



NEWS RELEASE

September 30, 2009

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CALIFORNIA ENDS THIRD DRY YEAR *Public Called On To Continue Conserving Water*

Sacramento – California embarks on a new water year tomorrow (October 1) with concerns about a fourth consecutive year of drought, serious water shortages and uncertain weather ahead. The 2009-10 water year runs from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010.

As of September 1, statewide precipitation was at 85 percent for the year. Water Year 2007-08 was even drier, resulting in only 63 percent of average annual precipitation. Water Year 2008-09 was slightly better, bringing 72 percent of average annual precipitation.

“After three years of dry weather, we are preparing for the likelihood that we are entering a fourth year of drought in 2010,” said California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Director Lester Snow. “Regardless of the weather outcome, it is critical that Californians continue to conserve as much water as we can to help stretch our water supply.”

Throughout the year, the DWR hydrologists and meteorologists measure precipitation (the combination of rain and snow) and runoff in the Northern Sierra and other key watersheds and produce runoff forecasts. This information helps state and local water agencies manage the water supply needed for local communities, agriculture, the environment and other needs of the state.

As a result of Gov. Schwarzenegger’s emergency drought declaration in February 2009, the state teamed up with the Association of California Water Agencies in April to create the “Save Our Water” conservation education program. Patterned after the successful “Flex Your Power”

public education program, the program aims to provide ongoing education for Californians about the state's water challenges and encourage greater water conservation as an ongoing practice.

“Local water agencies have done a stellar job of reducing water use,” said Timothy Quinn, ACWA’s executive director. “But our state is dealing with long-term water problems. As state leaders work together on a comprehensive solution, Californians need to turn off their taps as much as possible to avoid experiencing major water shortages in the future.”

Another year of drought will have severe impacts on both the economy and the environment. However, even when normal rainfall returns, the state will continue to experience water supply challenges due to several factors, including a growing population, measures to protect fish species, an aging water storage and delivery infrastructure system, and climate change.

DETAILS, FACTS AND FIGURES

- Statewide reservoir storage as of today is at 70 percent of average for this time of year, with individual key reservoirs much lower. Eight of the state’s 12 major reservoirs are at 50 percent of capacity or below. San Luis Reservoir is in the worst shape, at just 21 percent of capacity.
- In comparison, the state ended the 2005-06 water year with 123 percent of average reservoir storage.
- Runoff was also down this year. As of September 1, statewide runoff was at 65 percent of average with both the Sacramento and San Joaquin River regions being classified as “dry,” the second driest of five classification levels.
- UC Davis researchers are now revising their forecasts of 2009 water shortage impacts and DWR economists are surveying agricultural drought impacts around the state. This information should be released in October.
- More drought information can be found on the Department of Water Resources’ drought Web site, www.water.ca.gov/drought.
- There are 67 local water agencies that have mandated water conservation and 56 agencies that are urging voluntary conservation. More information can be found at ACWA’s drought Web site, www.acwa.com/issues/cadrought.
- State drought emergencies have been declared in Fresno, Mendocino, Humboldt and Kings counties. Last week, the federal government declared drought emergencies in 50 of California’s 58 counties.
- The state continues to work on a draft five-year Statewide Drought Contingency Plan that will help plan for and respond to a long-term drought. The plan will be finalized by February 2010.
- California water and agricultural officials are working closely with officials in Australia on drought and water management issues. Australia is experiencing its eighth year of drought and California officials are studying that country’s response to long-term drought to help prepare for the worst in California.

For more information about the “Save Our Water” program and ways to conserve water, visit www.saveourh2o.org or follow the program on Facebook or Twitter. For more information about ACWA, visit www.acwa.com. To learn more about the Department of Water Resources, visit www.water.ca.gov.

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