

STATE WATER CONTRACTORS

Press Release



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State Water Project Projected Allocation is Zero Percent for First Time in California History

Water Agencies Facing “Worst-Ever Water Supply Outlook”

Sacramento, CA – The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) [announced today](#) that for the first time in the history of the State Water Project (SWP), water agencies should expect a zero percent allocation of SWP water supplies due to record dry conditions and low storage levels. While the forecast may change, water agencies throughout the state are preparing for the possibility of getting no water from a critical source and what DWR has called the “worst-ever water supply outlook.” Twenty-five million people and 750,000 acres of farmland depend on the SWP for a significant portion of their water supplies.

“For the first time in history, we are facing the real possibility of getting no water from the State Water Project—it’s a very serious situation,” said Terry Erlewine, general manager of the State Water Contractors. “Each of our water agencies will handle the drought differently depending on their circumstances, but across the board water districts are ramping up conservation and efficiency efforts to go beyond the conservation achievements already made.”

This unprecedented allocation comes on the heels of the DWR’s most recent snow survey finding that snowpack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains has just 12 percent of the average water content for this time of year. The findings were expected to be grim, given the state’s record dry conditions. Governor Jerry Brown earlier this month issued an emergency drought declaration and water levels in nearly all of the state’s major reservoirs are well below [historical averages](#). San Luis Reservoir, for example, is at just 31 percent of capacity.

The drought conditions have prompted water agencies, cities and counties from the Bay Area to the Coachella Valley to take additional steps to mitigate against possible impacts, not just in their own regions but throughout the state. It is unknown when the dry conditions will break and statewide efforts are necessary to address what is a very serious statewide problem. Many agencies’ efforts are already being employed, and many others are outlining specific plans, including:

- Supporting Governor Brown’s call to reduce water use by 20 percent
- Exploring options for transferring water to address challenges in other parts of the state
- Increasing funding for water conservation programs and public outreach efforts
- Activating water shortage contingency plans
- Hosting free conservation workshops for the public

- Offering expanded rebate programs
- Sending information about the drought and water saving tips directly to customers

Despite conservation and efficiency efforts, California should still be prepared for the impacts of a zero percent allocation and the ongoing drought. While some areas will be hit harder than others, farming regions will likely face some of the more significant impacts as they are forced to fallow otherwise productive farmland. Water agencies normally receiving SWP supplies will also have less money to respond to the drought because they must still pay the state for the water system even though they will not receive any water from it.

The drought also underscores the need to invest in a statewide water system that allows us to capture and save more water when it's abundant.

"The last time storms came through was more than a year ago, and we had to let that water go," added Erlewine. "It's more important now than ever to build a modern water system so that we don't continually miss out on opportunities to capture extra water."

The few times storms came through last year, regulatory restrictions required the excess water to flow out to the San Francisco Bay, rather than into storage facilities, resulting in 800,000 acre feet of water being lost – water that could have served more than four million people for a year. The Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is being developed to modernize the state's water delivery system using today's technology to create a system with the flexibility to capture excess water during wet times and in turn ensure a reliable system is in place year round. The BDCP would also protect these water supplies from the threat of earthquakes or other natural disasters by moving them underneath the fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, rather than through the system of 100 year old dirt levees. The BDCP aims to ensure that Californians have a safe, adequate water supply, while also protecting the Delta environment.

For more information on the SWP water allocation and the drought, please visit www.water.ca.gov.

To learn more about conservation programs and ideas, please visit www.saveourh2o.org.

For more information about the BDCP, please visit www.baydeltaconservationplan.com.

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The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 25 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural lands. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit www.swc.org.