



March 21, 2022

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 under a drought emergency proclamation.
- January and February 2022 were the driest consecutive January and February on record dating back over 100 years in the Sierra Nevada.
- Statewide precipitation for the water year to date is 74 percent of average, down from 77 percent last week. Sierra-Cascades snowpack for the water year to date is 52 percent of average, down from 61 percent last week. Statewide reservoir storage is 69 percent of average for this time of year, down from 71 percent last week
- 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 March 21, the state's [voluntary household dry well reporting system](#) received reports of 20 dry wells in the past 30 days. Dry wells were reported primarily in Humboldt, Sonoma, Butte, Tehama 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

State and local leaders call on Southern Californians to conserve water (March 21): Facing another year of extremely limited water supplies from the Northern Sierra, state and local water leaders called on Southern Californians to significantly reduce their water use, particularly outdoors, where more than half of all residential water is typically used. Against a backdrop of a nursery filled with water-saving California native plants, state Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot joined leaders from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Los Angeles Department of



Water and Power to sound the alarm on the severity of the [drought](#) – now in its third year – and offer residents tips and rebates to help them conserve.

DWR announces \$180 million in funding for drought relief projects (March 21): DWR announced its second phase of funding through the [Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief Grant program](#). The program will provide financial assistance to 62 projects throughout the state to tackle drought impacts on human health and safety, protect fish and wildlife resources, and support other public benefits, such as ecosystem improvements. Of the \$180 million in funding, half will support various types of water supply projects including groundwater, surface water, recycled water, and supply reliability. The other half of the awarded funds will finance projects focused on water conservation, groundwater recharge, water quality, and habitat restoration. Included in the awards are five projects benefiting tribes and 38 projects benefiting underrepresented communities.

State Water Board advises diverters to plan for shortages (March 21): As drought conditions persist throughout California, the State Water Board sent [early warning letters](#) to approximately 20,000 water right holders urging them to plan for potential shortages. Despite record-breaking storms in October and December 2021, most of California is experiencing a severe drought due to the driest January and February on record. The letter notes that conditions are worsening quickly and can threaten water supplies, impair critical habitat, reduce recreational opportunities, and create uncertainty for all water users.

DWR announces reduction in State Water Project allocation (March 18): DWR reduced the anticipated allocation this year for the State Water Project from 15 percent to 5 percent of requested supplies. In addition to the 5 percent allocation, DWR will provide for any unmet critical health and safety needs of the 29 water agencies that contract to receive SWP supplies. The reduction in the allocation reflects extreme swings in precipitation. After a dry October and November, DWR expected to meet only health and safety supply needs. After robust rain and snow in December, DWR announced an allocation of 15 percent. DWR scaled back that allocation after a record-breaking lack of precipitation in January and February, with no major storms in March. A final SWP allocation typically is announced in May or June.



DWR, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation submit Temporary Urgency Change Petition (March 18): DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation jointly filed a Temporary Urgency Change Petition with the State Water Resources Control Board to temporarily modify requirements in water right permits and licenses for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project between April 1 and June 30. The changes are in response to a historically dry January, February, and first half of March, which are typically California's wettest months. Facing a third consecutive year of critically dry conditions, the changes are expected to conserve vital water supplies in upstream reservoirs for critical needs later in the year, including public health and safety, and environmental needs.

State Water Board assists well users (March 17): The State Water Board awarded a \$5.5 million grant from the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to expand a testing program and provide treatment to more rural households near Modesto facing well contamination. Board Member Laurel Firestone

joined the executive director of the grant recipient, Valley Water Collaborative, in Modesto to announce the award. The Collaborative already administers a program to test for nitrate contamination and provide treatment for domestic wells at no cost. This new partnership enables the Collaborative to expand testing to other contaminants, including arsenic and pesticides, and provide treatment free of charge to eligible well users.

Federal grants announced for California water agencies (March 17): The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced \$17.5 million in drought resiliency grants across the West, including \$2 million each to the following California water districts: Carmichael Water District for aquifer storage and recovery, the City of Santa Ana for water treatment, North Kern Water Storage District for capital improvements, Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District for groundwater banking, and the Turlock Irrigation District for a regulating reservoir project. The Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency received \$1.5 million for construction of wells to allow recovery of water banked in Kern County.

Workshop examines Sacramento River temperature management (March 16): The State Water Board hosted a workshop to discuss Sacramento River temperature management considerations that could



inform planning for the 2022 season and future years. The discussion included the status of Sacramento River chinook salmon and assessment of temperature modeling. Endangered winter-run chinook salmon evolved to spawn in cold waters of the upper Sacramento River and its tributaries but are blocked by Shasta Dam and forced to spawn in waters below the dam that can be lethally warm to salmon eggs and young.

State boosts potential funding for seven water storage projects (March 16): The California Water Commission voted to conditionally allocate an additional \$64 million in Proposition 1 funding for seven water storage projects that collectively would expand the state's storage capacity by 2.77 million acre-feet of water, more than double the capacity of Folsom Lake. The funding will be made available once the local water districts backing the projects complete permitting, environmental studies, and other requirements set forth in Proposition 1, the 2014 water bond that included \$2.7 billion to pay for the public benefits of new water storage projects. The Commission voted to give all seven projects a 1.5 percent increase in potential funding to help offset inflation and awarded \$25 million to the Sites project to correct a shortage from 2018 due to limited funding. The Sites project would construct a 1.5 million acre-foot off-stream surface storage reservoir in the Sacramento Valley west of the Sacramento River. The \$64 million conditionally distributed by the Commission became available when the Temperance Flat project, which proposed a new dam on the San Joaquin River, withdrew from the Proposition 1 program.

State Water Board reports uptick in water consumption in January (March 15): Urban water suppliers reported a statewide increase in water use of 2.6 percent for January 2022 compared to the same month in 2020, according to data presented by the State Water Board. The Colorado River region showed a 19 percent increase in water consumption while the Bay Area reduced water use by 1.4 percent. The South Coast, with about half of the state's population, increased water consumption by 1.8 percent. Overall, since the Governor called on Californians to save 15 percent last July, Californians have cumulatively reduced water consumption statewide by 6.5 percent. Water Board staff noted that almost no precipitation fell in California in January, which typically is one of the wettest months of the year.

Science workshop on forecasting (March 15-17): DWR, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the University of Arizona, and other partners held a virtual science workshop on sub-season-to-seasonal climate forecasting to support water management. Participants shared the latest research results, highlighted recent advances in short-term climate predictions, and discussed how to translate climate forecasts into products useful to water managers.

Curtailment adjustments (ongoing): The Water Board lifted curtailments in most watersheds following December storms, but dry conditions in January and February led to reimposition of curtailments in some areas. Curtailments have been reinstated in a few sub-watersheds of the Delta and in the Shasta River watershed. Due to potential precipitation in the forecast and other hydrological conditions, curtailments in the Scott River watershed are temporarily suspended through March 25. It is likely that additional curtailments will be reinstated as dry conditions persist, with the potential for additional curtailments in the Delta watershed next week and the Russian River around April 1. Water Board staff will continue to adjust curtailment orders as conditions change.

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
 - Zone 7 – 15 percent

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, as well as the Los Angeles and San Diego districts of the respective counties, with fines for non-essential water use)
- Cold Springs Water Company in Tuolumne County
- North Gualala Water Company in Sonoma County

Upcoming Decisions / Milestones

Next snow survey: DWR will hold its monthly snow survey press event **on April 1** at Echo Summit off Highway 50. April 1 is typically when California’s snowpack is the deepest and has the highest snow water content. Snowpack readings help hydrologists forecast spring and summer snowmelt runoff into rivers and reservoirs.

Workshop for small suppliers: DWR and the Water Board are planning the first of three workshops for small water suppliers on **April 20**. The workshop is tied to the new requirements of SB 552, a 2021 law that requires drought contingency planning. The agencies will be seeking input on the water shortage contingency plan template for suppliers with fewer than 3,000 connections and for schools.

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/>