

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

AUGUST 8, 2022

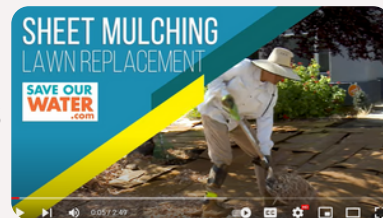
Current Conditions

- 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.
- 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 8, the state's voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 175 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

Save Our Water releases how-to videos (August 5): Save Our Water and DWR released a series of helpful videos showing easy ways for Californians to upgrade their yards and save water outdoors. The brief educational videos cover water-saving topics including using cardboard and wood chips to break down a lawn in time to plant drought-tolerant flowers and shrubs in the fall.



Release of proposed readoption of Mill and Deer creeks drought emergency regulation (August 5): The State Water Board released for public comment a proposed emergency curtailment regulation for Mill and Deer Creeks that establishes updated minimum instream flow requirements to protect native fish and critical habitat during the ongoing drought. The existing regulation went into effect last September. The State Water Board is expected to consider readopting the regulation at their **August 16** meeting.

Lake Oroville water levels recede (August 4): A recent aerial view from DWR show Lake Oroville water levels are only at 62 percent of the historical average. Lake Oroville conserves water for distribution by the State Water Project to homes, farms, and industries in the San Francisco Bay area, the San Joaquin Valley, and Southern California.



Hatchery chillers installed (August 2): Anticipating warm water releases from Shasta Lake, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation installed chillers at the Livingston Stone National Fish Hatchery in Redding. With the help of these chillers, the hatchery will continue to provide a critical safety net for winter-run chinook salmon while in-river conditions remain poor. Water temperatures must be maintained below 56 degrees Fahrenheit for successful winter-run reproduction. This third year of extreme drought coincides with the three-year life cycle of the salmon. Poor survival during the last two drought years makes this a critical year for the population's survival. In each of the preceding drought years, poor conditions have led to elevated temperature-related mortality in early life stages of these fish in the Sacramento River below Shasta Dam.

Californians boost water conservation rates (August 2): According to data reported to the State Water Board, urban water use declined 7.6 percent in June 2022 compared to June 2020, with an average gallons-per-capita-per-day rate of 101, which is almost as low as that of the wet year of 2019. The June conservation rates put the cumulative statewide water use savings since July 2021 at 2.7 percent. The June rates reflect greater conservation since May, when urban Californians cut back water use 3.1 percent compared to May 2020.



Recent Events and State Actions

DWR denies request for additional water supply (July 29): DWR denied a request from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California for 26,300 acre-feet of supplemental State Water Project supplies to maintain landscaping in order to mitigate wildfire risk. In a letter co-signed by the CAL FIRE director, the DWR director noted that alternative approaches to wildfire prevention are available, including use of fire-resistant building materials and creation of defensible space around homes. She also noted that DWR already had approved an additional 132,000 acre-feet of water for health and safety needs for MWD, and that release of supplemental water this year will make tradeoffs even more difficult if next year is dry.

Progress providing safe drinking water to all Californians (July 24): Three years after the Governor signed legislation creating a 10-year-long State Water Board program to provide safe and affordable drinking water to all Californians, the population of Californians impacted by failing water systems has shrunk from 1.6 million people to 934,000 – a 40 percent reduction. Approximately 650,000 Californians in 120 communities now have access to safe drinking water that they lacked three years ago. Nearly 10,000 households and 150 water systems experiencing water outages due to drought, contamination, and failing infrastructure have received \$50 million in aid.

Preparing to use winter flows for groundwater recharge (ongoing): Under a provision in the Governor's March drought Executive Order, water users may ask DWR for suspension of CEQA for construction of groundwater recharge projects that meet certain conditions, such as state grant funding or technical assistance support. DWR has posted [a form](#) for local agencies to use to assert project eligibility. A [fact sheet](#) about the process also is available. Under the process, DWR will review and concur if the project is eligible based on the documentation in the Self-Certification Form and will notify the project proponent once concurrence is complete. A list of projects that receive DWR concurrence for the CEQA suspension will be listed on the [DWR drought website](#).

Colorado River (ongoing): Interstate discussions continue about how to cut back Colorado River water use by two to four million acre-feet in order to avoid water supply and power generation disruptions at Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The seven states that depend upon the river are trying to reach compromise on a water-use reduction plan by mid-August that will avoid imposition of a cutback plan by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Typically, the Colorado River provides about a third of Southern California's water supplies. California water agencies face cutbacks as soon as 2023.

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.



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

Groundwater tool release: DWR plans to make public on **August 9** a new web-based tool that will allow people to explore thousands of groundwater projects across California. The interactive mapping tool allows users to explore a database of nearly 3,000 groundwater projects initiated in California over the last decade. The mapping tool features projects that were funded by DWR and external sources. The database will include information about project benefits and effectiveness in relation to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Users can also access more than 20 project case studies and get guidance on how to measure and track benefits of projects following construction.

Trees and parkland public workshop: The State Water Board hosts a workshop **August 12** on how potential water use efficiency standards for water suppliers may affect developed and natural parklands and urban tree health. The virtual workshop includes a presentation on analysis findings.

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/>