



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Thursday, March 5, 2015

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Recent Precipitation: Last week's storm brought rain mainly to the southern portions of the state, along with some snow in the mountains. Precipitation totals over California in the past week ranged from a few tenths of an inch in the Central Valley and northern part of the state to over 1.5 inches in the Central and Southern Sierras and Southern California.

Below are precipitation totals (in inches) from Monday, February 23, through Monday, March 2, and year-to-date rainfall based on the water year cycle (October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015).

- **Bakersfield:** 0.83" (4.32")
- **Folsom Dam:** 0.00" (23.30")
- **Fresno:** 0.49" (4.53")
- **Hetch Hetchy:** 0.47" (12.63")
- **Los Angeles:** 0.72" (6.51")
- **Modesto:** 0.00" (9.16")
- **Oroville:** 0.28" (22.92")
- **Pacific House:** 0.88" (22.92")
- **Redding:** 0.00" (28.80")
- **Riverside:** 0.70" (4.59")
- **Sacramento:** 0.00" (11.60")
- **San Diego:** 0.93" (6.23")
- **Shasta Dam:** 0.00" (45.76")
- **Willits:** 0.00" (34.36")

Precipitation Forecast: High pressure will remain over much of the state into the start of next week, continuing the warming trend with very dry conditions. Low pressure may reach the California coast with precipitation possible by the middle of next week.

Snow Survey: The March [manual snowpack survey](#), based on 180 snow courses, recorded California snowpack at 13% of normal to date, and 11% of the April 1 average. The snowpack as measured on March 2, using [automated sensors](#) shows snowpack at 19% of average to date, and 17% of the April 1 average. The automated sensor results captured the additional snowpack, resulting from the latest storm over the past weekend which may not have been reflected in the manual survey.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): Since the last report on February 23, Central Valley reservoirs from Shasta and Trinity in the North to Isabella in the South gained just under 500,000 acre-feet in net storage. Shasta led all reservoirs with over 186,000 acre-feet in net storage gain. San Luis Reservoir, an off-stream reservoir for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, continue to gain storage with a net increase of over 122,000 acre-feet since February 23.

[Reservoir Levels](#) as of March 1 remain low, including: Castaic Lake 30% of capacity (35% of year to date average); Don Pedro 43% of capacity (60% of average); Exchequer 8% of capacity (16% of average); Folsom Lake 58% of capacity (104% of average); Lake Oroville 49% of capacity (70% of average); Lake Perris 35% (42% of average); Millerton Lake 38% of capacity (57% of average); New Melones 25% of capacity (41% of average); Pine Flat 16% of capacity (30% of average); San Luis 64% of capacity (75% of average); Lake Shasta 58% of capacity (79% of average); and Trinity Lake 47% of capacity (63% of average). An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Fire Activity: CAL FIRE has responded to over 220 wildfires across the state since January 1, including the Stephens Fire in Siskiyou County, which has burned 200 acres and is 95% contained. CAL FIRE continues to monitor the drought situation and prepare for the wildfire season ahead while maintaining staffing that meets the current threat. Should the need arise, CAL FIRE is positioned to augment staffing as required.

Statewide Open Burn Ban Update: Due to recent rain, local outdoor burn bans have been lifted across much of the State. Most areas still require homeowners to obtain a burn permit. For those areas where the ban has been lifted, daily fire and weather conditions will dictate whether burning is permissible that day. The [burn ban](#), issued last July, prohibits certain outdoor burning in the State Responsible Areas (SRA).

Vulnerable Water Systems: The State Water Board's [Drinking Water Program](#) continues to provide technical and funding assistance to several communities facing drinking water shortages, and is monitoring water systems across the state to determine if new support is needed.

As of this week, \$13.9 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March 2014. According to the Drinking Water Program, five pending projects were removed due to eligibility criteria since the last drought brief, which made available \$1.1 million to redistribute and provide funding assistance to other communities facing drinking water shortages.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **Californians' Water Savings Dips in January, an Exceptionally Dry Month:** On Tuesday, March 3, the State Water Board released water conservation rates for the month of January as reported by large urban retail water agencies under the Emergency Conservation Regulation adopted in July 2014. Californians' water savings declined significantly from 22% in December to 8.8% in January. January followed a very wet December 2014, which reduced the need for outdoor water use and likely contributed to the high conservation rate in December. On Tuesday, March 17, the State Water Board will consider a proposed emergency regulation to both extend the current set of individual prohibitions and supplier requirements, and make additional changes to improve their effectiveness.

State Water Board Issues Revised Order to the State and Federal Projects: On Tuesday, March 3, the State Water Board's Executive Director issued a revised order that modifies the February 3 order approving urgency changes to Delta standards for the State and Federal Water Projects. These changes will address concerns raised at the February 18 workshop. The State Water Board is also responding to additional urgency requests for changes in water rights permits due to the drought. These include changes for the City of Santa Cruz, City of Thousand Oaks, the June Lake Public Utility District and the Walker River Irrigation District.

- **Rains of December and Early February Allow Slight Increase in SWP Deliveries:** On Tuesday, March 3, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that the storms of mid-December and early February have allowed water officials to make a small increase in water deliveries to most customers of the State Water Project (SWP), [increasing the allocations from 15% to 20%](#). DWR officials cautioned, however, that despite the storms of December and early February, 2015 is shaping up to be a critically dry fourth consecutive year of drought.

- **Reclamation Announces Initial Zero Water Allocation for Many Ag Users North and South of Delta:** On Friday, February 27, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) announced an initial allocation of 3 million acre-feet of water to farmers, wildlife refuges, and urban water users. Most of the water, 2.6 million acre-feet, will go to farmers who are senior water rights holders on the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. USBR announced a zero allocation for Central Valley Project (CVP) agricultural customers north and south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Urban customers will receive sufficient water to meet health and safety needs or 25 percent of contract amounts, whichever is greater.
- **Mokelumne River Salmon Defy Drought with Help from East Bay MUD and CDFW:** On Friday, February 27, the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) announced that more than [12,000 Chinook salmon](#) resisted the impacts of the drought last fall and returned to the Mokelumne River to spawn, which created the river's fifth-largest run in 74 years. According to EBMUD, the success of the fall Chinook run can be attributed to the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery project, which is a partnership between EBMUD and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 525,200 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 461,250 boxes of food have been picked up by 244,414 households. By this Friday, February 27, an additional 11,882 boxes will be delivered to eight counties. Local food banks continue to target food aid to residents most impacted by drought.

The non-profit group La Cooperativa continues to distribute the \$10 million state-funded emergency rental assistance to impacted families and individuals across counties most impacted by the drought. As of Tuesday, February 24, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$8,587,538 is committed; and \$7,375,702 in funds has been issued to 4,484 applicants in 21 counties.

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) created a \$600,000 program to help families pay their water bills. This program targeted families through 10 agencies that are experiencing "exceptional" drought. As of January, CSD has completed the Drought Water Assistance Program Pilot.

CSD has also implemented a \$400,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) drought assistance program, in coordination with the California Human Development (CHD), Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC), and Center for Employment Training (CET) and Proteus, which provides assistance in employment training and placement services to individuals impacted by the drought. As of Friday, February 20, 128 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 33 clients have obtained employment, and 128 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$400,000 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **Water Saving Tips Promoted Across the State:** Californians made strides in 2014 to save water during one of the worst droughts in generations. For 2015, [SaveOurWater.com](#) urges Californians to make a New Year's resolution to save water daily as a permanent lifestyle change. Save Our Water's newly revamped website makes it even easier for Californians to learn how to save water indoors, outdoors, and at work. The website features the theme "Conservation: California's Year-Round Resolution." Visitors can sign up for daily email tips

and grow the public awareness campaign by sharing Save Our Water [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds.

This campaign will expand beyond the general public to feature corporate and business efforts. Save Our Water is also building an easy-to-use digital water calculator, to be unveiled in March that will help people figure out how much water they currently use and how certain practices could cut that volume both indoors and outdoors.

- **Drought Response Funding:** The \$687 million in state drought funding that was appropriated last March through emergency legislation, as well as \$142 million provided in the 2014 Budget Act, continues to advance toward meeting critical needs. To date, \$227 million has been expended, and nearly \$625 million of the emergency funds appropriated in March came from sources dedicated to capital improvements to water systems. Since March, the Department of Water Resources has expedited grant approvals, getting \$21 million immediately allocated to grantees that were pre-approved for certain projects. As planned in March, the next \$200 million of expedited capital funding was awarded in October, and the remaining \$250 million will be granted by fall 2015. The 2014 Budget Act appropriated an additional \$53.8 million to CAL FIRE over its typical budget to enhance firefighter surge capacity and retain seasonal firefighters beyond the typical fire season. In the event drought conditions continue through next year, the proposed 2015-16 Governor's Budget includes an additional \$115 million to continue critical drought response efforts.
- **Governor's Drought Task Force:** The Task Force continues to take actions that conserve water and coordinate state response to the drought.

Local Government

- **San Diego County Reduces Water Use by 28% in January:** Despite continued high temperatures in the San Diego region, the [San Diego County Water Authority](#) reported on Thursday, February 19, that county water use dropped by 28% for January as compared to January 2014 numbers. In December, the district also reduced its water usage by 29% over the previous year's figures for that month.
- **Sacramento Region Uses Less Water despite Drier, Warmer Weather:** On Thursday, February 26, the Regional Water Authority announced that the [Sacramento region](#) used less water in January compared to the previous two years despite the dry and warm weather. According to the data submitted to the State Water Board, the region's water use in January 2015 decreased 18% compared to the same month last year, and dropped 3% compared to January 2013.
- **Local Emergency Proclamations:** A total of 60 local Emergency Proclamations have been received to date from city, county, and tribal governments, as well as special districts:
 - **24 Counties:** Glenn, Inyo, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Modoc, Plumas, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Sutter, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yuba, and El Dorado.

- **13 Cities:** City of Willits (Mendocino County), City of St. Helena (Napa County), City of Calistoga (Napa County), City of American Canyon (Napa County), City of Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County), City of Montague (Siskiyou County), City of Live Oak (Sutter County), City of San Juan Bautista (San Benito County), City of Lodi (San Joaquin County), City of Portola (Plumas County), City of Ripon (San Joaquin County), City of Rio Dell (Humboldt County), and City of West Sacramento (Yolo County).
- **9 Tribes:** Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt County), Tule River Indian Tribe (Tulare County), Karuk Tribe (Siskiyou/Humboldt Counties), Sherwood Valley Pomo Indian Tribe (Mendocino County), Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (Yolo County), Cortina Indian Rancheria (Colusa County), Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria (Sonoma County), and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians (Madera County).
- **14 Special Districts:** Brooktrails Township (Mendocino County), Lake Don Pedro Community Services District (Stanislaus County), Placer County Water Agency (Placer County), Twain Harte Community Services District (Tuolumne County), Carpinteria Valley Water District (Santa Barbara County), Meiners Oaks Water District (Ventura County), Mariposa Public Utility District (Mariposa County), Goleta Water District (Santa Barbara County), Montecito Water District (Santa Barbara County), Tuolumne Utilities District (Tuolumne County), Mountain House Community Service District (San Joaquin County), Nevada Irrigation District (Nevada County), Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Los Angeles County), and Lake Berryessa Resort Improvement District (Napa County).
- **Water Agency Conservation Efforts:** The Association of California Water Agencies (AWCA) [has identified](#) several hundred local water agencies that have implemented water conservation actions. These water agencies [are responding to the drought](#) by implementing conservation programs, which include voluntary calls for reduced water usage and mandatory restrictions where water shortages are worst.
- **County Drought Taskforces:** A total of 29 counties have established drought task forces to coordinate local drought response. These counties include: Butte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yolo.
- **Tribal Taskforce:** A total of 3 tribes have established drought task forces to coordinate tribal drought response. These tribes include: Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt Counties) and Sherwood Valley Tribe (Mendocino County).

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Drought.CA.Gov](#): California's Drought Information Clearinghouse

State's Water Conservation Campaign, [Save our Water](#)
Local Government, [Drought Clearinghouse and Toolkit](#)

California Department of Food and Agriculture, [Drought information](#)

California Department of Water Resources, [Current Water Conditions](#)

California Data Exchange Center, [Snow Pack/Water Levels](#)

California State Water Resources Control Board, Water Rights, [Drought Info and Actions](#)

California Natural Resources Agency, [Drought Info and Actions](#)

State Water Resources Control Board, Drinking Water, [SWRCB Drinking Water Program](#)

California State Water Project, [Information](#)

[U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for Current Conditions throughout the Region

[U.S. Drought Portal](#), National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)

National Weather Service [Climate Predictor Center](#)

USDA Drought Designations by County [CA County Designations](#)

USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information [USDA Programs](#)

U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance Office: www.sba.gov/disaster