



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Monday, March 16, 2015

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Recent Precipitation: Within the last week, moderate amounts of precipitation brought 2 to 3 inches near the mouth of Smith River on the North Coast tapering down to 1 inch around Shasta and the Trinity Alps. Additional rainfall extended southeast to the Lake Tahoe areas with totals around a half inch, with even lighter amounts of rain throughout the Central Valley, northern to central and the Monterey Bay region, leaving the Russian River area mostly dry.

Precipitation totals over those regions in the past week ranged from hundredths to a few tenths of an inch in the Central Valley Monterey Bay and foothills of the Sierra to over 0.5 inches in the Northern and Central Sierras, with the mountain crest line collecting slightly higher amounts to about 0.75 inches.

Below are precipitation totals (in inches) from Monday, March 9, through Monday, March 16, and year-to-date rainfall based on the water year cycle (October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015).

- **Bakersfield:** 0.00" (4.53")
- **Folsom Dam:** 0.04" (23.04")
- **Fresno:** 0.02" (4.60")
- **Hetch Hetchy:** 0.04" (13.43")
- **Los Angeles:** 0.00" (7.33")
- **Modesto:** 0.19" (9.35")
- **Oroville:** 0.12" (23.04")
- **Pacific House:** 0.08" (23.24")
- **Redding:** 0.44" (32.24")
- **Riverside:** 0.00" (3.85")
- **Sacramento:** 0.16" (11.76")
- **San Diego:** 0.00" (6.51")
- **Shasta Dam:** 0.52" (46.28")
- **Willits:** 0.00" (34.36")

Precipitation Forecast: A weak system is passing over the north coast into northern Nevada today and tomorrow with precipitation up to a third of an inch in the mountains and hundredths in the lower terrain. High pressure will remain offshore of the State after that, continuing the warming trend with generally dry conditions. Light precipitation is possible in northern Nevada and the southern Sierra extending down to southern California. A weak front may reach the North Coast with widespread light to moderate precipitation possible by the end of next week.

Snow Survey: The Sierra Nevada snowpack continues to decline following another week dominated by above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Despite the small amounts of precipitation that fell over the last week, snowpack levels throughout the Sierras remain at or below the lowest on record dating back to 1950. [Electronic snow sensors](#) indicate the Northern Sierra snowpack is at 14% of average to date, the Central Sierra is at 18% of average to date, and the Southern Sierra is at 19% of average to date.

Statewide snowpack is at 17% of average to date and 16% of the expected April 1 total. The state must gain significant snow over the second half of March to avoid ranking as the lowest early April snowpack in historical records. The next [manual snow survey](#) will be conducted at the beginning of April.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): Since the last report on February 27, Central Valley reservoirs from Shasta and Trinity in the North to Isabella in the South gained just under 235,000 acre-feet in net storage. Shasta Reservoir increased by 47,000 acre-feet, while San Luis Reservoir, an off-stream reservoir for the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, increased its storage by 77,000 acre-feet.

[Reservoir Levels](#) as of March 15 remain low, including: Castaic Lake 29% of capacity (33% of year to date average); Don Pedro 43% of capacity (60% of average); Exchequer 9% of capacity (16% of average); Folsom Lake 59% of capacity (100% of average); Lake Oroville 50% of capacity (69% of average); Lake Perris 37% (44% of average); Millerton Lake 39% of capacity (57% of average); New Melones 25% of capacity (40% of average); Pine Flat 17% of capacity (31% of average); San Luis 68% of capacity (77% of average); Lake Shasta 58% of capacity (76% of average); and Trinity Lake 48% of capacity (62% of average). An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Fire Activity: CAL FIRE has responded to almost 300 wildfires across the state since January 1, burning nearly 3,200 acres in the State Responsibility Area (SRA). This is well above the average of acreage burned for this time of year (average is 787 acres burned). 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 SRA.

Vulnerable Water Systems: The State Water Board [Division of Drinking Water Programs](#) 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, approximately \$13.9 million has been committed 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 to Consider Readopting Three Emergency Regulations in 2015:** The State Water Board is scheduled to consider [readopting three drought emergency regulations](#) regarding Informational Orders at its March 17, 2015 meeting. These regulations include emergency conservation regulations, emergency minimum fish flow regulations for Antelope, Mill, and Deer Creeks (tributary to the Sacramento River), and information order for water rights holders not subject to State's water rights system.

The emergency conservation regulation proposes additional prohibitions and water agency requirements. The other two regulations affecting the State's water rights system contain minor amendments. In addition, Temporary Urgency Change Petitions (TUCPs) are anticipated this week to request additional State and Federal Water Project operational flexibility.

- **Emergency Food Aid and Rental Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 543,900 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 484,400 boxes of food have been picked up by 258,083 households. By this Friday, March 20, an additional 10,800 boxes will be delivered to four 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.

- **CSD provides \$1.2 Million in Water Utility Assistance to Low-Income, Drought Impacted Households:** On Thursday, March 12, the Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) announced an [additional \\$600,000 available](#) for the Drought Water Assistance Program Pilot that provides emergency assistance to drought-impacted residents by covering a portion of the costs of their electricity bills. This brings the total funding for this emergency assistance program to \$1.2 million to assist drought impacted, low-income households with residential water utility bills.

As of Friday, February 20, CSD has completed the \$400,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) drought assistance program, which provides assistance in employment training and placement services to individuals impacted by the drought. This program has been provided in coordination with the California Human Development (CHD), Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC), and Center for Employment Training (CET) and Proteus, which assisted clients in enrolling into employment training programs, receiving employment support services and obtaining employment.

- **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, \$236 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

- **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