



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Donner Lake Will Benefit from First Multi-Party Water Exchange under Truckee River Operating Agreement

SACRAMENTO – The Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA) implemented in December 2015 provides new mechanisms for federal, states (California and Nevada), tribal and local agencies to address unique and challenging water management issues. This week, parties to TROA exhibited flexibility and cooperation by agreeing to a series of water exchange transactions, allowed under TROA, to maintain higher water levels at Donner Lake through August.

The upper 12 feet of Donner Lake is reservoir storage that is wholly owned and operated by the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA). TMWA is obligated by a 1943 Indenture Agreement to operate the reservoir within a specified range during the months of June, July and August. However, the minimum elevation permitted during that period often results in undesirable impacts to recreational opportunities and aesthetics at the lake during the peak vacation period leading up to Labor Day.

Due to quickly diminishing runoff in the Truckee River Basin watershed this summer, local reservoirs, including Donner Lake, are being drawn down faster than normal. As a result, TMWA's drought management and operations plan required releases from Donner Lake to be increased beginning in late July. These releases would have resulted in lowering the level of Donner Lake during the popular summer season to the minimum allowed by the Indenture Agreement.

To maintain Donner Lake levels as high as feasible through August, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) proposed a series of complex water exchanges between TMWA and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe in Nevada that was accepted by the parties on August 3, 2016. As a result, the releases from Donner Lake were reduced to a flow rate of 15 cubic feet per second, as negotiated. This reduced flow will be maintained through August and is expected to limit the minimum Donner Lake water level to approximately 1.5 feet above the minimum level permitted at the end of August by the Indenture Agreement. This is above the maximum level the lake experienced during the entire 2015 drought-impacted summer season.

The multi-party voluntary exchange is the first significant transaction under TROA benefitting California interests since the historic agreement between the U.S. Department of Interior, the states of California and Nevada, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and TMWA took effect. TROA replaced an inflexible river management system that was more than a century old.

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.

