



Media Advisory
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DWR Schedules Final Snow Survey of 2008-2009 Season

SACRAMENTO---The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct its final snow survey of the season at 11 a.m., Thursday, April 30, near Lake Tahoe.

Survey Location and Results

Phillips Station at Highway 50 and Sierra at Tahoe Road, about 90 miles east of Sacramento, is the manual survey location. Reporters and photographers should bring snowshoes or cross-country skis and park vehicles along Highway 50.

Snow depth and water content figures should be available by 1 p.m. This survey is the last of five measurements that help water supply planners estimate the amount of spring snowmelt runoff into reservoirs.

Water Supply Threats

Water storage in several major reservoirs remains below average, though late winter storms allowed an April increase in State Water Project (SWP) allocations to 30 percent. However, high temperatures this month have resulted in snowpack melt. Electronic sensors currently measure snow water content at 68 percent of average statewide. Snowpack was at 75 percent of average this time last year. Conservation remains a necessity to maximize use of 2009 water supplies. DWR and the Association of California Water Agencies recently launched the Save Our Water public education program to encourage Californians to save water in and outside their homes and businesses.

On top of dry conditions, regulatory restrictions to protect native fish species have a significant impact on SWP deliveries.

Regardless of Sierra snow conditions, water deliveries through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta will remain in jeopardy because of regulatory factors. DWR continues to work toward a comprehensive solution that must include additional water storage and alternate conveyance. These measures would increase water supply reliability for farms, businesses and homes and benefit fisheries. Alternate conveyance would allow water deliveries, while avoiding pumping hazards to the most vulnerable fish species.

Importance of Snow Surveying

Snow water content is important in determining water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with needed data.

Monitoring is coordinated by DWR as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses in California's mountains to gauge the amount of water in the snowpack.