



January 30, 2014

Contact:

Ted Thomas, Information Officer - (916) 653-9712

Ted.Thomas@water.ca.gov

Doug Carlson, Information Officer – (916) 653-5114

Paul.Carlson@water.ca.gov

Elizabeth Scott, Information Officer - (916) 712-3904

Elizabeth.Scott@water.ca.gov

Snow Surveyors Find Sparse Snowpack Drought Retains Grip on California

SACRAMENTO -- Freshly fallen snow from late-arriving storms brightened the scenery but did not end California’s drought. The winter’s second snow survey today found far too little water in the still scant snowpack.

“This winter remains dry, making it very unlikely our record drought will be broken this year,” said DWR Director Mark Cowin. “Now more than ever, we all need to save every drop we can in our homes and places of work.”

Manual and electronic readings today record the snowpack’s statewide water content at only 12 percent of average for this time of year. That is a mere 7 percent of the average April 1 measurement when the snowpack normally is at its peak before melting into streams and reservoirs to provide about a third of the water used by California’s cities and farms.

Prior to today, the lowest snowpack water content readings for this time of year were 21 percent of average for the date in 1991 and 1963, 22 percent in 1976, 25 percent in 1977 and 35 percent in 2012, the first year of the drought now pushing its way into a third consecutive year. These statewide records go back to 1960.

Today’s electronic readings indicate that water content in the northern mountains is 6 percent of normal for the date and 4 percent of the April 1 average. Electronic readings in the central Sierra show 15 percent of normal for the date and 9 percent of the April 1 average. The numbers for the southern Sierra are 14 percent of average for the date and 8 percent of the April 1 average.

DWR and cooperating agencies conduct manual surveys on or about the first of the month from January to May. The manual measurements supplement and check the accuracy of real-time electronic readings.

Results of today’s manual readings by DWR off Highway 50 near Echo Summit are as follows:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	inches	inches	Missing
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	12.4 inches	1.4 inches	7
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	inches	inches	Missing
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	inches	inches	Missing

Not only is water content in the mountain snowpack – often referred to California’s largest reservoir – low, but so are the state’s major water supply reservoirs.

The reservoir storage from winter 2012 storms that got most of California through last year’s (calendar year 2013) record dry weather is depleted, with each day reducing the odds rain and spring snowpack runoff will replenish supplies before summer.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project’s (SWP) principal reservoir, is only at 36 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity (54 percent of its historical average for the date). Shasta Lake north of Redding, California’s and the federal Central Valley Project’s (CVP) largest reservoir, is at 36 percent of its 4.5 million acre-foot capacity and 53 percent of its historical average for this time of year. San Luis Reservoir, a critical south-of-Delta pool for both the SWP and CVP, is at a mere 31 percent of its 2 million acre-foot capacity (39 percent of normal for the date).

Not only was 2013 California’s driest calendar year on records going back to 1895, but this month may go into the records as the driest ever January.

State Climatologist Michael Anderson noted that statewide, only 1.53 inches of rain was recorded from October through December, also the lowest aggregate total in records going back to 1895. The aggregate average for the period is 7.87 inches. California’s average aggregate rainfall for the entire Water Year (October 1-September 30) is 22.90 inches, meaning the state needs more than 21 inches added to the October-December total just to get back to normal.

“We are in record dry territory and this needs to be stressed,” said Anderson.

With California facing its driest year on record, Governor Brown declared a [drought State of Emergency](#) earlier this month and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. This week, CAL FIRE announced it hired 125 [additional firefighters](#) to help address the increased fire threat due to drought conditions, the California Department of Public Health identified and offered [assistance](#) to communities at risk of severe drinking water shortages and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife [restricked fishing](#) on some waterways due to low water flows worsened by the drought. Also this week, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Food and Agriculture released the [California Water Action Plan](#), which will guide state efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems and improve the resilience of our infrastructure.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent and last week, the [Save Our Water](#) campaign announced four new [public service announcements](#) that encourage residents to conserve. Last December, the Governor formed a [Drought Task Force](#) to review expected water allocations and California’s preparedness for water scarcity. In May 2013, Governor Brown issued an [Executive Order](#) to direct state water officials to expedite the review and processing of voluntary transfers of water and water rights.

Electronic snowpack readings are available on the Internet at:
<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/current/snow/index.html>

Reservoir conditions are found here:
<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reservoirs/RES>

For a broader snapshot of current and historical weather conditions, see DWR’s “Water Conditions” and “Drought” pages:
Water Conditions Page
<http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/>

Drought Page
<http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/>

Everyday water conservation tips may be found by clicking on Save Our Water at:



-30-

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.