



# Governor's Drought Task Force



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## **Drought Operations Plan for Coming Dry Months Presented by Federal, State Water Managers** *Framework for Water Delivery Potential, Environmental Protections, and Conserving Water Through 2015*

SACRAMENTO – Managing California's scarce water resources in order to protect the state's economy and environment during one of the worst droughts on record, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) today released a multi-stage [Drought Operations Plan](#) for the rest of 2014. The plan will be implemented in close coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the State Water Resources Control Board.

As California transitions from the rainy season to the coming dry months, this Drought Operations Plan will ensure key water needs are met in the third consecutive year of dry conditions. The operations plan provides a framework for water management decisions through mid-November and will be modified as conditions change and new information is available on the state's water supply. With active, aggressive management of the precious little rain and snow that California has received in the past three months, water managers can now more accurately provide this management framework for water usage.

The overall objectives of the plan are to:

- Closely manage our scarce water resources in the coming dry months and into next year;
- Augment water exports from the Delta for storage and use this spring when possible;
- Ensure adequate water supplies for drinking water, sanitation and firefighting;
- Prevent saltwater from intruding into California's water delivery system;
- Provide sufficient water for fish migration and spawning; and
- Meet water quality needs for water users located in the Delta by keeping saltwater at bay.

"In late January, amidst the driest calendar year on record, we took action to conserve water in upstream reservoirs for beneficial use later in the season," explained DWR Director Mark Cowin. "Since then, we have taken advantage of the rain we've received and through flexible management the water projects have captured storm runoff for use later this year. Now, as we head into the dry season, this plan will carefully guide management of these scarce water resources through the coming dry months and into next year."

"California's scarce water supplies require extraordinary management measures by water project operators, water quality and environmental regulators, the hundreds of local water agencies that supply most Californians with water, and state residents themselves," said David Murillo, the Regional Director of Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region. "Providing a roadmap for 2014's water management gives urban and agricultural water users, and environmental managers the tools they need to protect economic and environmental interests."

Today's plan results from hydrological assessments and weeks of consultation among agencies and with stakeholders from the agricultural and environmental communities. Reclamation and DWR closely consulted with federal and state environmental regulatory agencies in the drafting of this plan and will continue to collaborate on water operations with these agencies to reduce economic impacts and avoid permanent damage to California's natural environment. Since December, state and federal agencies have worked together daily to cope with drought. Together, these agencies have maximized regulatory flexibility to adjust quickly to changes in the weather and environment and bolster water supplies when possible while minimizing impacts to fish and wildlife.

“Using history as a guide, we know that managing our natural environment through a severe drought presents significant peril and risks,” said DFW Director Chuck Bonham. “Only by relying on the best science known and working within existing legal frameworks, can we potentially head off decades of possibly irreversible damage to some of our most iconic fish species.”

Reclamation and DWR's proposed drought operations plan incorporates the following components into operations of the federal Central Valley Project and State Water Project through mid-November 2014:

- Operational plans and forecasts of water deliveries will be updated each month as new hydrologic data become available. This plan is based on hydrology as it was on March 1 and an update of the operations plan based on April 1 data will be provided in the coming weeks.
- Planned actions intended to achieve water flow needs and temperature management are outlined for Northern California reservoir releases and management of the Feather River, Sacramento River, Trinity River, Clear Creek, American River and Stanislaus River.
- Proposed changes to Delta flow criteria for April and May are detailed, including modified Delta Cross Channel operations to protect water quality, increased exports that take advantage of natural or abandoned water flows for the remainder of the spring, and increased flows to protect out-migrating San Joaquin River steelhead and salmon.
- The operations plan considers Emergency Drought Barriers in the Delta and corresponding changes to Delta water quality objectives to keep saltwater from intruding from the San Francisco Bay in order to protect urban and agricultural water users located in the Delta.
- The plan calls for improved emergency fisheries monitoring, updated fish barrier technology, and a science plan to minimize effects to endangered species and improve understanding of biological effects of water operations during the drought.

This plan is considered a flexible framework to guide decision making in the coming months. Reclamation and DWR will update the plan in collaboration with other agencies as current conditions and forecasts change for the Sierra snowpack, reservoir storage, and river flow.

The release of this Drought Operations Plan continues water operations that have been in place since late January to manage drought conditions. In late January, after a record number of rainless days in December and January, state and federal water managers took action, including making regulatory adjustments, to ensure minimal health and human safety water needs are met. As late season storms came in February and March, agencies worked together to capture and store as much storm runoff as possible. Water management actions since January have included multiple petitions to the State Water Resources Control Board, close coordination with environmental agencies, and aggressive actions within the water projects. For more information on the actions taken to manage California's scarce water resources, click [here](#).

Visit [Drought.ca.gov](http://Drought.ca.gov) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought, and for more water conservation ideas, visit [SaveOurH2O.org](http://SaveOurH2O.org).

To read the plan, click [here](#).

For answers to frequently asked questions on the plan, click [here](#).

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