STATE OF CALIFORNIA – CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, *Governor*

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
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March 30, 2009

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On February 27, 2009 you proclaimed a state of emergency due to drought conditions, recognizing the water crisis facing California and directing actions to address immediate and future shortage issues. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) along with other state agencies have implemented strategies and initiatives contained in the proclamation to respond to the drought and provide assistance to those areas in greatest need.

The proclamation specifically directed DWR to provide a status report on the state's updated water conditions. Since the proclamation was issued, precipitation levels have increased to about 80 percent of average for this time of year and drought conditions have eased in some parts of the state. However, the overall water supply situation has not improved enough to make up for the two previous dry years and low reservoir conditions. Water storage is about five million acre feet below average, and the state and federal water project allocations are expected to remain at or near record lows through the end of the year.

With California in a third year of a drought, economic projections continue to show serious impacts to farms, farm workers and agriculture-related businesses. Many local water agencies have imposed restrictions on water use to stretch their available supplies. The drought will also impact natural resources and recreational opportunities, and it brings added fire danger. In order to help meet our most essential water needs for 2009 and plan for the possibility of a dry 2010 we are initiating or supporting the following activities:

1. DWR is coordinating with the Department of Finance and the State Treasurer's Office to expedite approximately $108 million in bond funds this year. These funds are for drought relief, groundwater, desalination, conservation, recycling and other water management projects to assist regions in dealing with drought conditions. The total state share for these projects, over multiple years, will be approximately $240 million, as follows:

- $17 million for 54 recently awarded Urban Water Management Grants that have signed contracts in place
- $32 million for 127 previously awarded Ag and Urban Water Management Grants
- $154 million for 12 previously awarded Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grants. The grants fund 107 individual projects
- $25 million for 44 previously awarded Desalination Grants
- $2 million for a statewide water conservation public education and outreach campaign
- $10 million for water transfer mitigation

2. DWR in partnership with other water management agencies will continue to work with the legislature to develop a comprehensive plan and bill to permanently reduce per-capita water use 20 percent by 2020 as request in your February 28, 2008 letter to the legislature.

3. DWR in partnership with ACWA will launch a new "Save Our Water" public education program. The current drought and the governor's proclamation have created the need for an immediate, statewide public education campaign to encourage greater water conservation. Patterned after the successful "Flex Your Power" public education campaign, the "Save Our Water" campaign will reach out to different demographic and business segments to achieve significant reductions in water use. The Save Our Water campaign will be launched on April 21, 2009.

4. DWR, in cooperation with the Department of Housing and Community Development and the California Building Standards Commission, will finalize standards to safely plumb buildings with potable and recycled water systems (dual plumbing).

5. DWR will complete upgrades to the California Irrigation Management Information Systems to take advantage of new technology and allow more irrigators, water agencies and other users to access this network of automated weather stations to manage their water resources more efficiently.

6. The California Emergency Management Agency, in cooperation with other state and local agencies, has initiated workshops in drought-stricken areas to provide information on social service assistance programs that are available to communities and individuals impacted by the drought.

7. DWR, in coordination with the California Water Plan steering committee (representing 21 state agencies) and the public advisory committee, is preparing a drought contingency plan to address the possibility of a dry 2010. This contingency plan will be prepared using the comprehensive California Water Plan process and a public draft of the plan shall be available by September 30, 2009. The final drought contingency plan shall be incorporated into the California Water Plan 2009 Update and finalized by December 31, 2009.

8. DWR will prepare periodic status reports on the continuing drought. The first update shall be completed by June 30, 2009. These updates will continue through the duration of the drought. In addition, DWR will prepare and post on its Web site monthly drought bulletins to provide up-to-date information on water conditions and impacts. The first drought bulletin shall be available on April 30, 2009.

The attached report provides an update on the state's drought conditions and water availability. In addition, DWR has worked with the California Department of Food and Agriculture on recommendations contained in this report to reduce the economic impacts of the drought.

But these measures are only one part of the comprehensive solution that is needed to provide clean, reliable and sustainable water supplies to our people, farms and businesses. As you know, California's water problems don't end when the drought ends. We need immediate action on a comprehensive solution that includes aggressive conservation, new groundwater and surface storage facilities, conveyance facilities and environmental restoration. California's future economic growth and prosperity depends on it.

Sincerely,

Lester A. Snow
Director

Attachment