

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 19, 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 September 19, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 199 dry wells in the past 30 days. Most are in San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys.

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

Governor signs budget that includes \$3.6 billion for water resilience

(September 16): The Governor enacted the remaining pieces of the 2022-23 budget. It builds on the historic, \$5.2 billion investment in California water systems enacted in 2021-22 with an additional \$3.6 billion for drought and water resilience over multiple years.



Governor signs water right legislation (September 16): The Governor enacted a bill to require the State Water Board to develop and adopt regulations to govern consideration of climate change effects in water availability analyses used in the Board's review of applications for water right permits. SB 1205 by Sen. Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) requires the Board to consult with the Department of Water Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife in preparing regulations.

Drought forces closure of hunting in wildlife area (September 16): The Department of Fish and Wildlife announced that the Shasta Valley Wildlife Area will close for waterfowl hunting for the entire season, which lasts Oct. 1 through January 11, due to lost wetlands and habitat. This includes special days scheduled in September for youth hunters and in January for military personnel. The 4,700-acre wildlife area in Siskiyou County typically provides important seasonal wetlands for migrating waterfowl supplied by three reservoirs on the property. Two of those reservoirs – Steamboat Lake and Bass Lake – are completely dry and a third reservoir – Trout Lake – is at approximately 25 percent of capacity. Closing the wildlife area to all waterfowl hunting is necessary to protect the waterfowl using what limited habitat remains.



Governor asks President and Congressional delegation to invest in California water

(September 14): Governor Newsom sent letters to President Biden and California's representatives in Congress. The Governor urged federal investment in implementation of his strategy to adapt to a hotter, drier California and the voluntary agreements with Northern California water users to improve the environmental conditions of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and tributaries. The letters noted that California itself has invested nearly \$9 billion over the last two years in water resilience. The Governor asked federal leaders to prioritize California investments as they develop the fiscal year 2024 budget for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Applications open for irrigation system grants (September 13): The California Department of Food and Agriculture is now accepting grant applications for a State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) pilot project for the Southern Desert Region of California. Of the \$50 million appropriated to SWEEP in the Budget Act of 2021, CDFA is allocating \$2 million for this solicitation. The eight-week application period will close on November 8.

Recent Events and State Actions

Colorado River negotiations continue (ongoing): Water users in Nevada, Arizona, and California continue 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. Recent discussions have focused on any potential additional conservation in 2023 and federal administrative tools to stabilize the river as needed in subsequent years. 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.



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

Save Our Water on the road (ongoing): Save Our Water and DWR will spread the water conservation message at a Community Gardening Day in Sacramento on **September 17**, at a Save Our Water event at California State University San Bernadino on **September 19** with State Water Board Vice Chair, Dorene D'Adamo, the Kern County Fair on **September 23 and 24**, and the Oroville Salmon Festival on **September 24**.

Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

Water Commission considers water storage projects and climate extremes: On **September 21**, the Water Commission will discuss potential site visits to Water Storage Investment Program project locations and hear presentations from state agency staff about the process for developing contracts for the administration of public benefits from those seven water storage projects, which together would increase California's storage capacity by 2.77 million acre-feet. The Commission also will hear a presentation from DWR staff on preparing the State Water Project for drought, flood, and wildfire in a changed climate.

Colorado River symposium: The chair of the State Water Board and the Secretary for Natural Resources will participate in the Water Education Foundation's Colorado River Symposium from **September 21 to September 23** in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Delta conveyance project public meetings: DWR will host the second and third virtual public hearings scheduled to receive public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact report for the Delta conveyance project on **September 22 and 28**. The first was held **September 13**. The public comment period opened July 27 and will end Oct. 27. The proposed project would modernize water transport infrastructure in the Delta to address the effects of sea level rise and climate change, minimize water supply disruption caused by an earthquake, protect the ability of the State Water Project to reliably deliver water to two of every three Californians, and provide operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions in the Delta.

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/>