



News for Immediate Release

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DWR Schedules Fourth Snow Survey of 2009-2010 Season

SACRAMENTO -- The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct its fourth snow survey of the season at 11 a.m., Thursday, April 1, 2010, near Lake Tahoe.

Survey Location and Results

Phillips Station at Highway 50 and Sierra at Tahoe Road, about 90 miles east of Sacramento is the manual survey location. Reporters and photographers should take snowshoes or cross-country skis and park vehicles along Highway 50.

Snow depth and water content figures should be available by 1 p.m. This survey is the fourth of five monthly winter measurements that help water supply planners estimate the amount of spring snowmelt runoff into reservoirs. It is generally considered the most meaningful of the season because the Sierra snowpack normally reaches its peak by April first and begins to decline thereafter.

Water Supply Threats

California's snowpack water content is particularly significant this year because the state has endured three years of drought and Lake Oroville, the main reservoir in the State Water Project (SWP) system, is low -- only 58 percent of normal for the date and just 45 percent of capacity.

Because of the less-than-normal water supply conditions, the SWP allocation for calendar year 2010 has been placed at only 15 percent of water contractors'

requested amounts. The results of the April snow survey will affect future allocations.

Electronic sensors indicate that statewide, snowpack water content currently is 104 percent of normal for the date. The northern Sierra, which feeds Lake Oroville, is at 122 percent of normal for the date.

In addition to low reservoir storage, regulatory restrictions to protect native fish species are having an adverse impact on SWP deliveries.

Regardless of snowpack conditions, it is clear that water deliveries through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta will remain in jeopardy because of regulatory uncertainty. DWR is working towards a comprehensive solution that must include additional water storage and alternate conveyance.

These measures would increase water supply reliability for farms and businesses, and benefit fisheries. Alternate conveyance would allow water deliveries, while avoiding pumping hazards to the most sensitive fish species.

About Snow Surveying

Snow-water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with needed data.

Snow monitoring is coordinated by DWR as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses to determine the amount of water in the snowpack.

In addition to the manually measured sites, reporters can find the latest electronic readings of snowpack water content posted on the Internet at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>

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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.

Contact the [DWR Public Affairs Office](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.