



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ted Thomas, Information Officer – (916) 653-9712  
tthomas@water.ca.gov

### **DWR Director Welcomes Coordinated Federal Drought Aid**

**SACRAMENTO** – California Department of Water Resources Director Mark Cowin on Wednesday welcomed an “all-in” federal effort to help California cope with extreme drought.

“The effects of this widespread drought are clearly beyond the control of local personnel, services, and facilities in nearly every corner of California,” said Director Cowin. “It will require the combined efforts of all of our agencies to address the public health, economic, and environmental ramifications of this drought.”

Director Cowin joined U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Michael L. Connor and administrators from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Integrated Drought Information System and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wednesday at a Sacramento press conference to demonstrate a united and coordinated federal response to record-breaking drought conditions in California.

Reclamation and NRCS announced the availability of up to \$14 million in funding for water districts and farmers to build resilience to drought with projects that improve water management. The announcement follows action Tuesday by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to make \$20 million available for agricultural water conservation efforts throughout California.

Federal officials also committed to accelerate water transfers and exchanges and provide operational flexibility as necessary to support projects that might help stretch California’s water supplies. Reclamation released its 2014 Central Valley Project Water Plan, which outlines numerous specific actions to help water users better manage their supplies through drought.

As California enters a third dry year, the state’s major reservoirs are diminished and the crucial Sierra Nevada snowpack – which melts to supply roughly a third of the water used statewide – was recently measured at a scant 12 percent of statewide average water content for this time of year.

The California Department of Water Resources operates the State Water Project, which captures snowmelt runoff in Northern California to supply 25 million Californians and roughly 750,000 acres of irrigated farmland. On January 31, Director Cowin announced that the 29 water districts that buy water from the State Water Project could expect no deliveries in 2014 beyond those needed to meet critical health and safety needs or that involved water banked

from previous years by the water districts. The across-the-board zero allocation – the first of its kind in the 54-year history of the State Water Project – is intended to preserve reservoir storage in case conditions remain dry.

The allocation may change, but it would take near-record levels of rain and snow in the remaining few months of winter to bring statewide conditions even to average.

Last month, as California faced its driest year on record, Governor Brown declared a [drought State of Emergency](#) and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. In January CAL FIRE 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 [restricted fishing](#) on some waterways due to low water flows worsened by the drought. Also last month, 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 the [Save Our Water](#) campaign launched four [public service announcements](#) encouraging 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.

