

EMERGENCY DROUGHT RESPONSE

The State of California has experienced three consecutive years of below-average rainfall, and is currently facing severe drought conditions in all of the state's 58 counties. The most recent manual survey of the Sierra Nevada snowpack recorded water content at 18 percent of the normal average. Water levels at the state's largest reservoirs, as well as groundwater aquifers, are also dangerously below average. As a result, drinking water supplies are at risk in some communities, agricultural areas face increased unemployment, dry conditions create higher risks for wildfires, and important environmental habitats have been degraded.

On January 17, 2014, the Governor proclaimed a state of emergency and directed state agencies to take all necessary actions to respond to drought conditions. Since the emergency proclamation was issued in January, the state has initiated the following actions.

TASK FORCE

The Governor has formed an interagency Drought Task Force, led by the Office of Emergency Services and comprised of representatives of the Governor's Cabinet and various department directors. The Task Force enables daily coordination on actions to help minimize harm from the drought. In support of this unified effort, all state agencies that participate in drought response and relief efforts are organized under the Incident Command System and will continue to provide emergency planning, response, and mitigation support. As part of this effort, immediate state support is being provided

to communities running out of water, community outreach is being made to inquire about other upcoming shortages, and the University of California, Davis has been assisting the Task Force in analyzing the economic impacts of the drought.

LEGISLATION

In February, the Legislature enacted urgency legislation to assist drought-impacted communities and improve the management of local water supplies. The legislation provided \$687.4 million to support drought relief, including emergency financial assistance for housing and food for workers directly impacted by the drought, funding to secure emergency drinking water supplies for drought-impacted communities, and funds for projects to help local communities more efficiently capture and manage water.

Highlights of the legislation include:

- \$549 million from the accelerated expenditure of voter-approved bonds, Proposition 84 and Proposition 1E, for the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to provide infrastructure grants for local and regional projects. These projects will increase local water supply reliability by recapturing storm water, expanding the use and distribution of recycled water, enhancing the management and recharge of groundwater storage, and strengthening water conservation efforts.
- \$30 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for the DWR to support state and local water use efficiency projects that will save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- \$25 million General Fund for the Department of Social Services to provide food assistance to those impacted by the drought.
- \$21 million special funds and federal funds for the Department of Housing and Community Development for housing-related assistance for individuals impacted by the drought.
- \$15 million General Fund for the Department of Public Health to address drought-related drinking water emergencies.
- \$13 million General Fund for the California Conservation Corps and local community conservation corps to expand water use efficiency and conservation activities and to reduce fuel loads to prevent catastrophic fires.

- \$10 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for the California Department of Food and Agriculture to invest in irrigation and water pumping systems that reduce water use, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions.

EXPANDED FIRE PROTECTION

The Governor's emergency proclamation directed the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to hire additional seasonal firefighters to suppress wildfires and take other needed actions to address elevated fire risk as a result of drought conditions. Between January 1 and May 1, CAL FIRE has responded to over 1,200 wildfires that have burned nearly 2,700 acres. In an average year over the same period, CAL FIRE would typically respond to fewer than 600 wildfires. CAL FIRE's quarterly seasonal outlook predicts above-normal large-fire potential through August. To combat severe fire conditions this spring and through the summer, CAL FIRE has increased its firefighter surge capacity pool to address high-risk areas. Enhancements to CAL FIRE's firefighting capacity are estimated to cost an additional \$44 million General Fund (Emergency Fund), and total Emergency Fund expenditures including the drought related costs are expected to increase by \$90 million in the current year.

OPERATIONS PLAN

In April, the DWR, in conjunction with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, began implementation of a Drought Operations Plan. The Plan will be implemented in close coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the State Water Resources Control Board.

The overall objectives of the Plan are to:

- Closely manage 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.
- Provide 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.

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- Meet water quality needs for water users located in the Delta by keeping saltwater at bay.

The Drought Operations Plan provides a flexible framework for water management decisions through mid-November 2014 and will be modified as conditions change and new water supply information is available.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

In late April, the Governor issued a continued proclamation of drought emergency to enable regulatory streamlining that will allow several urgent actions to be expedited, including voluntary water transfers, emergency drinking water projects, crucial habitat protection measures, and the purchase of essential equipment for fire suppression and drought response.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED BUDGET ACTIONS

The May Revision includes additional one-time resources for 2014-15 to continue immediate drought-related efforts started in the current year.

Significant Adjustments:

- Department of Forestry and Fire Protection—An increase of \$53.8 million General Fund and \$12.2 million other funds to expand firefighter surge capacity, retain seasonal firefighters beyond the budgeted fire season, provide additional defensible space inspectors, and enhance air attack capabilities to suppress wildfires. Of these additional resources, \$10 million is available to support local grants for fire prevention projects or public education efforts that benefit owners of habitable structures in state responsibility areas.
- Department of Fish and Wildlife—An increase of \$30.3 million General Fund and \$8.5 million other funds to implement enhanced salmon monitoring, restore sensitive habitat, improve water infrastructure for wildlife refuges, expand the fisheries restoration grant program, and remove barriers for fish passage.
- Department of Water Resources—An increase of \$18.1 million General Fund to comprehensively assess current surface and groundwater conditions, expedite water transfers, provide technical guidance to local water agencies, and provide additional public outreach through the Save Our Water campaign.

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- Department of Social Services—An increase of \$5 million General Fund to provide food assistance for communities most impacted by the drought.
- Office of Emergency Services—An increase of \$4.4 million General Fund for the State Operations Center to continue to provide local communities with technical guidance and disaster recovery support related to the drought.
- Department of General Services—An increase of \$5.4 million special funds to implement water efficiency and conservation measures in state-owned facilities.
- State Water Resources Control Board—An increase of \$4.3 million General Fund to continue enforcement of drought-related water rights and water curtailment actions.

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