



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Monday, October 13, 2014

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Fire Activity: CAL FIRE has responded to 5,224 wildfires across the state since January 1, burning 91,792 acres in state responsibility areas. This year's fire activity is above the year-to-date average of 4,263 wildfires on 88,470 acres. CAL FIRE responded to over 100 new wildfires last week, including the Applegate Fire in Placer County, which has burned 459 acres with 80% containment. The King Fire in El Dorado and Placer Counties, which has burned a total of 97,717 acres in mostly federal responsibility area, has reached full containment.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): [Reservoir Levels](#) as of October 9 remain low, including: Don Pedro 37%; Exchequer 11%; Folsom Lake 34%; Lake Oroville 30%; Millerton Lake 35%; New Melones 22%; Pine Flat 11%; San Luis 22%; Lake Shasta 25%; and Trinity Lake 24%. An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Vulnerable Water Systems: The State Water Board's [Drinking Water Program](#) continues to provide technical and funding assistance to several communities facing drinking water shortages, and is monitoring water systems across the state to determine if new support is needed. As of this week, a total to date of over \$12.2 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March for this purpose.

Vulnerable Domestic Water: As of Friday, October 10, state government has received reports of nearly 1,000 water shortages in homes that rely on domestic wells or very small water systems through the Domestic Water Issues online reporting database. These reports, primarily provided by counties, identify households and small communities facing water shortages. This information is used to coordinate state and local government response to help provide emergency water supplies to these residents. Governor Brown issued an [Executive Order](#) on Friday, September 19, enabling funding from the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) to support counties' efforts to supply emergency water to residents. Donations of potable water have also been made to local communities by a wide range of companies and non-profit groups.

Recent Precipitation: California experienced scattered amounts of precipitation during the latest storm system at the end of September. Precipitation totals (in inches) from Friday, September 25 through Tuesday, September 30:

- **Shasta Dam:** 2.72"
- **Oroville:** 0.88"
- **South Lake Tahoe Airport:** 1.60"
- **Pacific House:** 0.48"
- **Yosemite Headquarters:** 0.37"
- **Cheery Valley Dam:** 0.82"

** This rainfall will have minimal effect on California's drought conditions, and reservoir water levels will remain largely unchanged. Due to low water supplies from the two previous dry years, California remains in drought conditions. **

Most Recent El Niño Predictions Suggest Very little Change in the Status this Month: According to current forecasts, conditions are still favorable for the development of an El Niño event over the next two (2) months, however, any El Niño event that may develop will be weak. The National Weather Service (NWS) currently is forecasting about a 67% probability that an El Niño event will develop between the November and January timeframe.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **Urban Water Suppliers Show Progress In August Water Conservation Report:** Water conservation in California's urban communities continues to grow. August data collected by the State Water Board shows an [11.5 percent statewide](#) reduction in water use compared to last August. The water usage data submitted by 95% of urban water suppliers indicates that Californians are answering the call to reduce water usage amidst the drought.

Overall, Californians saved 27 billion gallons of water in August. By comparison, residents collectively saved 18 billion gallons in July of this year and 9 billion gallons in June compared to water usage in those months last year. Next month, water districts will be required to report "residential gallons used per capita per day" in an effort to determine average water consumption per person throughout the state

- **CVP Begins Water Year 2015 with 2 Million Acre-Feet Less than Water Year 2014:** The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) [Central Valley Project \(CVP\) began water year 2015](#), which began on October 1, with 3.1 million acre-feet of water in its six key CVP reservoirs. This water supply represents less than half of the 15-year average annual carryover of 6.4 million acre-feet and is about 2 million acre-feet less than the amount in supply last October at the start of the 2014 water year.

Both federal and state water projects continue to work closely with regional partners to develop their operations contingency plan and strategies to grapple with limited water supplies and plan for a possible dry 2015.

- **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Increasing Flows in Klamath River to Fight Parasite Attacking Salmon:** On Saturday, October 4, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) began releasing additional water from PacifiCorp's Iron Gate Dam near Hornbrook, California in an effort to [combat a parasite outbreak in Coho and Chinook salmon](#) in the upper Klamath River. Flows at the Iron Gate Dam will increase from 1,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 1,750 cfs for 10 days and is expected to make the river current too strong for the parasite to swim through to reach the salmon. It is anticipated that the increased flow will use about 16,000 acre-feet from PacifiCorp's reservoirs and will have no effect on Upper Klamath Lake levels.
- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 291,150 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 242,585 boxes of food have been picked up by 128,437 households. By this Friday, October 17, an additional 10,800 will be delivered to four counties. Local food banks continue to target this food aid to residents most impacted by the drought.

The non-profit group La Cooperativa continues to distribute the \$10 million state-funded emergency rental assistance to impacted families and individuals across counties most impacted by the drought.

As of Thursday, October 2, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$6,138,586 is committed; and \$4,621,929 in funds has been issued to 3,024 applicants in 20 counties.

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has created a \$600,000 program to help families pay their water bills. This program targets families through 10 agencies that are experiencing “exceptional” drought. As of Friday, October 3, CSD has reported that a total of \$107,202 has been issued to 832 households.

CSD has also implemented a \$400,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) drought assistance program, in coordination with the California Human Development (CHD), Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC), Center for Employment Training (CET) and Proteus, which provides assistance in employment training and placement services to individuals impacted by the drought. As of Friday, October 3, 82 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 9 clients have obtained employment, and 66 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$136,833 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **Temporary Relief may become Available to Some Curtailed Water Rights Holders:** If significant early rains occur this winter, curtailed water right holders in the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Russian and Eel river watersheds [may be able to divert or store water on a temporary basis](#), according to an announcement released on Friday, October 3, by the State Water Board. Under the revised curtailment criteria, water rights holders that have been unable to divert water may be allowed to do so if sufficient rain occurs and will be notified in real-time of these temporary relaxations of curtailments.
- **U.S. EPA Announces \$183 Million to Improve Water Quality, Infrastructure in California:** On Thursday, October 2, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced more than [\\$183 million in new funding](#) to invest in California for statewide improvements in a wide variety of local water quality projects including pollution control, water and energy efficiency projects, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, and technical assistance for communities.

The funding announcement was made during an event highlighting new water meters installed in Fresno communities as part of the Fresno Water Conservation Project. Fresno was able to obtain \$51 million in federal funding that helped offset the cost of installing 73,000 water meters. Since the installation of the meters, water usage in the city has decreased by 25 percent. Now, the EPA is offering \$183 million to California to make more of these changes around the state.

- **CDFA Opens Application Period for Agricultural Water Efficiency Grants:** The Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) on Monday, September 29, opened a second application period for the [State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program \(SWEEP\)](#) grants authorized by emergency drought legislation. The SWEEP grants will provide financial assistance to agricultural operations seeking to implement water conservation measures that result in increased water efficiency and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Applications must be submitted electronically using [FAAST](#) by Monday, November 10 at 5:00 p.m.

- **State Water Board Accepting Public Comments on Draft Safe Drinking Water Plan until Dec. 15:** The State Water Board is [now accepting public comments](#) on its draft Safe Drinking Water Plan through Monday, December 15. The plan includes the State Water Board's assessment of the overall quality of the state's drinking water, analysis of specific water problems and known and potential health risks associated with contaminated drinking water, and recommendations for improving water quality. The State Water Board anticipates a series of workshops on the plan will be announced soon.
- **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is Soliciting Project Proposals for New Colorado River System Conservation Pilot Program:** The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) is now soliciting for water conservation project proposals from Colorado River entitlement holders in Arizona, California, and Nevada as part of a new [Colorado River System Conservation](#) pilot program. The program will provide up to \$11 million in funding for projects related to reduced risk to water supplies, hydropower production, water quality, agricultural output, recreation and environmental resources across the Colorado River basin.
- **Sacramento Agencies Launch New “Drought Champs” Campaign to Thank Residents for Conversation Efforts:** The Regional Water Authority (RWA) has launched a new [“Drought Champs”](#) campaign to thank Sacramento area residents for their efforts in conserving 20 billion gallons of water since January. That's enough to meet the drinking water needs for 150,000 families for a year.

The campaign will feature messages in radio, print advertising and digital billboards, applauding “Drought Champs” for their water use reductions and asking them to continue conserving water through the fall and winter.

- **Carlsbad Desalination Plant 65% Complete, On Schedule for Deliveries in 2015:** On Wednesday, October 1, the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) announced that the [Carlsbad Desalination Plant](#) is 65% complete and on schedule for water deliveries to SDCWA by next fall. The \$1 billion project will produce 50 million gallons of water per day – or up to 56,000 acre-feet of water annually – for use across the San Diego area. The water produced will be enough to serve approximately 112,000 homes yearly and will account for 7% of the county's water need in 2020 and one-third of all locally generated water.
- **New Pilot Program Will Offer Rebates for Using Rainwater Barrels in San Mateo County:** On Monday, September 29, the City-County Association of Governments of San Mateo (C/CAG) announced that they will soon [offer rebates of up to \\$100 for rain barrel users](#) as part of a new pilot program geared towards conservation, which is being developed in partnership with the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA). The program will be funded by \$25,000 that is already allocated in C/CAG's budget for the countywide stormwater program and will run through June 30, 2015.
- **Water Saving Tips Promoted Across the State:** The state's newly improved water conservation website, [SaveOurWater.com](#), is promoting the “Don't Waste Summer” campaign. This campaign provides a new conservation tip each day for the 100 days of summer. Supporters can sign up for daily email tips, and share Save Our Water's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds for this public awareness campaign.

- **Open Burn Ban in Affect across the State:** Open burning continues to be prohibited on 31 million acres of land across the state due to the [burn ban that CAL FIRE](#) has directed through the coordination of its unit chiefs. This ban on open burning in state responsibility areas (outside of cities and towns) reduces wildfire danger amidst extremely dry conditions.
- **Drought Response Funding:** \$687 million in state drought funding that was appropriated in March through emergency legislation continues to advance toward meeting critical needs. Over \$61 million of this funding addresses emergency water needs, food aid and housing assistance to drought-impacted communities. Nearly \$21 million of those funds are already in communities providing assistance and additional funds are being readied as drought impacts worsen. Nearly \$625 million of the emergency funds appropriated in March came from sources dedicated to capital improvements to water systems. Since March, state agencies have expedited grant approvals, getting over \$21 million immediately allocated to grantees that were pre-approved for certain projects. As planned in March, the next \$200 million of expedited capital funding will be awarded this fall, with the remaining \$250 million granted by mid next-year. State government has also appropriated tens of millions in funding to CAL FIRE over its typical budget to enable staffing-up fire crews much earlier this fire season.
- **Governor's Drought Task Force:** The Task Force continues to meet daily to take actions that conserve water and coordinate state response to the drought.

Local Government

- **Local Emergency Proclamations:** A total of 59 local Emergency Proclamations have been received to date from city, county, and tribal governments, as well as special districts:
 - **25 Counties:** Glenn, Inyo, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Napa, Plumas, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Sutter, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yuba.
 - **13 Cities:** City of Willits (Mendocino County), City of St. Helena (Napa County), City of Calistoga (Napa County), City of American Canyon (Napa County), City of Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County), City of Montague (Siskiyou County), City of Live Oak (Sutter County), City of San Juan Bautista (San Benito County), City of Lodi (San Joaquin County), City of Portola (Plumas County), City of Ripon (San Joaquin County), City of Rio Dell (Humboldt County), and City of West Sacramento (Yolo County).
 - **9 Tribes:** Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt County), Tule River Indian Tribe (Tulare County), Karuk Tribe (Siskiyou/Humboldt Counties), Sherwood Valley Pomo Indian Tribe (Mendocino County), Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (Yolo County), Cortina Indian Rancheria (Colusa County), Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria (Sonoma County), and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians (Madera County).
 - **12 Special Districts:** Brooktrails Township (Mendocino County), Lake Don Pedro Community Services District (Stanislaus County), Placer County Water Agency (Placer County), Twain Harte Community Services District (Tuolumne County), Carpinteria Valley Water District (Santa Barbara County), Meiners Oaks Water District (Ventura County)

County), Mariposa Public Utility District (Mariposa County), Goleta Water District (Santa Barbara County), Montecito Water District (Santa Barbara County), Tuolumne Utilities District (Tuolumne County), Mountain House Community Service District (San Joaquin County), Nevada Irrigation District (Nevada County).

- **Water Agency Conservation Efforts:** The Association of California Water Agencies (AWCA) [has identified](#) several hundred local water agencies that have implemented water conservation actions. These water agencies [are responding to the drought](#) by implementing conservation programs, which include voluntary calls for reduced water usage and mandatory restrictions where water shortages are worst.
- **County Drought Taskforces:** A total of 30 counties have established drought task forces to coordinate local drought response. These counties include: Butte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yolo.
- **Tribal Taskforce:** A total of 2 tribes have established drought task forces to coordinate tribal drought response. These tribes include: Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), and Yurok Tribe (Humboldt Counties).

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Drought.CA.Gov](#): California's Drought Information Clearinghouse

State's Water Conservation Campaign, [Save our Water](#)
Local Government, [Drought Clearinghouse and Toolkit](#)

California Department of Food and Agriculture, [Drought information](#)
California Department of Water Resources, [Current Water Conditions](#)
California Data Exchange Center, [Snow Pack/Water Levels](#)
California State Water Resources Control Board, Water Rights, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
California Natural Resources Agency, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
State Water Resources Control Board, Drinking Water, [SWRCB Drinking Water Program](#)
California State Water Project, [Information](#)

[U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for Current Conditions throughout the Region
[U.S. Drought Portal](#), National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)
National Weather Service [Climate Predictor Center](#)
USDA Drought Designations by County [CA County Designations](#)
USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information [USDA Programs](#)
U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance Office: www.sba.gov/disaster