

California Department of Water Resources NEWS

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Roller-Coaster Water Conditions

It's been a roller-coaster year for the water supply forecasters at the California Department of Water Resources.

First, flood. Then, a long dry stretch.

But water supplies are still expected to be adequate in most areas despite the driest February-April on record in many locations. April rainfall was much below normal, too, especially in central and southern California.

What is keeping most reservoir levels up is a substantial high-elevation snowpack and reservoir storage accumulated during the torrential runoff in December and January, when many rainfall records were set. But lower-elevation watersheds that have no storage reservoirs will probably experience lower flows this year.

In its monthly water conditions report, the Department of Water Resources said that statewide runoff between April and July should drop to 90 percent of average, ranging from the North Coast (Humboldt, Del Norte counties) with 55 percent to North Lahontan (the eastside of the Sierra) with 125 percent. The key Sacramento River Basin, with many of the state's largest reservoirs, expects 75 percent.

When runoff from October 1 (including the floods of January) is included, the statewide figure jumps to 175 percent, with substantial amounts in each region. Despite the dry months, statewide runoff is expected to total 150 percent of average when the counting ends September 30. Statewide precipitation since October 1 is 120 percent of average. The snowpack is about half average at this time, but much fell earlier and melted.

Overall reservoir storage is now at 110 percent of average, only 10 percent down from a year ago.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs. The State Water Project provides water to two-thirds of California's population.

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