



News for Immediate Release

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DWR Announces Snow Survey Results

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources' (DWR) second snow survey of the winter season indicates snow water content is 61 percent of normal for the date, statewide.

“The low precipitation in January and snowpack results from today’s survey indicate California is heading for a third dry year,” said DWR Director Lester Snow. “We may be at the start of the worst California drought in modern history. It’s imperative for Californians to conserve water immediately at home and in their businesses.”

Manual survey results were taken at four locations near Lake Tahoe, and combined with electronic readings, indicate a statewide snowpack water content of 61 percent (49 percent in the Northern Sierra, 63 percent in the Central Sierra, and 68 percent in the Southern Sierra.) Last year at this time, snowpack was 111 percent of normal, but the driest spring on record followed resulting in a second consecutive dry water year. Daily electronic readings may be accessed at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snowsurvey_sno/DLYSWEQ

Local water agencies are updating Urban Water Management Plans, and DWR is facilitating what water transfers may be available through its Drought Water Bank program. Many providers have already enacted mandatory or voluntary water rationing and it is likely more agencies will require some form of rationing if dry conditions persist.

Storage in California’s major reservoirs is low. Lake Oroville, the principal storage reservoir for the State Water Project (SWP), is at 28 percent of capacity, and 43 percent of average storage for this time of year. With only two months left in what is normally the wettest part of the season, it is growing increasingly unlikely that enough precipitation will fall to end the drought.

Continuing dry conditions and regulatory agency restrictions on Delta water exports are limiting water deliveries to farms and urban areas. A Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect salmon and steelhead is expected in March and is the latest action that may further reduce pumping capability. DWR’s early estimate is that it will

only be able to deliver 15 percent of requested State Water Project water this year to the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

Gov. Schwarzenegger has outlined steps to safeguard the state's water supply through a comprehensive plan that includes water conservation, more surface and groundwater storage, new investments in the state's aging water infrastructure, and improved water conveyance to protect the environment and provide a reliable water supply. Today's drought and regulatory restrictions underscore the need to take action to safeguard tomorrow's water supply.

Here are results from today's manual survey at Phillips Station and other sites near Lake Tahoe:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	40 inches	13 inches	62
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	34.6 inches	13.1 inches	68
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	45.4 inches	15.5 inches	79
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	37.4 inches	13.2 inches	69

Importance of Snow Surveying

Snow water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with needed data.

Monitoring is coordinated by the Department of Water Resources as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses in California's mountains to gauge the amount of water in the snowpack. The following websites offer an overview of important snow survey information.

Snowpack Site

http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snowsurvey_sno/DLYSWEQ

Reservoir Storage Site

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reservoirs/RES>

Snow Survey Illustrated

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/hwy50/>