



December 20, 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. For tips and resources for conserving water, please visit www.saveourwater.com.

Current Conditions

- The water year that ended Sept. 30 was the second driest on record. All of California's 58 counties are now under a drought emergency proclamation.
- After two dry years, reservoir storage is markedly below 2019 levels, underscoring the need for ongoing water conservation.
- 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 Dec. 20, the state's [voluntary household dry well reporting system](#) received reports of 17 dry wells in the past 30 days, a decrease of 80 percent from the previous 30 days. Dry wells were reported primarily in Fresno, Madera and San Luis Obispo 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.

Recent Events and State Actions

Delta smelt released into wild for first time (Dec. 17): The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and CDFW, along with DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, [released captive produced Delta smelt](#) into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta in an experimental project will help inform future supplementation of the species in the wild.

Drinking water wells principles and strategies released (Dec. 16): DWR [released a final version](#) of a framework for monitoring, analyzing, and minimizing impacts to drinking water wells.

Called "Groundwater Wells Principles and Strategies," the document was developed by DWR with extensive public and stakeholder input. The Governor called for the framework in his April 21, 2021 drought proclamation. The framework is intended to provide direction and deliver solutions to



support groundwater-dependent communities to ensure that potential impacts of drought are anticipated and proactively addressed.

Water transfers workshop held (Dec. 16): DWR hosted its annual workshop for local entities wishing to convey water transfers in State Water Project facilities.

Legislative hearing on drought (Dec. 16): The Senate Select Committee on Human Security held an [informational hearing](#) called “The Western Drought: The Hidden Human Impacts.” DWR’s lead deputy director discussed, among other things, current hydrological conditions, DWR’s drought-related grant programs, release of California Groundwater Live interactive data platform, the Save Our Water public education campaign, and state strategy on drinking water wells.

Saving water at state facilities (Dec. 16): In a letter to state leadership, the Department of General Services director asked for assistance in [reducing water use at state facilities](#). The director asked leaders to use “Save Our Water” messaging, report water use monthly to DGS, complete “sustainability roadmaps” that highlight conservation measures, and embrace best water use practices.

States agree to reduce Colorado River water use (Dec. 15): Through a memorandum of understanding, California, Nevada, and Arizona agreed to collectively reduce water use by 500,000 acre-feet in 2022 and again in 2023 in order to help keep Lake Mead storage levels above a point that would trigger, under previous agreements, deeper supply cutbacks to Arizona and Nevada. The parties agreed to share the \$200 million cost of the water-use reductions, with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California contributing \$20 million. The parties also developed a collaborative relationship with a group of non-governmental environmental organizations in the Colorado River Basin related to addressing climate-change induced impacts. Both the MOU and agreement with environmental groups reinforce the commitment that seven states, the U.S., Mexico, tribes, and other stakeholders will need to manage reduced water supply from the Colorado River for the long term.

Water storage projects advance (Dec. 15): Four groundwater storage and reservoir projects were [deemed feasible by the California Water Commission](#), passing a key hurdle set forth in Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion water bond approved by voters in 2014. The determination by the commission allows the four projects to remain eligible for funding under the \$2.7 billion Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) created by Proposition 1. Three other WSIP projects received similar determinations from the commission in October and November. The local water districts backing the projects move next to permitting and other tasks that must be completed before they are eligible to receive their final funding awards from the commission.

Workshop examines curtailment methodology (Dec. 15): The Water Rights Division of the State Water Board held a [public workshop](#) to consider additional or alternative approaches to its existing Delta curtailment methodology.

Staff draft order issued on Petitions for Reconsideration of 2021 TUCP (Dec. 15): The State Water Board released for public comment a draft order that partially denies and partially grants petitions for reconsideration of the executive director’s June 1, 2021 issuance of a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) order for the State Water Project and Central Valley Project (projects), as well as her June 10, 2021 approval of Reclamation’s Temperature Management Plan (TMP). While the June 1 order conditionally approved the TUCP modifying Delta standards, it also imposed requirements on the projects, including timely implementation by Reclamation of a Sacramento River TMP modifying Shasta Reservoir operations for the protection of salmonids, as required by State Water Board Order 90-5. Following the executive director’s decision, the State Water Board received multiple petitions

requesting it reconsider the June 1 TUCP Order and June 10 TMP. On, January 5, 2022, the State Water Board will hold a combined workshop on both the staff Draft Order for Reconsideration and the 2022 TUCP the projects submitted to the Water Board on Dec. 1 to request modification of water quality conditions from February through April 2022. The board will hear oral comments on this issue at its Jan. 5 workshop. The deadline for public comment on the draft reconsideration order and 2022 TUCP is Jan. 7.

Solicitation released for project to modernize water rights data and information management (Dec. 13): The State Water Board and California Department of Technology released a solicitation for a project for updating water rights data for California. The solicitation period will end on Jan. 15. Up to \$20 million is available to digitize existing paper records and rebuild the state's water right data management system.

Curtailment adjustments (ongoing): Water Board staff evaluate conditions multiple times a week and continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change. Given increased precipitation, all curtailments in the Russian River watershed have been lifted at this time.

Save Our Water urges Californians to turn off sprinklers (ongoing): With rain reaching most of the state, Save Our Water is reminding residents that [now is the time to turn off sprinklers](#) and other outdoor irrigation systems. On average, Californians use 30 percent to 60 percent of their water on outdoor irrigation. Letting Mother Nature do the watering when it rains is an important way to save water. [Save Our Water offers more tips for saving water](#) when rain is in the forecast.

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.
- **Water suppliers:** The following public water suppliers have imposed mandatory water use reductions on customers, according to information voluntarily provided to the Association of California Water Agencies and / or recent announcements. The list likely is not comprehensive:
 - Alameda County Water District – mandatory water use restrictions aimed at reducing water use by 15 percent.
 - Brooktrails Community Services District – usage cap of 9,000 gallons per month, all customers
 - Indian Wells Valley Water District – 20 percent
 - Marin Municipal Water District – 40 percent
 - Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Conservation Improvement District – 40 percent
 - Modesto Irrigation District – irrigation allocation capped at 36 inches per acre
 - Montague Water Conservation District – 95 percent
 - Nevada Irrigation District – 20 percent
 - Reclamation District 1500 – 25 percent
 - Richvale Irrigation District – 50 percent
 - City of Santa Rosa – 20 percent

- Westlands Water District – no outdoor water use by municipal and industrial customers

The following private water companies have imposed a 15 percent mandatory water use reduction:

- San Jose Water Company, with drought surcharges for excessive water use
- Great Oaks Water Company, with drought surcharges for excessive water use
- California-American Water Company (in the Larkfield and Geyersville districts of Sonoma County, with fines for non-essential water use
- Cold Springs Water Company in Tuolumne County
- North Gualala Water Company in Sonoma County

Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

Season's first snow survey: DWR is tentatively planning the first snow survey of the winter on **Dec. 30**, including a media availability at Echo Summit in the Sierra Nevada.

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/>