



News for Immediate Release

February 26, 2010

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Department of Water Resources Water Delivery Projection Remains Low

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today increased anticipated 2010 State Water Project deliveries to California's water contractors from five to 15 percent of requests. If this amount remains unchanged by the final allocation in late spring this will be the lowest allocation percentage in the project's history.

"Despite a relatively wet winter our reservoir storage levels remain low," said DWR Director Mark Cowin. "After three years of drought conditions and a number of mandated pumping restrictions even a wet year won't get us out of the woods. We need increased conservation, a more reliable water delivery system and a comprehensive solution for California's water crisis."

Lake Oroville is at only 54% of its average storage level for this time of year. And while San Luis Reservoir is at 80% of normal for this time of year, the vast majority of that supply is unavailable for this year's allocation. Most of the supply in San Luis is earmarked for individual water contractors who are trying to stretch these supplies carried over from previous years. So supplies in two key State Water Project reservoirs are well below where DWR would like them to be.

Another hydrologic condition affecting the allocation amount is the condition of the watershed. After three years of drought, the watershed is dry and will likely absorb more of the snowpack. Therefore, less runoff from the snowpack is expected.

However, the allocation at this time of year is a conservative estimate. As winter progresses and the Department has a clearer picture of water conditions, the allocation can be increased. There is a 90 percent chance that the allocation will

improve by late spring. If average precipitation continues, the final allocation will likely be in the range of 35-45 percent of requested amounts. That spread is based on how the biological opinions to protect fish species are applied and how much flexibility the Department has to pump water.

In 2009, the State Water Project delivered 40 percent of customer requests. The federal Central Valley Project was only able to deliver 10 percent of contracted amounts to some agricultural areas in the San Joaquin Valley.

The reduced deliveries were due both to dry weather and fishery agency restrictions on pumping to protect fish species; principally Delta smelt, salmon, and longfin smelt.

The historical average of final State Water Project allocations over the past 10 years has been 68 percent of contractors' requests.

Electronic readings indicate that statewide, water content in the Sierra snowpack currently is 103 percent of normal for the date. The crucial reading will be at the beginning of April, when snowpack water content normally is at its peak before the spring melt into rivers and reservoirs.

Governor Schwarzenegger has championed a comprehensive water plan that he recently signed into law. The package would safeguard the state's water supply through conservation, more surface and groundwater storage, new investments in the state's aging water infrastructure and an improved water conveyance system to protect the environment and provide a reliable water supply.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

Contact the [DWR Public Affairs Office](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.