



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief Monday, November 10, 2014

CURRENT CONDITIONS

El Niño Predictions and Weather Outlook: The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center indicates a [58% probability](#) that El Niño conditions will develop in the Pacific Ocean this winter, which is decreased probability since previous reports. Predictions suggest that any El Niño that develops this winter will be a **weak El Niño event**, which has little historical correlation to increased precipitation. The next precipitation probability forecasts will be updated on Thursday, November 20.

Fire Activity: CAL FIRE has responded to 5,468 wildfires across the state since January 1, burning 92,027 acres in state responsibility areas. This year's fire activity is above the year-to-date average of 4,389 wildfires on 86,671 acres. CAL FIRE responded to over 35 new wildfires last week.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): [Reservoir Levels](#) as of November 6 remain low, including: Don Pedro 37%; Exchequer 9%; Folsom Lake 31%; Lake Oroville 26%; Millerton Lake 35%; New Melones 21%; Pine Flat 12%; San Luis 20%; Lake Shasta 24%; and Trinity Lake 23%. An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Vulnerable Water Systems: The State Water Board's [Drinking Water Program](#) continues to provide technical and funding assistance to several communities facing drinking water shortages, and is monitoring water systems across the state to determine if new support is needed. As of this week, a total to date of over \$13.3 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March for this purpose.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **State Water Board Reports Per Capita Water Use Figures for Urban Agencies:** The State Water Board released last week its [first-ever monthly estimates of daily per capita water](#) use by residential customers for nearly 400 urban agencies. Local water suppliers will be able to utilize this data to track and evaluate their own performance over time.

In addition to the per capita use estimates, the State Water Board also released monthly water conservation figures for September as submitted by water suppliers. The data, which showed that statewide urban water use was down an average of 10.3% in September 2014 as compared to September 2013, suggests that conservation efforts leveled off somewhat in September after three consecutive months of year-over-year improvement.

- **DWR Awards \$14 Million in Drought Relief Funding to Sacramento Region:** On Thursday, November 6, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced \$14 million of the \$200 million in drought relief grant funding has been awarded to a total of [19 projects in the Sacramento region](#). The projects that received funding are intended to help the region reduce dependence, maximize available water supplies, and move water to areas with the greatest need, as well as help drought-affected rural areas which would benefit both agricultural and urban sectors in the area.

- **Water Officials Meet with the State Board of Food and Agriculture:** The [California State Board of Food and Agriculture](#) met with both state and federal officials on Tuesday, November 4, to discuss drought planning and implementation of the California Water Action Plan. With weather forecasts indicating another dry year, water officials provided an overview of the potential drought impacts on groundwater, agriculture, food prices, and water systems operations in 2015.
- **DWR Releases Updated California Water Plan:** After five years of preparation and significant input from stakeholders, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released its updated [California Water Plan](#) on Thursday, October 30, which places significant emphasis on integrated regional water management and multi-agency collaboration. The plan outlines the goals state water managers hope to see implemented in California's water system through 2050.

Among its top priorities is the implementation of Governor Brown's five-year California Water Action Plan. The update contains 300 specific actions to support the governor's plan, which include expanding water storage capacity, providing safe drinking water and making conservation a way of life.

- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 341,370 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 292,100 boxes of food have been picked up by 155,160 households. By this Friday, November 14, an additional 10,800 boxes will be delivered to six counties. Local food banks continue to target this food aid to residents most impacted by the drought.

The non-profit group La Cooperativa continues to distribute the \$10 million state-funded emergency rental assistance to impacted families and individuals across counties most impacted by the drought. As of Thursday, October 30, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$7,522,723 is committed; and \$5,694,607 in funds has been issued to 3,833 applicants in 20 counties.

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has created a \$600,000 program to help families pay their water bills. This program targets families through 10 agencies that are experiencing "exceptional" drought. As of Friday, October 31, CSD has reported that a total of \$242,980 has been issued to 1,411 households.

CSD has also implemented a \$400,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) drought assistance program, in coordination with the California Human Development (CHD), Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC), Center for Employment Training (CET) and Proteus, which provides assistance in employment training and placement services to individuals impacted by the drought. As of Friday, October 31, 110 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 10 clients have obtained employment, and 89 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$206,307 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **Draft Environmental Documents Available for Temporary Change in Water Quality Requirements for Groundwater Released into Friant-Kern Canal:** The Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) has released environmental documents for public review that analyze a temporary reduction in water quality requirements for groundwater introduced into the [Friant-](#)

[Kern Canal](#). The proposal would temporarily allow introduction of water from specific, identified wells into the canal. Sampling of the water in the canal would be conducted weekly to ensure nitrate and salinity levels do not exceed certain limits. The proposed action would continue through Sunday, February 28, 2016, or as long as the drought continues.

- **Reclamation Releases Draft Environmental Documents for the WaterWise Landscape Rebate Program:** The Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) has released for public review a draft Environmental Assessment for the [Santa Barbara County Water Agency WaterWise Landscape Rebate Program](#) which provides over \$396,000 in grant funds through the WaterSMART Program. The program would increase rebates for non-agricultural water users that implement a variety of landscape-related water efficient upgrades. The goal is to reduce the demand for water and energy and improve overall water-use efficiency.
- **Fresno Council Members Outline Plans for Water Conservation Act:** Fresno City Council Members presented the [Water Conservation Act to the Fresno City Council](#) on Thursday, November 6. The act would expand water conservation rebate programs and propose new strategic watering practices in an effort to save water while preserving public areas. Currently, the city offers a variety of water conservation assistance programs including irrigation efficiency audits, water-wise landscape consultations, and water leak monitoring. The city also has restricted outdoor watering to two days per week but is reconsidering its total prohibition on outdoor winter watering from December 1, 2014 to March 1, 2015.
- **Sacramento Region Reports 17% Cut in Water Use:** On Thursday, October 30, the Regional Water Authority (RWA) reported that the [Sacramento region](#) reduced its September water use by 17% over last year's figures. Additionally, RWA well monitoring data shows a 9% reduction in groundwater pumping compared to 2013, despite increased reliance on groundwater resources due to the drought.

Based on an analysis of data provided to the State Water Board, RWA also reported that the Sacramento region's residential gallons per capita per day (GPCD) use came in at 185 gallons for September. This figure represents a significant decrease from the previous Sacramento Region GPCD calculation of 279 gallons by the Department of Water Resources.

- **Sustainability Expert to Share Insight from Australia's Millennium Drought at ACWA Fall Conference:** With California in the midst of one of its worst droughts in years, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) members will hear lessons from the most severe drought in Australia's history from Dr. Stuart White during the opening breakfast keynote address at ACWA's Fall Conference & Exhibition in San Diego on Wednesday, December 3. Dr. White, director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney, will provide [insights from Australia's "Millennium Drought"](#) which spanned from 1995 to 2009 and left agricultural, urban, and rural areas devastated.
- **Water Saving Tips Promoted Across the State:** The state's newly improved water conservation website, [SaveOurWater.com](#), is promoting the "Don't Waste Summer" campaign. This campaign provides a new conservation tip each day for the 100 days of summer. Supporters can sign up for daily email tips, and share Save Our Water's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds for this public awareness campaign.
- **Statewide Open Burn Ban Update:** Due to recent rain in some parts of Northern California, several local burns have been lifted. However, a majority of the state remains under a burn

ban due to drought conditions. The [burn ban](#) prohibits certain outdoor burning in the State Responsibility Area (SRA). For those areas where the ban has been lifted, daily fire and weather conditions will dictate whether burning is permissible that day.

- **Drought Response Funding:** \$687 million in state drought funding that was appropriated in March through emergency legislation continues to advance toward meeting critical needs. Over \$61 million of this funding addresses emergency water needs, food aid and housing assistance to drought-impacted communities. Nearly \$21 million of those funds are already in communities providing assistance and additional funds are being readied as drought impacts worsen. Nearly \$625 million of the emergency funds appropriated in March came from sources dedicated to capital improvements to water systems. Since March, state agencies have expedited grant approvals, getting over \$21 million immediately allocated to grantees that were pre-approved for certain projects. As planned in March, the next \$200 million of expedited capital funding will be awarded this fall, with the remaining \$250 million granted by mid next-year. State government has also appropriated tens of millions in funding to CAL FIRE over its typical budget to enable staffing-up fire crews much earlier this fire season.
- **Governor's Drought Task Force:** The Task Force continues to meet daily to take actions that conserve water and coordinate state response to the drought.

Local Government

- **Local Emergency Proclamations:** A total of 60 local Emergency Proclamations have been received to date from city, county, and tribal governments, as well as special districts:
 - **26 Counties:** Glenn, Inyo, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Napa, Plumas, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Sutter, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yuba, and El Dorado.
 - **13 Cities:** City of Willits (Mendocino County), City of St. Helena (Napa County), City of Calistoga (Napa County), City of American Canyon (Napa County), City of Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County), City of Montague (Siskiyou County), City of Live Oak (Sutter County), City of San Juan Bautista (San Benito County), City of Lodi (San Joaquin County), City of Portola (Plumas County), City of Ripon (San Joaquin County), City of Rio Dell (Humboldt County), and City of West Sacramento (Yolo County).
 - **9 Tribes:** Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt County), Tule River Indian Tribe (Tulare County), Karuk Tribe (Siskiyou/Humboldt Counties), Sherwood Valley Pomo Indian Tribe (Mendocino County), Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (Yolo County), Cortina Indian Rancheria (Colusa County), Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria (Sonoma County), and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians (Madera County).

- **12 Special Districts:** Brooktrails Township (Mendocino County), Lake Don Pedro Community Services District (Stanislaus County), Placer County Water Agency (Placer County), Twain Harte Community Services District (Tuolumne County), Carpinteria Valley Water District (Santa Barbara County), Meiners Oaks Water District (Ventura County), Mariposa Public Utility District (Mariposa County), Goleta Water District (Santa Barbara County), Montecito Water District (Santa Barbara County), Tuolumne Utilities District (Tuolumne County), Mountain House Community Service District (San Joaquin County), Nevada Irrigation District (Nevada County).
- **Water Agency Conservation Efforts:** The Association of California Water Agencies (AWCA) [has identified](#) several hundred local water agencies that have implemented water conservation actions. These water agencies [are responding to the drought](#) by implementing conservation programs, which include voluntary calls for reduced water usage and mandatory restrictions where water shortages are worst.
- **County Drought Taskforces:** A total of 30 counties have established drought task forces to coordinate local drought response. These counties include: Butte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yolo.
- **Tribal Taskforce:** A total of 3 tribes have established drought task forces to coordinate tribal drought response. These tribes include: Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt Counties) and Sherwood Valley Tribe (Mendocino County).

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Drought.CA.Gov](#): California's Drought Information Clearinghouse

State's Water Conservation Campaign, [Save our Water](#)
Local Government, [Drought Clearinghouse and Toolkit](#)

California Department of Food and Agriculture, [Drought information](#)
California Department of Water Resources, [Current Water Conditions](#)
California Data Exchange Center, [Snow Pack/Water Levels](#)

California State Water Resources Control Board, Water Rights, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
California Natural Resources Agency, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
State Water Resources Control Board, Drinking Water, [SWRCB Drinking Water Program](#)
California State Water Project, [Information](#)

[U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for Current Conditions throughout the Region
[U.S. Drought Portal](#), National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)
National Weather Service [Climate Predictor Center](#)

USDA Drought Designations by County [CA County Designations](#)
USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information [USDA Programs](#)
U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance Office: www.sba.gov/disaster