

October 25, 2021

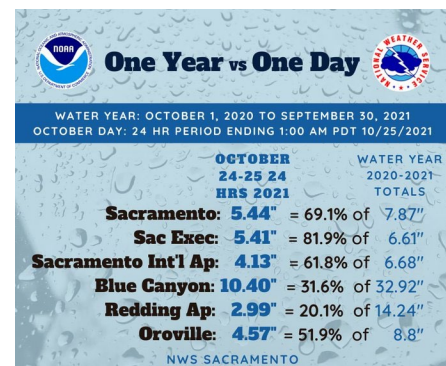
The California Drought Update is a weekly roundup of conditions, state actions and upcoming developments. It is produced by an interagency team that includes the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the California 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.
- All of California’s 58 counties are now under a drought emergency proclamation.
- The atmospheric river that dropped more than 5 inches of rain on Sacramento and other locations on Sunday provided a welcome break from the prolonged dry spell but did not end the drought.
- State experts say it would take 140 percent of normal statewide precipitation this year to recover from current drought conditions.
- 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. 25, the state’s [voluntary household dry well reporting system](#) received reports of 165 dry wells in the past 30 days That is a 2 percent increase in dry wells reported compared to the previous 30 days. Most of the dry wells were reported in Fresno, Madera 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.

Recent Events and State Actions

Storm system brings welcome rain (Oct. 22-25) – A series of storms delivered precipitation to Northern California over several days. The heaviest and most widespread precipitation came Sunday, Oct. 24, thanks to a category 5 atmospheric river, a historic storm by many measures. Sacramento set the all-time single day record for rain, and in many areas the single-day total represented up to 80 percent of what was recorded in the entire 2020-21 water year. Local impacts were reported in some watersheds affected by the Dixie and Caldor fires earlier this year. Runoff was beginning to



boost storage levels at Oroville, Folsom and Lake Mendocino. Updates will be available at <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/reservoir.html>.

Governor extends drought emergency statewide (Oct. 19) – The Governor issued a proclamation expanding the drought emergency statewide and further urging Californians to step up their water conservation efforts. The proclamation extends the emergency proclamation to the counties of San Francisco, Los Angeles, Imperial, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and San Diego, so that every county is now covered, allowing the state to move more nimbly wherever emergency situations arise. The latest proclamation also gives the Water Board authority to prohibit certain wasteful practices such as hosing sidewalks, irrigating ornamental turf during and immediately after rain, and irrigating turf in public street medians. Exactly which practices could be prohibited would be determined at the discretion of the Water Board in a process that could take several months. The proclamation also directs local water suppliers to implement their urban Water Shortage Contingency Plans and agricultural Drought Plans at a level appropriate to local conditions that takes into account the possibility of a third consecutive dry year and directs Cal OES to provide funding under the California Disaster Assistance Act, as appropriate, to support temporary emergency supply, delivery, or both for drinking water for sanitation purposes.

Data shows uptick in conservation efforts (Oct. 19) – Californians overall reduced urban water use by 5 percent in August compared to water consumption reported for August 2020, according to new data released by the Water Board. Regional savings ranged from a high of 18 percent for the North Coast to 3.1 percent, the lowest savings rate, for the South Coast. Statewide, the average August conservation level fell short of the 15 percent savings the Governor asked Californians to make in July, but it is an improvement over the less than 2 percent savings rate reported by water districts in July.

Curtailments adjusted (ongoing) – With rain boosting streamflow and inflow to reservoirs, the Water Board has temporarily lifted bans on curtailed water diversions on the lower Russian River, the upper Russian River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watersheds. Curtailment orders also were modified for the Scott and Shasta rivers. Curtailment orders will be re-imposed if dry conditions return.

State holds curtailments methodology workshop (Oct. 20) – Water Board staff held 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. Staff asked the public to consider, among other questions, how to most effectively suspend curtailments in response to actual and projected precipitation and runoff events.

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. 25:

- **Russian River (Upper and Lower):** Curtailments lifted in the Lower Russian River as of Oct. 21. Curtailments in the Upper Russian River were lifted on Oct. 23. Curtailments may be re-imposed based on precipitation and runoff.
- **Delta:** All of the approximately 10,300 rights curtailed in August are lifted as of Oct. 19.
- **Scott and Shasta:** Approximately 2,650 curtailments issued Sept. 9 and 10 for both watersheds. On October 21, curtailments temporarily suspended in the Shasta River watershed to a priority date of July 1923 through 11:59 pm on Oct. 31, contingent on the October flow requirement of 125 cubic feet per second being met. (The Shasta River flow requirement increases to 150 cfs in November.) Curtailments on the Scott were lifted through the end of the month on Oct. 25.
- **Mill and Deer:** The Office of Administrative Law approved the regulations Oct. 4 and Curtailment Orders were mailed Oct. 12.

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

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.

Forecasting and drought monitor work: Following the major shortcomings in the spring 2021 runoff forecasts, DWR is taking steps to transition to improved forecasting methodologies and to publish forecast guidance products. As directed by the April 2021 drought emergency proclamation, DWR also is developing a California Drought Monitor to provide a better representation of the state's drought conditions than that provided by the federal drought monitor. DWR is working toward **Dec. 31** launch of new drought monitor.

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/>