

California Department of Water Resources NEWS

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Updated California Water Plan Outlines Relief Options

SACRAMENTO----After extensive review and public input, the Department of Water Resources has compiled the final edition of the 1998 California Water Plan, a blueprint illustrating how water purveyors statewide are planning to deal with the increased demands being placed on the state's water supplies.

"This comprehensive report showcases the need for California's leaders to vigilantly pursue a variety of options -- especially those reflected in the ongoing CALFED process -- if we are to keep pace with California's rapidly expanding population," Secretary for Resources Doug Wheeler said.

The updated water plan, released as Bulletin 160-98, foresees a water shortfall by the year 2020 of 2.4 million acre feet in years of average precipitation and 6.2 million acre feet in drought years if no actions are taken to improve existing supplies.

On the positive side, Bulletin 160-98 estimates that a combination of expanded water conservation, recycling, groundwater storage, off-stream storage and other programs -- if implemented -- can substantially reduce forecasted water shortages to 0.2 million acre feet in years of average precipitation and 2.7 million acre feet in drought years.

To much fanfare, the draft version of Bulletin 160-98 was released in January for an extensive period of public review and comment. Comments received were strongly influenced by crucial water policy discussions taking place in the State federal CALFED program.

The most significant change in response to public comments was deletion from Bulletin 160-98 of

Central Valley Project Improvement Act supplemental water purchases from forecasted environmental water demands, reducing year 2020 estimated shortages by up to 880 thousand acre feet. A final federal decision on the amount of CVPIA water to be acquired for environmental purposes is not expected until 1999, and purchases are subject to the availability of willing sellers.

The Bulletin 160-series, updated every five years, assesses agricultural, environmental and urban water needs and evaluates water supplies. The report discusses in detail each of California's 10 major hydrologic regions and combines the regional information into a statewide tabulation. Bulletin 160-98 uses a planning horizon of 1995 to 2020, evaluates actions to improve the reliability of California's water supplies and, in turn, illustrates how water purveyors statewide are planning to meet future water needs.

Bulletin 160-98 discusses the variety of efforts to reduce forecasted shortages, including resolving problems associated with delivering water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and implementing California's plan to reduce its dependence on water from the Colorado River. Also discussed are implementation of water conservation, recycling, desalination, and conjunctive use programs, along with the reoperation of existing facilities and possible new storage and conveyance projects.

Implementing likely future options could eliminate average and drought year shortages in the State's major urban areas. The largest shortages would remain in the Central Valley. These shortages are associated with drought year agricultural water use and groundwater overdraft.

"Keeping pace with California's population increase, which is expected to jump from 32 million to 47.5 million people by the year 2020, will be a major challenge to our water suppliers," David Kennedy, Director of the Department of Water Resources said. "Our best evidence at this time, however, demonstrates that we have the means to meet the challenge."

The updated California Water Plan is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://rubicon.water.ca.gov/b160index.html> Print copies of the report may be requested by calling DWR's Publications Desk at (916) 653-1097.

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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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