



A SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF VARIOUS WATER ISSUES IN CALIFORNIA AND THE SIERRA.

CALIFORNIA WATER UPDATE

DRY WINTER AND AN EVEN DRIER YEAR LEADING TO DROUGHT DECLARATION?

JANUARY 2014
VOLUME 1

SAVE THE DATE!

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP MEETING!

TUESDAY JANUARY 28TH
9AM - 1PM

AT THE SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY OFFICE: 11521 BLOCKER DRIVE, STE. 205 AUBURN, CA 95603

TOPICS WILL INCLUDE: SWWG GOVERNANCE, 2014 SWWG SUMMIT IN JUNE, DWR GRANT AND OTHER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SWWG, OTHER PLANS FOR 2014.

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP 2014 SUMMIT

JUNE 12-13, 2014 IN TAHOE

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SUMMIT

CLICK HERE

WATER QUOTE:

"WHEN THE WELL IS DRY, WE KNOW THE WORTH OF WATER."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP (SWWG) IS CURRENTLY TRACKING THE DROUGHT AND PROVIDING UP TO DATE INFORMATION RELEVANT TO THE SIERRA

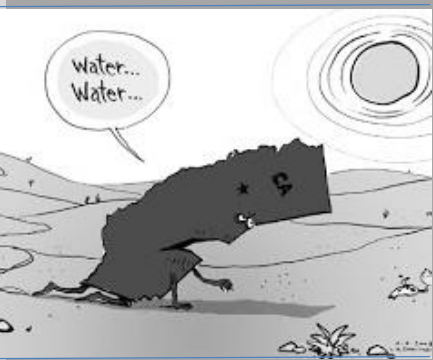
It does not take a scientist to look at California and determine that the state is in the middle of what may become the worst drought since the 1970's. Stories are increasingly published on the effects of the dry weather and what it means for the economy and people of California. 2013 the driest year in the recorded history of California; and a look at some statistics explains what all the publicity is about.

- 2013:** The driest year in California history.
- 9%:** The amount of land in California that is experiencing moderate drought or worse.
- 20%:** The percent of average snowfall the Sierra has for this time of year.
- 3.38 INCHES:** the amount of Precipitation at San Francisco International Airport in 2013. The average is 20.65 inches.
- 36%:** The level of capacity of the two main reservoirs (Shasta and Oroville) that supply California's two main canal systems.
- 5%:** The percent of normal canal water allocation the Bureau of Reclamation expects to allocate to farmers if current conditions do not improve.
- 37%:** The percent of Shasta Lake's (4.5 million acre-foot) capacity which was full on Dec. 31 2013.
- 56 INCHES:** The amount of snow as of Dec. 30, 2013 at the 8,200-foot elevation of the Squaw Valley Ski Resort, compared with 250 inches at the same time in 2012.
- 1,000 ACRES:** The number of forest acres which burned as a result of 2 fires in the first week of January.

The current conditions in California have led Governor Jerry Brown to assemble a "Drought Task Force." The task force, assembled on December 17th, 2013, is an interagency group made up of the Office of Emergency Services, the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Food and Agriculture, and the State Water Resources Control Board. The purpose of the task force is to; "meet weekly and review expected allocations, our state of preparedness, and



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whether conditions warrant the declaration of a statewide emergency drought disaster.” As of January 8th, despite many recommendations to declare a statewide emergency drought disaster, Governor Brown has decided to postpone declaration. Reasoning for the delay was a need to outline what a declaration would mean in terms of mandates and the allocation of water resources. There are indications that Brown may declare a statewide drought emergency after the February 1st snow survey.

The delay by the state has not stopped some counties from declaring a drought emergency themselves. On January 8, 2014, Mendocino County did exactly that; the declaration opens the door for implementing mandatory water-saving measures and assistance from the state and it is expected that other counties will soon follow suit with their own water-saving programs and measures.

The current drought conditions have the potential to negatively impact the Sierra in many ways. The lack of this winter’s snow may be negatively affecting the economy already, with some reductions in employees and customers at various resorts across the Sierra. Although many people are still flocking to the mountains to ski the manmade snow produced by resorts like Heavenly in South Lake Tahoe. If the dry conditions persist, the ski industry will no doubt take a hit.

California is coming out of a very rough fire season that saw the biggest single wildfire in California history. There are concerns that a small snowpack may slingshot the Sierra right into another harsh season of fires. It is safe to say that a small snowpack in the Sierra would be terrible for the forests, the wildlife, and most residents of California whose water comes from an already parched Sierra.

Most Californians are used to living in a climate that experiences occasional drought. Many residents and communities across the Sierra and the state have found ways to conserve water during times of drought. There is no way for us to control the weather and make it snow or rain, but with state water conservation mandates likely heading our way, it is good to remember that it is never too early to try and conserve the liquid gold that is water.

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CALIFORNIA WATER PLAN: CURRENT STATUS

SWWG ARE ON MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE RELEVANT REGIONAL DESIGN AND STAKEHOLDER TEAMS AND HAVE BEEN SUBMITTING IN-PERSON AND ELECTRONIC COMMENTS AND EDITS REGARDING SIERRA ISSUES FOR MORE THAN A YEAR.

THE five-year California Water Plan was most recently published in 2009 by the Department of Water Resources. The purpose of the plan is to “provide a collaborative planning framework for elected officials, agencies, tribes, water and resource managers, businesses, academia, stakeholder, and the public to develop findings and recommendations and make informed decisions for California’s



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ABOUT SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP

In 2009, a small group of individuals representing foothill water agencies and Sierra environmental groups met to discuss inter-regional cooperation amongst the existing and newly forming Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP) groups in the Sierra. Other regional organization such as the Mountain Counties Water Resource Association, Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba (CABY) region, and Sierra Nevada Conservancy were all discussed as optional venues to serve this need. However, no organization met all the criteria of: multi-stakeholder representation, wide geographic scope, unbiased reputation, flexible, and with the ability to promote on behalf of the Sierra. The Sierra Water Workgroup (SWWG) continued to meet over the last two years, and decided to formalize the membership through a charter in 2011.

SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP WEBSITE:
[CLICK HERE](#)

water future (California Water Plan).” The plan is often used by state decision-makers.

The Plan includes information on the current status of Sierra watersheds and the potential effects of climate change in the coming years. An important aspect of the Plan is the regional reports. The North and South Lahontan regions cover most of the eastern Sierra, while a majority of the western slope is included in the Sacramento and San Joaquin regions. Additionally, there is a “Mountain Counties” overlay which includes the western slope of the Sierra, but leaves out most of the eastern and northern Sierra. The regional plans include detailed descriptions of everything that has to do with water in the region, including Integrated Regional Water Management Coordination and Planning. The regional reports and overlay outline strategies that may prove useful in the future of Sierra water conservation.

The Plan is supposed to be updated every 5 years so in 2013 a new Public Review Draft was released to the public for comment. Comments were accepted until December 9th, 2013. The comments are currently being reviewed and taken into consideration. The response to public comments and final draft are expected to be released by March 2014.

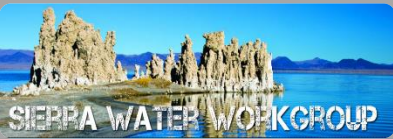
More information about the California Water Plan can be found here:
<http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/>

CALIFORNIA WATER ACTION PLAN: CURRENT STATUS

SWWG ATTENDED THE SIERRA “WATER CONVERSATION” HOSTED BY THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH (OPR) ON NOVEMBER 4, 2013 AND COMMENTED HEAVILY ON THE NEED TO IDENTIFY THE SIERRA AS THE MAJORITY SOURCE OF CALIFORNIA’S WATER, NOT THE DELTA AND COLORADO RIVER, WHICH ARE CURRENTLY LISTED AS THE MAJOR “SOURCES”, BEFORE THE SIERRA.

GOVERNOR Brown directed The California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Food and Agriculture to collaborate to come up with a document that identified the key actions for the next five years that would help provide a foundation for sustainable management of California’s water resources. The Plan focuses on the water supply, ecosystem restoration and water infrastructure. The 17-page document covers familiar water policy goals with few details of how they will be achieved and is broader than the extensive California Water Plan. Although the plan does lay out several goals which will benefit the state of water in California, including:

- Make water conservation a "way of life" in California.
- Make regions more self-reliant and reduce their need for imported water.



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[CLICK HERE TO CONTACT SIERRA WATER WORKGROUP](#)

RECENT WATER NEWS

[STATE WATER OFFICIALS CONSIDERING DROUGHT DECLARATION](#)

[HOW WILL THE GOLDEN STATE FACE AN EPIC DROUGHT?](#)

[GOVERNOR'S PLAN AND STATE WATER BOARD PLAN AT ODDS](#)

[TWO YEARS OF DRIEST SNOWPACK IN THE STATE](#)

[SNOW SURVEYS SHOW GRIM PICTURE](#)

[WATER BONDS SHRIVEL AS CALIFORNIA SEES DRIEST YEAR](#)

- Improve flood protection and provide safe drinking water for all communities.
- Restore important ecosystems.

The Plan only mentions the Sierra a few times; including a plan to restore key mountain meadows in the Sierra, which could increase groundwater storage. Beyond the meadow project, the Sierra is not an area of focus. In fact, the Sierra is only mentioned four times compared to the Delta's 69 mentions and is listed as a "source" of California's water after the Delta. The plan also acknowledges climate change and how it threatens the Sierra snowpack. The proposed solutions for the reduction in Sierra snowpack was an increase in ground and surface water storage, although no actual plan was outlined.

The Plan was released for comment on September 27th, 2013 and was submitted to Governor Brown on October 2nd, 2013. Public recommendation and comments were accepted until November 30th, 2013. Public comments are now being used to draft a final version of the Plan, which is slated to be released sometime this month.

The draft Plan can be read here:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1UKQI5fdIpvT0IHZU9nTUhMWEk/edit>

Comments/questions should be directed to: WaterAction@water.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA WATER BOND: CURRENT STATUS

SWWG HAS BEEN TRACKING THE NEWS AND ATTENDING HEARINGS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION RELEVANT TO THE SIERRA.

THE California Water Bond was last put in front of California voters in 2009. Since then, voting on the bond has been delayed, in hopes that the bond budget can be trimmed down so that it is more likely to pass. Currently, the \$11 billion dollar bond is scheduled for a vote in November 2014, if an alternative bond is not chosen before then. There are currently two alternatives gaining ground in the state. Senator Lois Wolk's (D) Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality, and Flood Protection Act of 2014 and Senator Rendon's (D) Climate Change Response for Clean and Safe Drinking Water Act of 2014. Both acts would trim the current bond down to a more reasonable \$6.5 billion dollars. Talks have resumed regarding the Water Bond this month so news should be coming out on this soon. The Sierra would benefit most from the retention of two chapters that are included in the \$11 billion dollar water bond; Chapter 5 (Water Quality and Clean and Safe Drinking Water), which would lead to better management of legacy mines in the Sierra and Chapter 6 (Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams, and Watersheds), which would provide millions of dollars in funding toward protection and restoration of the sierra watersheds.

More about those bills can be found here:

Wolk's: http://totalcapitol.com/?bill_id=201320140SB42

Rendons's: http://totalcapitol.com/?bill_id=201320140AB1331

[SEND FEEDBACK ON THIS OUTREACH](#)

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR ANY COMMENTS OR INFORMATION REGARDING WATER IN CALIFORNIA AND THE SIERRA