



October 18, 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.

Current Conditions

- California and the West are in severe drought, with impacts accelerated by climate change. The water year that ended Sept. 30 was the second driest on record, and storage in key reservoirs is low.
- August 2021 was the driest August on record since reporting began.
- On a statewide basis, California is now experiencing its worst drought in observational record going back to late 1800s, narrowly beating out 2014-'15 based on both precipitation and temperature.
- 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.
- As of Oct. 17, the state's [voluntary household dry well reporting system](#) received reports of 199 dry wells in the past 30 days. That is a 44 percent increase in dry wells reported compared to the previous 30 days. Eight or more dry wells were reported in the last 30 days in Lake, Butte, Fresno, Madera, 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, El Dorado and Los Angeles counties. The providers together serve a population of a little under 3,000 people.
- The State Water Resources Control Board is monitoring 108 water systems serving about 263,000 people that could experience water supply outages during this drought.



Household dry wells reported through <https://mydrywell.water.ca.gov/report/>.

Recent State Actions

Governor requests drought assistance from Reclamation (Oct. 14) – Governor Gavin Newsom sent a letter to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Acting Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton requesting drought assistance under the Reclamation Emergency Drought Relief Act. At least \$8 million is available for drought relief projects across the western U.S. A request from the Governor is required for Reclamation to deploy the funding in California.

Orland public meeting focused on drought assistance (Oct. 14) – Representatives of DWR participated in an informational meeting for Orland-area residents on emergency drought assistance for households with dry residential wells and opportunities to connect to the City of Orland’s municipal water system. The City of Orland was recently awarded a grant of nearly \$8 million from DWR to provide emergency water connections to county residents. Glenn County has partnered with North Valley Community Foundation on a grant program that is under development.

State Water Board helps Fort Bragg launch desalination system in response to drought emergency (Oct. 12) – With technical assistance and emergency funding from the State Water Resources Control



The Noyo River is key source of surface water for the City of Fort Bragg

Board, the City of Fort Bragg is launching a desalination-reverse osmosis system that can treat up to 144,000 gallons per day from the Noyo River. The river is the largest of the city’s three surface water sources, and the ongoing drought reduced flows to such a degree this summer that Fort Bragg’s water system, serving nearly 3,000 customer connections, was faced with pulling water from its emergency reservoir to bolster its supply. Instead, the city pursued using desalination to extract more drinking water supplies from the river and received \$691,796 in emergency funding from the State Water Board to do so.

Curtailments ordered on Tehama County salmon streams (Oct. 11) – The Water Board ordered all 22 water right holders in the Mill and Deer creek watersheds to stop diverting to protect drinking water and meet flow requirements for threatened spring-run chinook salmon and steelhead trout and endangered winter-run Chinook salmon. Water levels in the streams are at almost half normal volume.

Lake Tahoe drops below rim (Oct. 10) – Lake Tahoe has dopped below its rim and Truckee River flows at Tahoe City have dropped down to 1 cubic foot per second (cfs). Donner Creek flows are similarly low at only 5 cfs, resulting in extremely low flows for a large and visible stretch of the river. Combined flows at Farad on the Truckee are at 72 cfs, comparable to what was seen last in 2014. CDFW staff are evaluating impacts to habitat and the fishery.

Save Our Water campaign urges action to reduce water use (ongoing) – The statewide [Save Our Water](#) program managed by DWR is reaching Californians with tips to reduce water use. Messages are hitting social media, radio, billboards and more in English and Spanish, with additional languages online soon. The campaign is being conducted in partnership with local water agencies to support the Governor’s call for all Californians to reduce water use by 15 percent.



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 Oct. 15:

- **Russian River (Upper):** Approximately 1,500 rights curtailed. State Water Board staff are preparing to transition to wet-season curtailments as soon as precipitation events warrant and will move from complete curtailments to a methodology used in the lower Russian River that

accounts for flows, precipitation, and the location of the diversion (Drought Water Rights Allocation Tool, or DWRAT). Staff presented the DWRAT to Russian River stakeholders Oct. 6.

- **Russian River (Lower):** Approximately 300 rights curtailed. Some curtailments lifted in October 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. An update to curtailments was provided on Oct. 1, and a subsequent update provided on Oct. 6 in advance of a forecast precipitation event. Monitoring of expected and actual precipitation and runoff conditions will continue weekly, or more frequently based on precipitation. Curtailments will be updated weekly or more often in response to conditions. Because the forecast precipitation event is only expected to provide light precipitation (generally less than 0.5 inches in the Sierra Nevada), relatively few curtailments were lifted in advance of the event. Staff will hold a workshop on Oct. 20 to solicit information and feedback on wet season issues related to curtailments.
- **Scott and Shasta:** Curtailments issued Sept. 9, with approximately 2,650 curtailments estimated between both watersheds. A compliance assistance webinar was held Sept. 23. Approximately 500 Information Orders will be issued to parcels on Julian, Willow, and Yreka creeks (tributaries to the Shasta) during the week of Oct. 11. Information for more than 200 adjudicated rights has not been updated in decades and the creeks are not covered by the existing Watermaster. Very few adjudicated diversions have been reported to the Water Board. As a result, there is no information on water use in these three tributary systems. Additional curtailments likely will be issued in the next several weeks in the Shasta watershed if no precipitation events occur to achieve October and November flow targets.
- **Mill and Deer:** Draft regulations were adopted by the Water Board on Sept. 22 and submitted to the Office of Administrative Law on Sept. 24. The Office of Administrative Law approved the regulations Oct. 4 and curtailment orders were mailed Oct. 11.

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, 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

Water Board to hear updates on drought, water conservation: The Water Board's regularly scheduled **Oct. 19** meeting includes an update on drought actions, hydrologic conditions, and the water conservation data reported by urban retail water suppliers for the month of August.

SWEEP applications to be solicited: CDFA is expected to release a request for applications for the [State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program \(SWEEP\)](#) on **Oct. 18**. SWEEP provides financial assistance in the form of grants to farmers to implement irrigation systems that reduce greenhouse gases and save water on California agricultural operations. The current budget allocated \$50 million. Eligible system

components include (among others) soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, switching to low pressure irrigation systems, pump retrofits, variable frequency drives and installation of renewable energy to reduce on-farm water use and energy. SWEEP directly assists farmers during the drought.

Workshop on Delta drought curtailments: On **Oct. 20**, Water Board staff will hold a [technical workshop](#) to describe and receive public input on potential changes to the methodology for determining water unavailability in the Delta watershed. Currently, the methodology is focused on evaluating water unavailability during the dry season, but modifications to the methodology are being considered to address water unavailability during the wet season.

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.

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
- 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
- Information on state drought actions and assistance: <https://www.drought.ca.gov>
- Conservation tips and resources for consumers: <https://saveourwater.com/>