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For Immediate Release

State Water Project Allocation Increases to 15 Percent

BAKERSFIELD – Today, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that the State Water Project (SWP) water allocation will increase from 10 to 15 percent of contracted amounts due to recent northern California storms and related precipitation. The SWP provides water to more than 25 million residents and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural land throughout California.

This increase represents an important and welcome step in the right direction. “We appreciate the efforts by the California Department of Water Resources to quickly act to increase the SWP allocation. This is an important first step toward increasing water supplies for Kern County and all of California,” said Kern County Water Agency (Agency) Board of Directors President Ted Page.

The Agency and its participant local water districts are contractually obligated to make the full payment for their SWP allocation, whether they receive the water or not. “Although this is very welcome news, it is hard to ignore the fact that we are only receiving a portion of the water we are paying for,” Page said. “Kern County’s water reserves have been severely diminished due to dry conditions and regulatory restrictions imposed on water flowing through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to areas throughout California. We are hopeful the allocations will continue to improve during the remainder of the water year,” added Page.

To offset water shortages, Kern County people, farms and businesses have relied on water previously stored in the ground to make up for low SWP allocations. This practice, called groundwater banking, allows water users to recharge water into the groundwater basin during wet years for use during dry years.

“Kern County’s groundwater banking facilities are arguably the most advanced in the nation, which has lessened the massive impact of limited water supplies in recent years,” said Page. “Kern County has also been experiencing some much needed rain, but it is important to remember that we still need a lot more storms before we’re out of this drought. So, in the near-term, we will continue implementing creative water management strategies to help deal with the shortage.”

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The Kern County Water Agency (Agency) was created in 1961 by a special act of the State Legislature and serves as the local contracting entity for the State Water Project. The Agency, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2011, participates in a wide scope of management activities, including water quality, flood control and groundwater operations to preserve and enhance Kern County’s water supply—the main ingredient for the well-being of an economy.