

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 12, 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 12, the state’s voluntary household dry well reporting system received reports of 203 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

Desalination funding available (September 9): DWR announced the availability of \$6 million in financial assistance to support desalination projects. The Proposition 1 funding can support the construction and design of pilot projects for brackish and ocean water for potable water supply. Applications for grants are due Oct. 5, with final awards to be announced in February 2023. More information is available [here](#). Since passage of Proposition 1 in 2014, DWR has awarded \$81 million in desalination grants to 17 projects.

Water briefing for Los Angeles business and civic leaders (September 8):

The Secretary for Natural Resources spoke about drought and water resilience at the annual sustainability summit of the Los Angeles Business Council, attended by hundreds. He shared the Governor's new water supply strategy, among other updates, and urged water conservation.



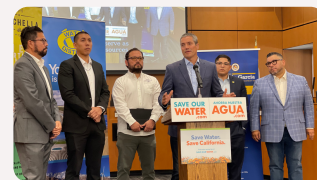
Conservation rates top double digits in July (September 7): Urban Californians reduced water use by an average of 10.4% statewide in July compared to the same month in 2020. Regionally, the reductions ranged from 28.5% on the North Coast to 8.6% on the South Coast and 5.6% in the Colorado River region.

Support for tribal water infrastructure projects (September 7):

DWR announced that it had signed a funding agreement with the San Luis Rey Indian Water Authority that provides \$15 million in direct financial assistance to tribal communities. The \$15 million was approved by the Legislature as part of the 2021-22 budget and is separate from the funding awarded by DWR's drought relief grant programs. The funding will be divided equally among five tribes represented by the San Luis Rey Indian Water Authority and will support the planning, design, and construction for a suite of projects that include water storage tank installation, water distribution system upgrades, emergency generators, and more. All projects are expected to be completed by 2025.



Save Our Water Campaign in Palm Desert (September 6): The Secretary for Natural Resources and chair of the State Water Resources Control Board joined local and state leaders for a drought-related press conference in the Coachella Valley. They promoted water conservation as climate change foretells of a hotter, drier future and highlighted the Governor's new strategy to adapt water supplies.



National group focused on fixing leaks (September 2): DWR led a small, recurring cross-state/province meeting to discuss using water audit data to reduce water losses and improve efficiency. Participants hailed from Georgia, Indiana, Hawaii, Tennessee, New Hampshire, Colorado, and Quebec.

Recent Events and State Actions

Budget includes \$3.6 billion for water resilience (September 1): The 2022-23 state budget passed by the Legislature August 31 includes an additional \$3.6 billion in one-time general fund investments over multiple years to support drought resilience and response. This builds on the historic three-year, \$5.2 billion investment in California water systems enacted in 2021-22. Of the \$3.6 billion, \$1.3 billion was enacted June 30 and the remainder will be enacted when the Governor signs the budget bills. This budget is tailored to meet immediate drought emergency needs for communities and fish and wildlife while deepening and expanding state investments to climate-proof water systems around the state.

USDA Undersecretary visit (August 31 – September 2): Robert Bonnie, undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, visited Northern California last week, including a meeting with the state Secretary for Agriculture and the Secretary for Natural Resources to discuss drought mitigation, water conservation, and the current issues impacting the Salton Sea. The USDA undersecretary also visited various locations in the Sacramento Valley to meet with rice growers, agricultural business operators, and water managers.



Save Our Water press conference in Fremont (August 30): The Secretary for Natural Resources joined a Save Our Water press conference at a water-wise garden in Fremont with leaders from the Alameda County Water District, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and East Bay Municipal Utility District. They highlighted the urgent need for water conservation this summer and longer-term efforts to build climate resilience. Replacing thirsty lawns with drought-tolerant plants is a great way to reduce outdoor water use. The Secretary noted that the state is pairing the request for conservation with significant investments in water resilience as part of Governor Newsom's recent strategy to increase water supply and adapt to hotter, drier conditions.



San Francisco Bay algal bloom (ongoing): The algal bloom in Lake Merritt has dissipated and the dissolved oxygen levels have begun to increase. The dead fish have been removed. In the southern portion of San Francisco Bay, the algal bloom has generally dissipated, and the dissolved oxygen levels have been increasing. No more fish kills are expected related to this algal bloom. It appears that the overall major algal bloom has dissipated, and the oxygen levels are returning to normal.

Klamath River fish disease (ongoing): Roughly 35 dead chinook salmon were observed on a 40-mile stretch of the lower Klamath River, and the Yurok Tribal Fisheries Program determined that the salmon suffocated due to a pathogenic bacteria known as gill rot. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation increased releases out of Lewiston Dam on the Trinity River, which drains to the lower Klamath River, from 450 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 1,050 cfs to alleviate observations of increases signs of other fish diseases and large schools of salmon stalling at cooler pools on the Klamath River.

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.



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

World Water Congress and Exhibition: September 10-16, State Water Board Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel will participate in the International Water Association's World Water Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark, a global event of world water leaders focused on innovation, technology and best practices for managing water wisely. On **September 13**, Chair Esquivel will be the keynote speaker and a panelist for a session titled, Perspectives on Water Stewardship. The session will address water management and "how many industries can not only reduce their environmental impact and meet societal demands for clean water, but also improve process performance and ultimately reduce costs."

Save Our Water on the road (ongoing): Save Our Water and DWR will spread the water conservation message at the SMUD Electricity Fair on **September 11** in Folsom, a Community Gardening Day in Sacramento **September 17**, and the Oroville Salmon Festival **September 24**.

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/>