

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

AUGUST 29, 2022

Current Conditions

- California and much of the Western U.S. is immersed in a third consecutive year of extreme drought. This is also the third statewide drought declared in California during this century (2007-2009, 2012-2016, 2020 – present).
- 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.
- Hot and dry conditions are expected to continue through November indicating a late start to water year 2023, extending fire season and setting the stage for dry watersheds under any snowpack that forms in winter. The current outlook for water year 2023 is another year of drought as the third consecutive winter with La Nina conditions is expected.
- The State is taking action to prepare for the possibility of a fourth dry year.
- To replace and replenish the water that thirstier soils, vegetation, and the atmosphere will consume under hotter and drier conditions, Governor Newsom announced an adaptation strategy that targets capturing, recycling, de-salting, and conserving water supply.
- “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 capacity of more than three million acre-feet of new storage to mitigate the impacts of the anticipated 10% reduction of traditional water supplies.
- 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 August 29, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 210 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in the Central Valley.

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. For tips and resources for conserving water, please visit www.saveourwater.com.

Recent Events and State Actions

Drought-relief grants for small communities announced (August 23): DWR announced grant awards to 15 communities totaling \$40 million. Most of the funding will assist underserved communities, including \$7.2 million to help connect the Tulare County community of Tooleville with the city of Exeter's water system. Burnt Ranch in the mountains of Trinity County will receive \$2.5 million to replace water storage tanks, and in Riverside County, the community of Banning Heights will receive \$3.7 million to construct a new well and water tank and implement a hauled water program. Other grant recipients are in Butte, Humboldt, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Placer, San LuisObispo, Sierra, Tehama, Ventura and Yolo counties. Overall, this DWR grant program has provided more than \$175 million to nearly 90 projects. Underrepresented communities and tribes make up 89 percent of the projects funded by the grant program. The program was authorized by the Legislature pursuant to the Budget Act of 2021



Water right enforcement on Shasta River (August 18): The State Water Board issued a notice of violation for failure to comply with curtailment orders and a draft cease-and-desist order to the Shasta River Water Association, which serves farmers in the basin of the Shasta River, a major tributary of the Klamath River. On August 17, river flows began precipitously dropping by over 20 cubic feet per second (cfs) and had dropped more than 28 cfs by August 18, well below the minimum requirement of 50 cfs set to protect rearing juvenile and migrating adult salmon. In its notice, the State Water Board refuted the association's claims that the diversions are necessary for fire suppression and livestock watering, noting that in the event of wildfire, CAL FIRE can take water from the river and the curtailment regulation already considered exceptions for minimum health and safety needs, as well as for some livestock. On August 24, the National Marine Fisheries Service sent a letter to the association, informing them of compliance issues and potential violation of the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The association has reportedly ceased diversions as of August 25; Division of Water Rights enforcement staff are in the process of verifying.

Colorado River negotiations continue (ongoing): Water users in Nevada, Arizona, and California continued to negotiate ways to reduce Colorado River diversions in order to maintain supplies in Lake Mead and Lake Powell, which have reached historic lows and are at risk of falling too low to support power generation and water supply. Depending on future snowpack and runoff, a range of actions will be needed to stabilize reservoir elevations over the next four years. Reclamation analysis shows that the additional water or conservation needed ranges from 600,000 acre-feet to 4.2 million acre-feet annually. The Colorado River supplies about a third of Southern California's water supplies.



Recent Events and State Actions

Curtailments adjustments (ongoing): 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](#), the [Russian River watershed](#), and the [Scott River and Shasta River watersheds](#). Curtailments are suspended for the [Mill Creek and Deer Creek watersheds](#) (sub-watersheds of the Delta) but curtailments in the larger Delta watershed may apply. Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change. Water right holders should closely monitor their email and the [watershed drought webpages](#) for curtailment updates.



Save Our Water on the road (ongoing): Save Our Water and DWR spread the water conservation message August 18 at the Roseville Home and Garden show and will be at the Butte County Fair August 24 through 28.



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

Drought briefing for urban water districts: State water leaders brief urban water district representatives **September 1** on drought conditions and activities.

July conservation rates to be announced: The final water usage data for urban water suppliers for July 2022 compared to July 2020 will be discussed by the State Water Board when it meets **September 7**. Early reporting from some suppliers shows a water use reduction of approximately 9.8 percent.

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
- 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
- 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/>