

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

FEBRUARY 15, 2023

Current Conditions

- California is taking advantage of the runoff of nine atmospheric rivers that reached the state in late December and early January to bolster water storage above and below ground. The State Water Project's two largest reservoirs (Oroville and San Luis) have gained a combined 1.6 million acre-feet of water. That is roughly enough water to supply 5.6 million households for a year. The storms also built the Sierra Nevada snowpack to above-average levels, which should also improve water storage levels when the snow melts this spring.
- Statewide snowpack is 189 percent to date and 138 percent of average as of April 1. 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.
- Drought is not over. While the winter season started impressively, February has been dry. An important measurement will occur on 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 made earlier this winter.
- 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.

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. 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 13, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 37 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in Tehama County.

Recent Events and State Actions

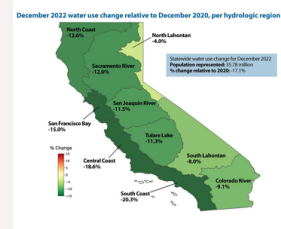
Governor signs order to build water resilience (Feb. 13): Governor Newsom signed an executive order to protect the state’s water supplies from the impacts of climate-driven extremes in weather. The order helps expand the state’s capacity to capture storm runoff in wet years by facilitating groundwater recharge projects. It also continues conservation measures and allows the state to maximize water supplies north and south of the Delta while protecting the environment. Additionally, the order directs state agencies to review and provide recommendations on the state’s drought response actions by the end of April, including the possibility of terminating specific emergency provisions that are no longer needed, once there is greater clarity about the hydrologic conditions this year.



\$15 million to support Central Valley flood control, water supply reliability, and groundwater recharge (Feb. 13): The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced grant awards totaling \$15 million to support projects in the Kern County, Tule, and Upper Kings Basin regions. Projects to be funded through the Integrated Regional Water Management Program will, for example, provide clean water to 85 connections and 238 people in severely disadvantaged communities, construct a 5.5 mile-long canal to irrigate 5,500 acres of land that would otherwise be dependent only on groundwater, and increase stormwater storage and increase flood protection in the disadvantaged community of Parlier.



Water Boards announce December conservation numbers (Feb. 7): The State Water Resources Control Board reported that Californians used 17.1 percent less water in December 2022 as compared to December 2020. In July 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom asked Californians to conserve and voluntarily reduce water use by 15 percent to protect water reserves and complement local conservation mandates. Despite recent storms, drought is expected to persist into a fourth year.



Food and agriculture discussion on flood and drought issues (Feb. 7): DWR, State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) spoke to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Board about drought and groundwater recharge. DWR provided a general water update, covering current water conditions and planning ahead for the summer months. SWRCB and CDFW provided an overview of the water rights permitting for recharge projects (180 day & 5 year). The presentation focused on the timelines, considerations, evaluations and determinations that govern change permits.

Recent Events and State Actions (cont.)

\$46 million to improve water supply reliability, groundwater recharge and water use efficiency (Feb. 2): DWR announced grant awards to nine projects in six counties through the [Urban Community Drought Relief Grant program](#). The \$46 million in financial assistance will provide critical support to implement drought relief projects that build long-term drought and climate resilience in communities across the state and help advance efforts outlined in Governor Newsom's strategy to adapt California's water supply for a [hotter and drier future](#). For example, in Monterey County, the City of Soledad received \$17 million to extend a recycled water system to irrigate public schools and parks, replacing 180 acre-feet of groundwater. In Sacramento County, the Regional Water Authority received \$3.1 million to fund an indoor fixture installment program for disadvantaged communities and a climate-resilient yard transformation program that will provide rebates and directly replace inefficient indoor fixtures in 5,060 multi-family and commercial/institutional properties. And, among other awards, the San Diego Water Authority also received \$3 million to provide direct installation of high-efficiency toilets and smart irrigation controllers to underrepresented communities.



Snow survey reflects boost from atmospheric rivers (Feb. 1): DWR conducted the second snow survey of the season at Phillips Station near Echo Summit in the Sierra Nevada. 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 on February 1. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of DWR's water supply forecast.



Multibenefit Land Repurposing solicitation for applications (Feb. 1): The Department of Conservation (DOC) announced round 2 (FY 22/23) of the [Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program \(MLRP\) Guidelines and Solicitation Notice](#). The MLRP seeks to increase regional capacity to repurpose agricultural land to reduce reliance on groundwater while providing community health, economic wellbeing, water supply, habitat, and climate benefits. The DOC will be hosting an online application workshop on Feb. 22 for those interested in applying to the program. Registration information is available [here](#).

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.

Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

California Water Commission meeting: On **Feb. 15**, the California Water Commission will meet in Sacramento. [Agenda](#) items include hearing from DWR staff about how the department is working to provide resilience to drought and flood.

CalDesal annual conference: On **Feb. 16**, California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Crowfoot will be the keynote speaker at the [CalDesal annual conference](#) on water policy in Sacramento and on Feb. 17, DWR's Desalination Grant Program staff will participate on a panel titled "Meet the Regulators." The panel will include representatives from the California Coastal Commission, California State Lands Commission and State Water Resources Control Board. Panel members will discuss each agency's roles and responsibilities in the Governor's Water Supply Strategy, which directs state agencies to support desalination production where projects are cost effective and environmentally appropriate.

Secretary Speaker Series - After the Storms: On **Feb. 21**, California Natural Resources Secretary Crowfoot will host a virtual speaker series, "After the Storms: An Update on California Water Situation." The panel will feature California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Yana Garcia, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Chuck Bonham, DWR Director Karla Nemeth and State Water Resources Control Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel. These leaders will share updates on the status of drought and water supply after the series of nine atmospheric rivers in late December and early January. Register to join [here](#).

Drought risk explorer tool: On **Feb. 22**, DWR staff will host a webinar for counties showing how to use its newly updated Drought Risk Explorer Tool. This is a water shortage vulnerability tool that enables users to perform drought risk assessments for domestic wells and state small water suppliers. In 2021, DWR successfully released an initial version of this tool, developed with the County Drought Advisory Group. DWR will refine additional data for the tool and maintain and periodically update the tool. This webinar will share recent improvements with California counties and other potential users.

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://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/>