

News for Immediate Release

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DWR Schedules Third Snow Survey of 2010-2011 Season

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct its third manual snow survey of the winter at 11 a.m., Tuesday, March 1, 2011, near Echo Summit on Highway 50, not far from Lake Tahoe.

Currently, electronic readings reflect an increase in snowpack water content for this month. The water content is at 100 percent of the April 1 seasonal average, with an increase of 6 inches from February 1.

After a wet December, conditions were unusually dry during January and the first half of February. Then a week of storms delivered almost normal amounts for the month, offsetting the deficiency of the first two weeks. The statewide precipitation for January was about 30 percent of average.

"We are hopeful March will help improve our water supply, especially with the upcoming weather predictions," said DWR Director Mark Cowin. "With our ever-changing weather conditions, as well as delivery restrictions, conservation will continue to remain as a top priority."

Manual surveys are conducted up and down the state's mountain ranges on or about the first of the winter months. The manual surveys supplement and provide accuracy checks to real-time electronic readings as the snowpack builds, then melts in early spring and summer. April 1 is when snowpack water content normally is at its peak before the spring runoff.

The State Water Project (SWP) delivers water to more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland. The mountain snowpack provides approximately one-third of the water for California's households, industry and farms as it slowly melts into streams and reservoirs.

DWR estimates it will be able to deliver 60 percent of requested SWP water this year. The estimate will be adjusted as hydrologic and regulatory conditions continue to develop.

In 2010, the SWP delivered 50 percent of a requested 4,172,126 acre-feet, up from a record-low initial projection of 5 percent due to lingering effects of the 2007-2009 drought. Deliveries were 60 percent of requests in 2007, 35 percent in 2008, and 40 percent in 2009.

The last 100 percent allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years due to pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish – was in 2006.

Most of the state's major reservoirs are above normal storage levels for the date. Lake Oroville in Butte County, the SWP's principal reservoir, is 106 percent of average for the date (74 percent of capacity). Remaining winter weather will determine whether it fills to its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity. Lake Shasta north of Redding, the federal Central Valley Project's largest reservoir with a capacity of 4.5 million acre-feet, is at 112 percent of average (82 percent of capacity).

The news media is welcome to accompany DWR snow surveyors near Lake Tahoe on March 1. The location is Phillips Station at Highway 50 and Sierra at Tahoe Road, about 90 miles east of Sacramento. Reporters and photographers should bring snowshoes or cross-country skis and park their vehicles along Highway 50.

Results should be available by 1 p.m.

Statewide snowpack readings are available on the Internet at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>

Electronic reservoir level readings may be found at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action>

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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.