



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Tuesday, December 9, 2014

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Recent Precipitation: Recent storms have brought Northern Sierra precipitation above 12.8 inches as of December 8, which represents 110% of normal of year-to-date precipitation in this important region for California's water supply. However, since most of the state's annual rain and snow falls later in the winter, it is premature to draw conclusions on the impact of this winter's rain and snow on the current drought. Recent and upcoming storms will no doubt improve California water conditions, but this precipitation is a small step in the right direction amidst the multi-year drought. California's extreme drought conditions have evolved over several years of rainfall deficits; so it will take several more storms during this wet season to significantly reduce California's drought conditions. It continues to be very important for Californians to conserve water and follow drought-related directives from water agencies.

Below are precipitation totals (in inches) from Monday, December 1 through Monday, December 8:

- **Folsom Dam:** 3.98"
- **Hetch Hetchy:** 1.07"
- **Modesto:** 1.10"
- **Oroville:** 5.08"
- **Redding:** 3.20"
- **Sacramento:** 2.65"
- **Shasta Dam:** 4.36"
- **Willits:** 4.28"

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): Runoff generated from the recent storms has been fairly limited for the four major Sacramento Valley reservoirs: Lake Shasta, Lake Oroville, New Bullards Bar, and Folsom Lake. However, the recent storms have at least put an end to the declining reservoir storage levels. As of December 8, the four Sacramento Valley reservoirs are still far below average to date.

[Reservoir Levels](#) as of December 8 remain low, including: Don Pedro 38%; Exchequer 7%; Folsom Lake 33%; Lake Oroville 29%; Millerton Lake 34%; New Melones 22%; Pine Flat 12%; San Luis 27%; Lake Shasta 25%; and Trinity Lake 25%. An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Prior to the recent storms, [Lake Oroville has dropped to near-record lows](#) set in 1977, despite receiving some runoff from late November rain showers. The reservoir, which has a capacity of 3.5 million acre-feet of water, held just 904,000 acre-feet on Tuesday, November 25, or 26% of capacity. Eight of California's 12 major reservoirs are at or below 30% capacity and are below historic averages.

Fire Activity: CAL FIRE has responded to 5,585 wildfires across the state since January 1, burning 90,755 acres in State Responsibility Areas (SRA). This year's fire activity is above the year-to-date average of 4,571 wildfires on 88,049 acres. CAL FIRE responded to over 90 new wildfires over the past two weeks.

Recent rains and cooler temperatures have lowered the current threat of wildfires across much of the state. While rainfall totals in December are predicted to be higher than normal, it will take more storms with heavy rain to give the larger vegetation the time to absorb the water and raise their fuel moisture levels. Until that happens, even with the recent rain the vegetation can easily dry back out during extended periods of warm weather. As drought conditions continue to have a hold on California, CAL FIRE is maintaining staffing that meets the current threat. CAL FIRE continues to monitor weather conditions closely and has the ability to increase staffing should weather conditions change.

Statewide Open Burn Ban Update: The recent rains and lowered fire threat have allowed CAL FIRE to lift the outdoor burn bans across much of the State. Currently there are 50 counties where CAL FIRE has lifted the burn ban. The [burn ban](#) prohibits certain outdoor burning in the SRA. For those areas where the ban has been lifted, daily fire and weather conditions will dictate whether burning is permissible that day.

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 over \$13.6 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March for this purpose.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **Urban Conservation Rates Decline in October:** According to figures reported by the State Water Board on Tuesday, December 2, year-over-year [monthly residential water savings](#) statewide decreased from 10.3% in September to 6.7% in October. The State Board indicates that even with the decline in conservation, residents used less water in October 2014 compared to September 2014 and the total monthly water use was lower in 2014 than for the same month in 2013.

The State Board will hold a Southern California urban water conservation workshop at the Metropolitan Water District facility in Los Angeles on Wednesday, December 17, to receive input on what further actions, if any, should be taken to improve water conservation in 2015.

- **Decrease in Per Capita Daily Water Use Is Promising:** On Tuesday, December 2, the State Water Board released the residential gallons per-capita per day (GPCD), which estimates daily water use by residential customers for nearly 400 urban water agencies statewide. Data for September showed statewide average use of 123 gallons per person, per day. October data indicates the statewide average dropped to 109 gallons per person, per day, which is most likely due to lower outdoor water use as the state moves into cooler months.
- **Groundwater Resources Depleted by Drought:** On Tuesday, December 2, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released an updated report on [groundwater basins](#) that details groundwater level changes, potential water shortages, land subsidence, farmland following and gaps in groundwater monitoring. Directed by Governor Brown's Proclamation of a State of Emergency in April and following a previous DWR report on groundwater in April, the report shows groundwater basins in most areas of the state at historically low levels.

Drought conditions typically result in an increase in groundwater well activity and pumping to compensate for surface water supply shortages. Collectively, groundwater basins are the state's largest reservoir, 10 times the size of all its surface reservoirs combined. More than 80 percent of Californians rely, in part, on groundwater for their drinking water.

- **Initial State Water Project Allocation for 2015 Set at 10 Percent:** On Monday, December 1, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an [initial allocation of 10 percent](#) for the customers of the State Water Project (SWP) for 2015. Due to improved precipitation forecasts, DWR established the initial allocation for 2015 at 10 percent, up from the five percent SWP allocated for its customers this past year. Depending upon the volume of rain and snow that California receives the initial allocation may be increased. Should dry conditions return, DWR may reallocate SWP supplies to meet critical human health and safety needs.
- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 389,900 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 337,450 boxes of food have been picked up by 180,488 households. By this Friday, December 12, an additional 10,800 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 Thursday, November 27, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$8,251,315 is committed; and \$6,535,215 in funds has been issued to 4,188 applicants in 20 counties.

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has 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 Friday, November 28, CSD has reported that a total of \$380,082 has been issued to 2,068 households.

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, November 28, 123 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 16 clients have obtained employment, and 100 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$253,503 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **SCWC and Clear Channel Outdoor Launch "Lawn Dude" Digital Billboards:** The Southern California Water Committee (SCWC), working in partnership with Clear Channel Outdoor (CCO), has launched the second phase of its [Lawn Dude](#) billboard campaign with a digital messaging effort that advocates drought tolerant landscaping.

The latest phase advocates for drought tolerant landscaping and features new art on digital billboards donated by CCO in the Los Angeles region. The new artwork features "Lawn Dude" stripped of all his grass and covered in succulents which promote turf removal and drought tolerant landscaping initiatives.

- **Water Saving Tips Promoted Across the State:** The state's newly improved water conservation website, SaveOurWater.com, is promoting the "Don't Waste Summer" campaign. This campaign provides a new conservation tip each day for the 100 days of summer. Supporters can sign up for daily email tips, and share Save Our Water's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds for this public awareness campaign.
- **Water Leaders Gather for ACWA Fall Conference & Exhibition in San Diego:** The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) held a conference & exhibition in San Diego on Wednesday, December 3. The 3-day conference & exhibition focused on the theme "Moment of Truth: One State, One Water Future," which gathered over 1,600 water leaders together to participate in a wide range of discussions in California water, which included water conservation, water storage, groundwater management and the water-energy nexus.
- **Drought Response Funding:** The \$687 million in state drought funding that was appropriated in March through emergency legislation continues to advance toward meeting critical needs. Nearly \$625 million of the emergency funds appropriated in March came from sources dedicated to capital improvements to water systems. Since March, state agencies have 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 next-year. State government has also appropriated tens of millions in funding to CAL FIRE over its typical budget to enable staffing-up fire crews much earlier this fire season.
- **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 61 local Emergency Proclamations have been received to date from city, county, and tribal governments, as well as special districts:
 - **26 Counties:** Glenn, Inyo, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Napa, 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).

- **13 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), and Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Los Angeles 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 30 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, Napa, 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