advantage of the City of Fresno's Lawn to Garden rebate program to cut their water use in half since 2017. The goal is to encourage other Californians to take similar water-savings actions to help mitigate extreme and highlight local initiatives and resources.



**Readoption of prohibitions on wasteful water use practices (Dec. 7):** The State Water Board readopted the 2022 emergency regulations that prohibited certain wasteful water use practices and encourage Californians to monitor their use more closely. The regulation addresses the need for immediate action to ensure suppliers and customers are taking sufficient actions to conserve and preserve the state's supply. Wasteful practices include irrigating ornamental landscapes when it's raining, using potable water to clean hard surfaces or driveways, and displaying ornamental fountains.

**Curtailment adjustments (ongoing):** The State Water Board continues to monitor six critical watersheds where conditions may threaten water supplies. Due to precipitation in late November and early December, nearly all curtailments have been lifted in the Delta watershed and Shasta River watershed. All curtailments have been lifted in the Russian River watershed through December 31. Curtailments remain in effect in the Scott River watershed. Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change. Water rights holders should closely monitor their email and the 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.

## Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

**Holiday-themed media tour for Save Our Water:** The Save Our Water campaign will conduct a satellite media tour on **Dec. 14** with a holiday theme that will feature a bilingual Santa. The tour will reach local broadcast television and radio across the state in both English and Spanish on morning, noon, and lifestyle shows. Santa will be positioned in a residential backyard and provide viewers with water-wise planting tips and seasonal conservation messages (turn off your sprinklers when it rains). A Facebook live will begin at 1:30pm for an educational conversation with Santa in English and Spanish to remind consumers to conserve water this holiday season.

**California drought and water conservation livestream:** Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and DWR will host a Facebook live stream on Wednesday, **Dec. 14**, to promote the need for all Californians to conserve water, including in state parks. DPR will be participating from Millerton Lake State Recreation Area and Calaveras Big Trees State Park, and DWR from the CNRA headquarters building in Sacramento. Topics for the 20-minute live stream include examples of how DPR is helping conserve water in state parks, drought impacts on natural habitats, a drought update and ways all Californians can conserve water from their homes. The live stream is scheduled for 3 p.m. on DPR's Facebook platform.

**Webinar No. 4 on county drought plan requirements for state small water systems and domestic wells:** DWR will host the fourth of four webinars on **Dec. 14** to inform and solicit input from interested parties on the development of a guidebook to support the preparation of County Drought Resilience Plans which focus on state small water systems and domestic wells as required under SB 552, the 2020 legislation that requires drought planning by operators of systems with fewer than 3,000 connections. During this fourth workshop, DWR will review and solicit feedback on the full set of chapters of the draft Guidebook that will be open for public comment through January 10.

**Colorado River meeting:** The Colorado River Water Users Association will convene for its annual conference in Las Vegas **Dec. 14-16**. This year is the 100th anniversary of the 1922 seven-state compact that apportions Colorado River flows, and the conference focuses on the future of that compact in a rapidly changing climate. Conference speakers include Colorado River Board of California Chair Peter Nelson. Invitees include Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille C. Touton, U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo, and Interior Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau.

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