



September 27, 2021

*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](http://www.drought.ca.gov).*

## Current Conditions

- California and the West are in severe drought, with impacts accelerated by climate change.
- This is a second dry year for most of California, and conditions are on par with the state's 1976-77 drought. The next water year begins October 1, and state agencies are actively preparing for a third consecutive dry year.
- Storage in the state's major reservoirs is low, and some will reach historic lows this fall.
- Fifty 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.
- In the last 30 days, 164 wells were reported dry through the state's [voluntary household dry well reporting system](#). Eight or more dry wells were reported in the last 30 days in Lake, Mendocino, Butte, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Tehama and Tulare counties.
- The state is providing hauled or bottled water to eight separate small water providers experiencing supply outages in Monterey, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Tulare, Shasta, and El Dorado counties. The providers together serve a population of a little under 3,000 people.
- Fish and wildlife managers are monitoring conditions and where possible, relocating native fish and amphibian species and increasing hatchery production to compensate for losses. Some stream sections have been closed to fishing.



*Storage in Lake Oroville was 36% of its historical average on September 24. The reservoir, which captures and stores runoff from the Feather River watershed, is a key part of the state's water delivery system.*

## Recent State Actions

**Governor signs legislation to making historic water investments (Sept. 23)** – With ancient sequoia groves threatened by wildfire as a backdrop, Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation to fund the

largest investment in climate resilience in the state’s history. The budget includes \$5.2 billion for short- and long-term water resource investments over the next three years, including \$815 million for immediate drought support. Among other investments, the budget includes:

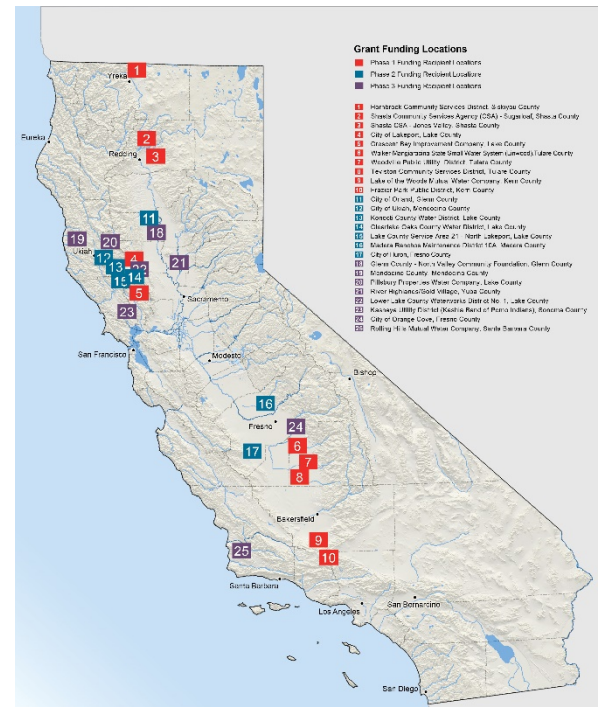
- \$1.3 billion for grants to local agencies for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.
- \$500 million to support ready-to-go local drought projects and help local managers develop new projects that could make a difference in the event of continued dry conditions. Of these funds, \$200 million is dedicated to small communities, and DWR has begun directing these funds in coordination with the Water Board.
- \$400 million to support local efforts to recycle water and clean up groundwater contamination.
- \$300 million to support local agencies as they implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.
- \$300 million for flood management projects.
- \$250 million to provide environmental flows to improve conditions for native fish species.
- \$200 million to pay a portion of repairing major canals damaged by subsidence in order to facilitate movement of water across and within regions.
- \$100 million for grants to improve on-farm energy and water use efficiency.
- \$100 million to support local efforts to clean groundwater contaminated by long-lasting industrial chemicals.
- \$50 million to support local efforts to repurpose farmland where demand for groundwater must be reduced.
- \$30 million to modernize the State’s water right data infrastructure.
- \$25 million for watershed-scale climate vulnerability and adaptation studies that can inform local efforts to recharge groundwater, manage floods, and protect fish and wildlife.

**Drought relief funding directed to small communities (Sept. 23)**

– The Department of Water Resources (DWR), in coordination with the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board), announced [a second and third round of funding commitments](#) totaling \$28 million for 15 communities as part of the Small Community Drought Relief program. Of the 15 communities, 11 are disadvantaged. The funding will, for example, help replace four miles of leaking pipes in Orange Cove, purchase pumps to pressurize Ukiah’s emergency interties, and cover the costs to haul water to the rancheria of the Kashaya Band of Pomo Indians. A [first round of funding](#) for 10 communities, totaling \$25 million, was awarded last month.

**Early look at urban conservation efforts provided (Sept. 21)**

– Water Board staff presented conservation data for the month of July, offering a very preliminary look at water savings since the Governor issued a call for voluntary conservation on July 8. Data submitted by 376 urban water suppliers showed a statewide conservation rate of 1.8% compared to July 2020, with reductions varying by region. The North Coast, including the hard-hit Russian River watershed, showed a 16.7% savings rate. The South Coast, home to 56% of the state’s population, showed a savings rate of .1%. The San Francisco Bay region conserved 8.4% compared to



DWR has directed Small Community Drought Relief Funding to 25 communities around the state as of Sept. 23.

July 2020, and the Tulare Lake region showed a 1.6% savings rate over the same period. Conservation data will be reported to the Board monthly.

**2022 water project operation plans previewed (Sept. 21)** – DWR Director Karla Nemeth and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Regional Director Ernest Conant briefed the Water Board on contingency planning for a third consecutive dry year in 2022 and potential State Water Project and Central Valley Project operations. Water suppliers that rely on the SWP have been advised to prepare for and plan for a zero allocation in 2022.

**Updated Save Our Water campaign launched to help Californians conserve (Sept. 20)** – The statewide water conservation campaign managed by DWR launched new messaging and materials (“Saving Our Water is Saving Our Future” and “Let’s Make It Last, California”) on social media and radio, with more extensive advertising coming online in the coming week. The campaign, developed in partnership with local water agencies, emphasizes the need for Californians to take steps now to reduce water use, including taking care to water trees even as they cut back on landscape irrigation.

**Adjustments to curtailments (ongoing)** – As the irrigation season ends, the Water Board is lifting some water right curtailments. In the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, approximately 4,500 curtailments were lifted in September due to decreased demand and rice field drainage making additional water available. It is anticipated these rights will be curtailed again in October once rice field drainage is largely over. Adjustments to curtailments will be made over the coming week in the Shasta and Scott River watersheds.

## Current Water Right Curtailments

The following watersheds have water right curtailments in place. Also shown are the current number of curtailed rights or right holders (counts will change as hydrology changes) as of Sept. 23:

- **Russian River (Upper):** Approximately 1,500 rights curtailed.
- **Russian River (Lower):** Approximately 300 rights curtailed. Some curtailments lifted in September due to decreased demand as growing season ends. Curtailments updated monthly.
- **Delta:** Approximately 10,300 rights curtailed in August. Approximately 4,500 curtailments lifted in September in the Sacramento watershed due to decreased demand and rice field drainage making additional water available. It is anticipated these rights will be curtailed again in October once rice field drainage is largely over.
- **Scott and Shasta:** Curtailments issued Sept. 9, with approximately 2,300 curtailments estimated between both watersheds. A compliance assistance webinar was held Sept. 23.
- **Mill and Deer:** Draft regulations planned for adoption the week of Oct. 4. The regulations could affect approximately 25 diverters.

## Tribal / Local Actions

- **Tribal governments:** Tribal emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Karuk Tribe, Resighini Rancheria, Tule River Indian Tribe, Yurok Tribe, Wiyot Tribe.
- **Local government:** Local emergency drought proclamations as reported by Cal OES to date: Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo.

## Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

**New Water Year:** Water Year 2020-21 ends Sept. 30 and Water Year 2021-22 begins **Oct. 1**. The beginning of a new water year is a natural opportunity to assess conditions and adjust state actions as needed.

**Health and safety needs for 2022:** DWR is gathering projections of health and safety needs of State Water Project customers in event of zero allocation next year and planning for contingency.

**Removal of salinity barrier:** Removal of the salinity-repelling rock barrier at West False River in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta should be complete by **Nov. 30**.

**Initial State Water Project allocation for next year:** Lake Oroville is entering Water Year 2022 with record-low storage, and San Luis Reservoir is expected to be at its second-lowest level of record. Low storage means that the SWP's initial allocation to project contractors on **December 1** will be very low, and the subsequent low probability of getting an exceptionally wet winter means that the project's final allocation is also likely to be low.

**Fishery closures:** CDFW is preparing an emergency regulation request to the Fish and Game Commission to extend the current low-flow closure criteria dates through April 30 in the Eel River, Mad River, Mattole River, Redwood Creek, Smith River and Van Duzen River and Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin county coastal streams. CDFW has developed a core team for this effort and is coordinating with Commission staff on presenting at the **December** meeting.

## 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](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](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/conservation_reporting.html)
- Information on state drought actions and assistance: <https://www.drought.ca.gov>
- Conservation tips and resources for consumers: <https://saveourwater.com/>