



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Thursday, February 19, 2015

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Recent Precipitation: This January finished as one of the driest Januaries on historical record, with very little precipitation throughout the state. In early February, rainfall from a major statewide storm event provided 90% of the February monthly average rainfall for the Northern Sierra, and 52% for the San Joaquin Valley. Less rain fell further south in the state during this storm.

Below are precipitation totals (in inches) from Monday, February 2 through Tuesday, February 17, and year-to-date rainfall based on the water year cycle (October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015).

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| • Bakersfield: 0.07" (3.43") | • Pacific House: 7.28" (21.92") |
| • Folsom Dam: 2.05" (22.96") | • Redding: 6.32" (28.80") |
| • Fresno: 0.47" (3.87") | • Riverside: 0.00" (2.88") |
| • Hetch Hetchy: 3.27" (12.56") | • Sacramento: 2.28" (11.60") |
| • Los Angeles: 0.02" (5.73") | • San Diego: 0.00" (5.30") |
| • Modesto: 1.39" (8.79") | • Shasta Dam: 10.44" (45.76") |
| • Oroville: 3.40" (22.64") | • Willits: 6.68" (34.36") |

Precipitation Forecast: High pressure over California will continue to keep weather dry and warm throughout the state this week. Slightly cooler temperatures are likely for next week but continued dry weather is expected to persist.

Snow Survey: The February [manual snowpack survey](#) recorded California snowpack at 19% of normal to date, and 12% of the April 1 average. The next statewide manual snow survey will be conducted at the beginning of March. The snowpack as measured on February 10, using [automated sensors](#) shows snowpack at 23% of average to date, and 17% of the April 1 average which is a drop of 2 percent over the past week. The automated sensor results captured the additional snowpack, resulting from the early February storms, which is not reflected in the manual survey.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): The early February storm event brought a much needed boost in storage to the state's major Northern California reservoirs. Statewide, the storm generated net gains for reservoirs that totaled in excess of 1.0 million acre-feet. Reservoirs in the southern portion of the state did not benefit significantly from this storm event, as precipitation mostly fell further north.

[Reservoir Levels](#) as of February 16 remain low, including: Castaic Lake 34% of capacity (40% of year to date average); Don Pedro 42% of capacity (61% of average); Exchequer 8% of capacity (15% of average); Folsom Lake 54% of capacity (102% of average); Lake Oroville 46% of capacity (69% of average); Lake Perris 34% (42% of average); Millerton Lake 36% of capacity (56% of average); New Melones 25% of capacity (41% of average); Pine Flat 15% of capacity (29% of average); San Luis 58% of capacity (71% of average); Lake Shasta 53% of capacity (77% of average); and Trinity Lake 44% of capacity (62% of average). An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Fire Activity: In 2014, CAL FIRE responded to almost 1,000 more wildfires than the 5-year average. Since the beginning of 2015, CAL FIRE has responded to over 150 wildfires across the state, including the Round Fire in Inyo County, which has burned over 7,000 acres and is 100% 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, a total to date of \$14.4 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March 2014 for this purpose.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **State Water Board Approves Elements of Temporary Urgency Change Petition for SWP and CVP:** On Wednesday, February 4, the State Water Board issued an order approving most elements of the [January 23 temporary urgency change petition](#) submitted by the Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to adjust flow and water quality requirements that govern inflows and outflows in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and operation of the Delta Cross Channel Gates for the next two months. These requirements help control salinity in the Delta and protect fish and wildlife uses, and water quality for municipal, industrial and agricultural uses.

The State Water Board held a Public Workshop on Wednesday, February 18 to receive public comments on the Temporary Change Order. The workshop included panel presentations by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and stakeholder groups. The State Water Board is now reviewing all comments received to determine if changes to the Order are appropriate.

- **CDFW Approves Restoration Grants Including \$3.5 Million for Drought Projects:** On Wednesday, February 11, the Department of Fish & Wildlife announced its selection of grants to [restore and protect river and estuarine habitat](#) for coastal salmon and steelhead trout. This year's selection includes both traditional restoration projects as well as special projects to respond to the drought and improve fisheries habitat on private and state forestlands.
- **State Board Streamlines Process to Apply for Drinking Water Funds:** On Friday, February 6, the State Water Board announced that they have streamlined access to its [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund \(DWSRF\)](#) in order to make it easier for water systems to apply for funds. The DWSRF program, which was transferred to the State Board from the Department of Public Health in July, offers below-market-rate loans to water providers to upgrade their drinking water systems to meet state and federal safe drinking water standards.

- **State Water Board Orders More Information from Diverters Claiming Senior Delta Water Rights:** On Wednesday, February 4, the State Water Board has required individuals claiming [senior water rights](#) in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watershed to provide detailed information on the water rights they claim, and the diversions associated with those rights. The order comes after the State Water Board received information that some riparian and pre-1914 water right holders may be illegally diverting stored water in the Sacramento and San Joaquin watersheds, and the Delta.
- **State Board Releases Report on Improving Oversight of Water Right Systems during Drought:** On Friday, January 30, the State Water Board released a report that outlines ways to improve the enforcement of the state's [water rights system](#). The report addresses issues ranging from improving the accuracy and timeliness of supply and demand data to increasing public outreach. These recommendations for improvement are based on the State Water Board's review and implementation of the water rights system this past year, and is viewed as a way to improve the water rights enforcement process as California faces the likelihood of a fourth consecutive dry year.
- **\$50 million in Drought Relief for Western States Detailed during Drought Response Press Conference:** On Friday, February 2, the Department of Interior (DOI) announced the availability of [\\$50 million in federal grants](#) for drought relief in the western states. The \$50 million for Western Drought Response was made available through the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015, which will enable the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to work with water districts and other water users to increase efficiency and conservation of available water.
- **Conservation Partners Sought for Drought-related Wind Erosion Prevention:** On Wednesday, February 11, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California announced that they are looking to partner with local, city, county, or irrigation districts to address wind [erosion risks on fallow farmland](#) due to California's ongoing drought. Approximately \$4 million will be available through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) which will assist agricultural producers and rural landowners install conservation practices and limit the effects of wind erosion.
- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 495,650 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 435,600 boxes of food have been picked up by 231,871 households. By this Friday, February 20, an additional 12,000 boxes will be delivered to five 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 17, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$8,557,364 is committed; and \$7,338,693 in funds has been issued to 4,462 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 targets 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), 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 6, 128 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 30 clients have obtained employment, and 128 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$394,653 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **Californians Achieve Strong Water Conservation Gains in December:** The State Water Board announced on Tuesday, February 3, that [Californians cut back on water use by 22%](#) in December as compared with the same period last year, which is the largest water conservation gain since state officials began tracking the data last summer. The sharp climb in water conservation marks the first time the state has attained Governor Brown's goal of a 20% reduction in water use.
- **Save Our Water Message Delivered 210 Million Times in 2014:** During the February 3 State Water Board meeting, Save Our Water officials announced that the Save Our Water campaign achieved 210 million impressions delivering water conservation messages on television, radio, social media, and websites in 2014. This achievement was made possible by the additional funding given to the campaign last year, which helped to expand its reach into new channels and markets, and paid advertising.
- **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

- **MWD Outlines Drought Scenarios that Could Result in Mandatory Rationing This Summer:** This past December, the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) of Southern California revised its allocation plan which equally distributes water supply reductions among member agencies during shortages. On Tuesday, February 9, the MWD outlined a range of allocation actions and scenarios to its Board of Directors that may require the district to make wholesale cutbacks by July 1. MWD's Board will consider its options in April, but if a supply allocation is adopted, there is a possibility that it could result in water rationing throughout Southern California this summer.
- **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