

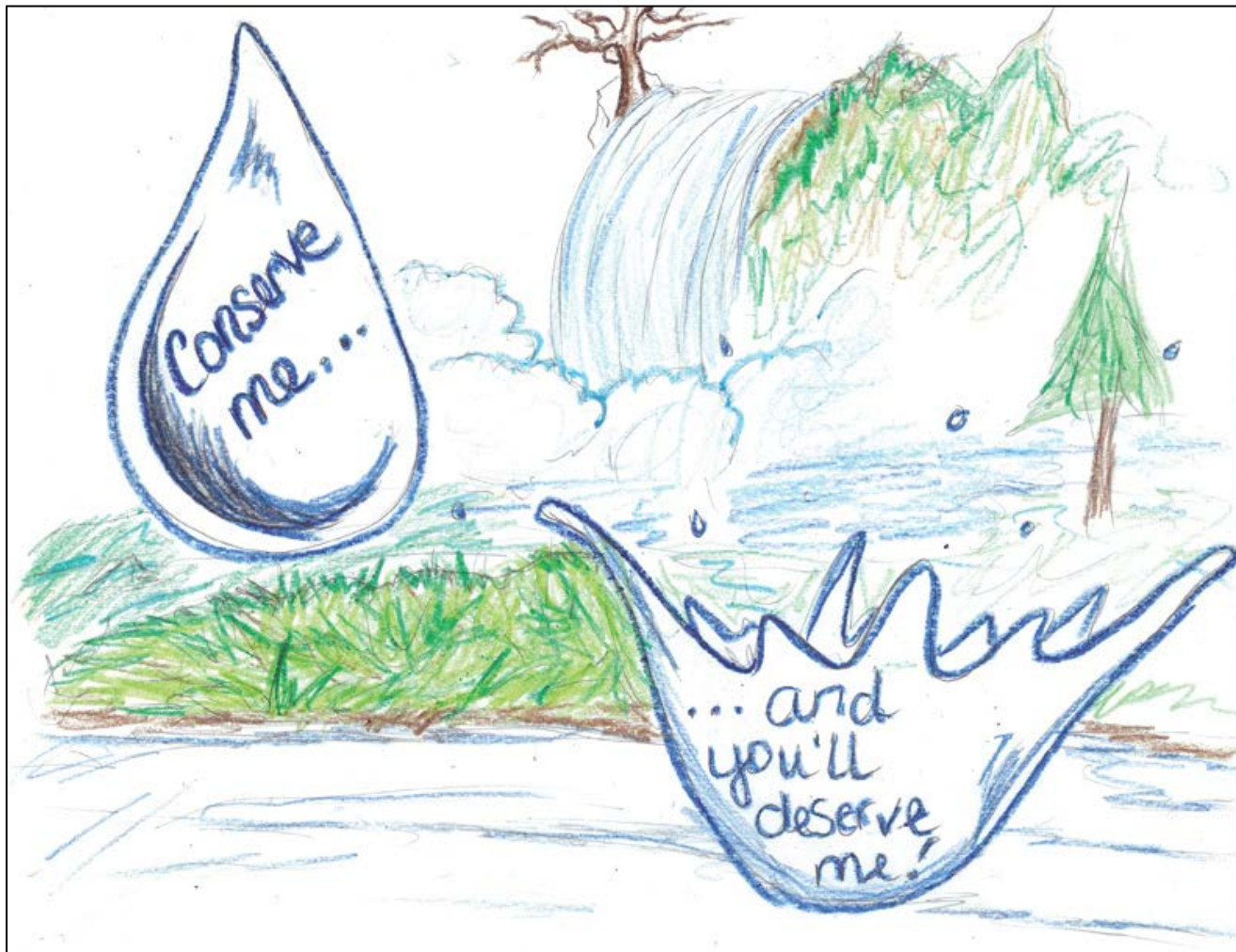


TMWA Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Press Clippings

January 20, 2015 – March 11, 2015



*Desiree Villareal (Lincoln Park Elementary School)
2010 Poster Art Contest - Second Place, Grades 4-6*

forwarded message:

From: Marlene Olsen <marlene@goodstandingoutreach.com>
Date: March 6, 2015 at 4:03:21 PM PST
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Tell the Board Submission

Hi Sandra:

We do get asked that question a lot. TMWA is always investigating new water-saving technologies and conservation programs. Any technology or program like this requires funding. Some communities may have developers pay for programs, and others may increase customer rates to cover program costs. Thus, a funding mechanism would be needed to pay for any program, including grass removal.

Currently the water customers save is retained for drought reserves, flows downstream to other users, or is released to benefit river system health. It does not go to serve new growth. For now, we do not have a funding source and we are sure to address this program in the near future.

Marlene Olsen
GoodStanding Outreach
775-829-2810
775-772-0020-cell

-----Original Message-----

From: Tell the Board [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2015 11:36 AM
To: Marlene Olsen; R Charpentier; K Mazeris
Subject: Tell the Board Submission

Name: Sandra Trounson
Email: [REDACTED]

Comments: I was wondering if TMWA was going to offer a rebate program for turf? I know Southern Nevada does, its sounds like a great program. I would love to give it a go.

Thank you
Sandra Trounson

Washoe County seems to be talking out of both sides of the mouth. With all the recent news about job creation, and efforts to bring new business to the Reno area, I recently received a notification that my water provider is now the Truckee Meadows Water Authority. Previously I paid my water bill to the county via credit card with no fees. The new entity charges \$2.50 for a transaction fee. If I choose to mail it in, the bill goes to Prescott, Arizona. This seems counterproductive to send payments out of state to pay for services provided by our local quasi-governmental authority. I also have to render payment for my false alarm permit to Colorado.

Both of these situations are counterintuitive to the mantra and intent to “employ Nevadans.” I am certain there is a Nevada entity that can provide this service instead of an out-of-state agency. I have also registered this complaint with my county commissioner as a voting member of my district. There should be a review by state and local elected officials regarding outsourcing at the expense of Nevadans.

William Dainty,

Warmer Temps Impact Trees & Grass

By: [Terri Russell - Email](#)

Updated: Mon 9:09 PM, Jan 19, 2015

By: [Terri Russell - Email](#)



MGN images

RENO, NV - Local arborist Dale Carlon is counting trees for the city of Reno. He's about halfway through the roughly 24,000 trees, and lately he's noticed more than just numbers.

"This is a Callery Pear Tree. What's happening right now, and you can see, these buds starting to get fuzzy and preparing to open. It's the fact we've had this long period of warm weather," says Carlon.

Carlon says his recommendation, if warm temperatures are ongoing for more than ten days at a time, and they are, is: it's time to give those trees a little water. He recommends using a soaker hose and watering the circumference of the tree until the ground is saturated.

One woman who just happened to be watering while we were taking video down the street says she hand-waters her trees but only for about ten [minutes](#) per tree. She wanted to do her lawn next, but Carlon says that's not such a good idea.

"It's going to be tolerant to this. Grass is not going to wake up until you start watering it. So as long as we aren't watering it, it's going to be ok," says Carlon.

Carlton says if cold weather does return, the buds will fall off, and the trees will grow them later into the spring. They may go right to leaves, however, and produce no flowers.

Those who are most concerned with these temperatures are people who grow fruit trees for consumption.

In that case, Carlton says there are products on the market that shield the buds from freezing temperatures.

Chances are we are headed for another drought-ridden summer; we just don't know to what extent.

Carlton says with that in mind, once spring gets here and temperatures remain warm, water lawns and other outside plants and trees at about 50%. That will acclimate them to water restrictions that may occur in the summer months

Dry January Sets Water Supply Back

Posted: Jan 20, 2015 4:42 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Tuesday, January 20, 2015 7:42 PM EST *Updated: Jan 20, 2015 4:54 PM PST* <em class="wnDate">Tuesday, January 20, 2015 7:54 PM EST

By Paul Nelson

[Email](#)

[Connect](#)

producers@ktvn.com



Three straight years of drought has taken its toll on western states and it appears that the dry pattern could continue for a fourth. January is usually the wettest month of the year and the region still hasn't gotten any precipitation in 2015.

"This weather's great for golfing but not for building a water supply," Bill Hauck, Senior Hydrologist for TMWA said. "We should be building snowpack, this time of the year, but we're actually losing it in the lower and mid elevations."

Snowpack is only 41-percent of average in the Truckee Basin, and just 28 percent in the Tahoe Basin. That doesn't bode well for Lake Tahoe, where water levels are more than 6 inches below its natural rim.

"We really would need probably two feet increase on Tahoe to have any significant outflow of the lake for the rest of the year," Chad Blanchard, US District Court Water Master said.

Getting levels back to the lake's natural rim would require 70,000 acre feet of water. That is enough to fill Boca Reservoir twice. Boca Reservoir's water is also substantially lower than usual.

The area has had longer droughts in the past, but if this dry pattern continues, it would be the first time in recorded history that we've gone four straight years without one average or wet winter. Without any this month, precipitation will already be 10-inches in the hole.

"February precipitation should be about 5.5 inches," Blanchard said. "We would need about 15 inches, which is 50 percent of an average year, almost."

The good news is the Truckee Meadows Water Authority says there is enough water in the drought reserves to last several years.

"TMWA still goes into this summer with full upstream drought reserves," Hauck said. "So, we want our customers to know that they have nothing to worry about. We've got them covered, regardless of what happens this winter."

Luckily, there is still time to build up the snowpack and it's possible there could be some big storms coming through the spring.

"I would rather get it February, March, April than earlier because it's fresh precipitation," Blanchard said. "The ground is wet. So, when the snow does melt, you're going to get more production or more efficient runoff."

Written by Paul Nelson

State Board Warns of Water Curtailments if Dry Conditions Persist

Submitted by Pamela Martineau on Fri, 01/23/2015 - 1:45pm

in

- [Water Supply Challenges](#)
- [Water News](#)



The State Water Resources Control Board advised water rights holders today that water diversions may be curtailed in critically dry watersheds again this year if conditions do not improve over the coming months.

“If hydrologic conditions do not significantly improve in the next several months, the State Water Board will once again begin notifying water right holders in critically dry watersheds of the requirement to limit or stop diversions of water under their water right, based on their priority,” the notice read.

The notice warned that even senior riparian and pre-1914 water rights holders could receive curtailment notices if the natural flow of water is not sufficient even after more junior water rights holders’ rights have been curtailed.

“We hope that significant precipitation occurs in the next few months and the need to curtail water diversions is unnecessary,” the notice read. “However, this notice is to encourage you to plan ahead. Whether you are a water right holder or a residential or business customer of a water service provider, all of California’s water users are urged to conserve and use water wisely.”

Last year, more than 9,000 water rights holders received curtailment notices due to the state’s ongoing drought. The State Board notice advised water rights holder in water short areas to look into additional conservation measures and alternative water supplies. The notice also advised water rights holders to subscribe to the State board’s electronic updates [here](#).

7:52 am - January 28, 2015 — Updated: 8:08 am - January 28, 2015

Water District approves usage for four medical pot facilities

By Lillian Browne
Pahrump Valley Times
lbrowne@pvtimes.com

Nye County residents are one step closer to having access to medical marijuana following a water district meeting Monday.

Water impact plans were approved for three cultivating facilities and one dispensary in Pahrump by the Nye County Water District. The heavily regulated industry is in its infancy stage in Nye County and officials have taken more stringent precautionary measures than the state.

Not only has Nye County required that each facility obtain a special use permit which requires a transportation and security plan, officials also require a detailed water management plan. Southern Nye County, which is largely populated by Pahrump, obtains water from the Pahrump Basin which is fed by two underground sources; an alluvial fan and basin-fill aquifer.

County consultant Oz Wichman has asserted that though portions of the alluvial fan aquifer level are rising, water levels in certain areas of the basin-fill aquifer are declining. That information, together with recommendations from the state water engineer's office to address issues that could contribute to a future water shortage, have caused officials to explore water usage and water saving measures for residents and businesses alike.

It is not disputed that water rights have been over-allocated by the state. Should all of those rights be exercised, there would without doubt be a diminishment of the underground water source.

A water management plan, or water impact plan, is just one of the monitoring tools the county has implemented to address future issues.

Of the four facilities, two are supplied with water and sewer services from Utilities, Inc. The private for-profit company is mandated to comply with state water and sewer regulations, which govern consumption rates to preserve water supply. The other facilities obtain their water from private wells, fed by the aquifers, for domestic and commercial use.

Though the imposition of additional ratio-relinquishment of water rights for the approval of the water plans were discussed, no action was taken on the suggestion. Policy will be established by the water district governing board for future ratio-relinquishment of water rights for any new business.

Board member Michael Lach insisted that the water district board have the opportunity to make recommendations on water usage plans prior to approval by the board of county commissioners.

Under state law, four different types of medicinal marijuana facilities are permitted in Nevada. They consist of cultivation, processing, laboratory and dispensary facilities. To date, Nye County has not received an application for a laboratory.

The opening of the dispensary hinges on the acquisition of cultivated medicinal marijuana and the issuance of final state approval which could be just a few short months away.

All Nye County medicinal marijuana related facilities are required by the Board of County Commissioners to comply with similar levels of reporting and accountability as gaming and liquor facilities

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Sacramento Region Reduces Water Use by Nearly 20% in 2014

Submitted by Pamela Martineau on Tue, 01/27/2015 - 11:07am

in

- [Water Supply Challenges](#)
- [All](#)
- [Water Supply Challenges](#)
- [Water News](#)



The Sacramento region as a whole answered Gov. Jerry Brown's call for significant water conservation last year and reduced its water usage by nearly 20% in 2014 compared with its 2013 usage, according to an analysis released by the Regional Water Authority today.

The 20% conservation rate aligns with Gov. Jerry Brown's call last year for Californians to reduce water usage by 20%. The RWA represents water providers in Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties. The findings come from a review of water use data submitted to RWA and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Overall, RWA customers cut water use by 19.3% last year, saving 30 billion gallons of water compared to 2013. When considering water use reductions since February 2014, the first full month following the declaration of a drought emergency, the reduction was nearly 21 percent.

"The Sacramento region did an outstanding job at meeting the call to conserve 20% issued by local water providers and the Governor in 2014," said RWA Water Efficiency Program Manager Amy Talbot.

Especially significant were water reductions in July and August when summer temperatures and water use typically peak.

"Instead of ramping up landscape watering in response to the hot weather, customers cut water consumption by 22% in both July and August, saving significant amounts of water overall," Talbot said.

"Certainly, there is much more that can and should be done to conserve water, as California faces a fourth dry year and the snowpack remains well below normal. But our residents deserve kudos for the extraordinary steps they are taking to cut back," Talbot added.

RWA and local water providers are urging residents to keep up the great work by:

- **Letting Mother Nature do the watering:** Keep sprinklers off until spring, watering by hand only if the weather stays dry for several weeks in a row.
- **Limiting shower time:** Less time in the shower can pay off with big savings, even if you already have a water-efficient showerhead. Keeping showers to five minutes (instead of 10) will save 12.5 gallons every time.
- **Washing only full loads of laundry:** Waiting until the washer is full can save 15 to 45 gallons per load, depending upon the efficiency of your machine. Other water-wise laundry tips: Wash clothes in cold water (which will also retain their color) to save energy, select the minimum amount of water required per load (for machines with a variable water volume setting) and use the shortest wash cycle for lightly soiled clothes.
- **Turning off the faucet when brushing teeth or shaving:** Every minute the bathroom faucet runs sends 2 gallons of water down the drain. Multiply that by the number of times you brush or shave a day, and all that water adds up. Instead of running a steady stream, use short bursts of water to rinse to save at least 10 gallons a day.

Additional water-saving tips plus information about rebates and free services available to help residents use less water is available at www.BeWaterSmart.info and at ACWA's and the Department of Water Resources' site www.saveourwater.com.

Meager snowpack suggests longer drought



[Jeff DeLong](#), RGJ 8:49 a.m. PST February 2, 2015



Buy Photo

Jeff Anderson, hydrologist and snow surveyor for the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation, weighs a core sample of snow to determine the water content at a snow survey site on the Mt Rose summit on Friday. (Photo: Andy Barron/RGJ) Buy Photo

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Jeff Anderson took measure Friday of a meager mountain snowpack that points to an increasing likelihood the Reno-Tahoe area faces a fourth year of drought.

The hydrologist and snow surveyor with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service hiked into the woods near Mount Rose Summit to assess the snowpack at the end of what is normally the most important month when it comes to building the Sierra snowpack.

To no one's surprise, the news is not good.

Scientists measured the depth of water content in the Sierra on Friday. They didn't find a lot. Jeff DeLong/RGJ

At the close of a January that was almost completely dry, snow at the Mount Rose survey site was less than 3 feet deep, carrying a water content of 8.5 inches. Normally this time of year, snow in the area is about 6 feet deep with 22 inches of water.

At 39 percent of normal, that high-elevation location is looking better than many places. The overall snowpack for the Truckee River Basin Friday was 33 percent of normal, while the Lake Tahoe Basin's snowpack was 21 percent.

At another snow survey site near Lake Tahoe's Camp Richardson that Anderson visited Tuesday, there was no snow. That's the first time that's ever been the case at that location at the end of January since records started in 1951, Anderson said.

"It's not good news for our water supply," Anderson said. "We're well below where we should be."

Hopes were high this winter would be a big one after three straight years of drought but the longer this one stays dry, the more likely it becomes the region is in for a fourth drought year.

There's still plenty of winter ahead but the chances for a major turnaround are somewhat slim, Anderson said.

"We would probably need a February and March that would beat 90 percent of the years (on record) to catch up," Anderson said. "Another way you could look at it is there is a 10 percent chance."

Kelly Redmond of the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno said there is still hope for the winter.

"It is not out of the question," Redmond said. "We could get a wet February or March. There are enough instances in the past. We have some years that started off gangbusters and totally quit and others just the opposite. I don't think anything is precluded yet."

Operators of the largest water purveyor serving the Reno-Sparks region are preparing for the worst. More surface water is now being pumped into the underground aquifer than at anytime before in anticipation groundwater wells will have to be relied upon much more than normal to meet water demand next summer, said Bill Hauck, water supply coordinator for the Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

It is still anticipated that drought reserves stored in upstream reservoirs – tapped for the first time in 20 years last summer – will be fully recharged and available as needed during the coming summer, Hauck said. He also said it's becoming increasingly likely residents of the Reno area, like last summer, will again be asked to cut back on outdoor water use.

"It's becoming more and more likely that we will be asking our customers to conserve once again this summer," Hauck said.

Friday's mountain snowpack

Truckee River Basin: 33 percent of normal.

Lake Tahoe Basin: 21 percent of normal.

Carson River Basin: 34 percent of normal.

Jan. 30, 2014

Truckee River Basin: 12 percent of normal.

Lake Tahoe Basin: 19 percent of normal.

Carson River Basin: 22 percent of normal.

April 1, 2014

Truckee River Basin: 34 percent of normal.

Lake Tahoe Basin: 47 percent of normal.

Carson River Basin: 61 percent of normal.

Source: U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

California: A profusion of drought restrictions with varying results



These hydroelectric turbines at Oroville Lake in California should be well below water; however, due to the ongoing severe drought, they have been exposed. Credit: ©Shutterstock.com/David Brimm.

With 100 percent of California experiencing moderate to exceptional drought conditions last year, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), Gov. Jerry Brown mandated the tracking of monthly personal water usage for the first time. In addition, water districts around the state also took up varying degrees of drought restrictions, including such strategies as raising water prices and severely limiting outdoor irrigation. But whether these restrictions will make a dent in California's water shortage amid the ongoing and historic drought remains to be seen.

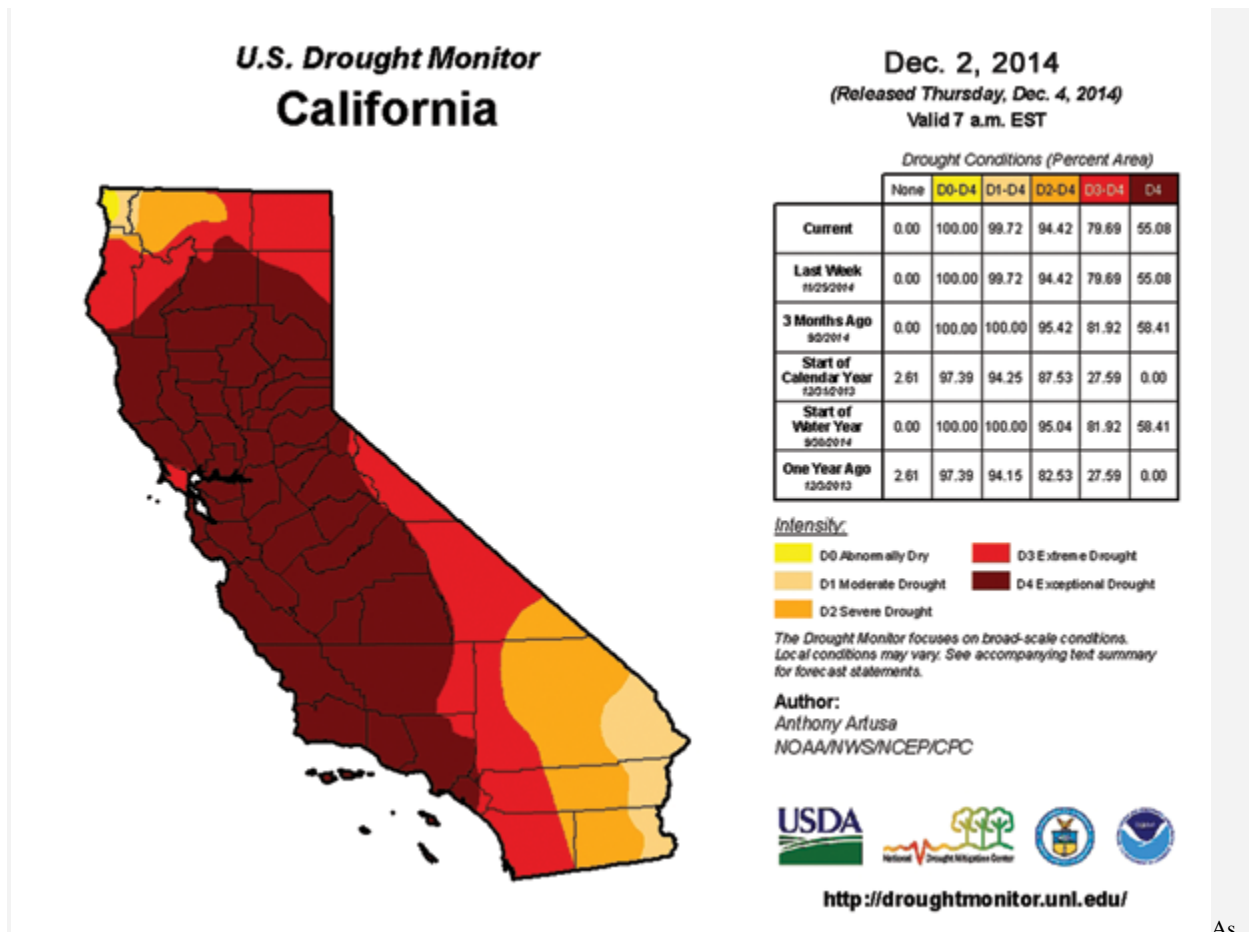
The [new monthly reporting requirement](#), called the residential gallons per capita per day (GPCD), was ordered into effect for one year by the [State Water Board](#) last July. GPCD estimates the daily water use by residential customers for almost 400 urban water agencies, representing 35.5 million Californians, more than 90 percent of the state's population.

The order also prohibits all urban California water users from applying potable water to driveways or sidewalks; allowing runoff when irrigating with potable water; using a hose without a shut-off nozzle to wash a car; or using potable water in a fountain or other decorative water feature that doesn't recirculate the water. It also requires urban water suppliers to impose restrictions on outdoor irrigation.

Although these requirements form the basis for the water restrictions enacted by most of the state's urban water suppliers, each urban district's specific restrictions vary widely, resulting in a profusion of drought regulations that have proven difficult for local consumers to follow. To make it easier for consumers, the Association of California Water Agencies mapped the various regulations by district at www.acwa.com/content/drought-map.

In addition, each urban water supplier has variously defined stages that increase restrictions as the drought progresses. Stage 1 is usually an alert that notifies the public that a potential water shortage may occur if water demands remain high or dry weather continues. Stage 2 typically enacts mandatory restrictions on outdoor irrigation

and often includes increased water prices; Stage 3 is usually triggered by an extreme water shortage and typically includes more aggressive mandatory restrictions and even higher water prices.



As of Dec. 2, 2014, about 94 percent of the state of California was under severe to exceptional drought conditions. Credit: U.S. Drought Monitor.

Given this patchwork approach, it's not surprising that the conservation results have so far also varied considerably, both within and among regions, according to year-on-year data for September released by the State Water Board in early November.

Because water use varies widely between the cooler, wetter north of the state and the warmer, drier south, the GPCD data can't be compared directly from region to region. In Northern California, for example, the city of Redding, which provides water to about 90,000 customers, cut its GPCD from 255.4 in September 2013 to 208.2 in September 2014, an 18.5 percent decrease. The city has enacted Stage 2 mandatory restrictions, which prohibit exterior watering during the heat of the day and limit it to a maximum of three days per week.

Yet the data show that implementing mandatory drought restrictions is no guarantee of success. The city of Susanville, 180 kilometers east of Redding, has also implemented Stage 2 restrictions, but during the same period, the usage for the population of 9,300 actually increased from 136.2 to 287.6 GPCD, or 111 percent.

In Central California, the 847,000 people served by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) averaged 45.7 GPCD, a 9 percent savings compared to the previous September. The SFPUC has invoked Stage 1, requiring its customers to reduce potable water use for outdoor irrigation by 10 percent. Less than 120 kilometers south, the city of Santa Cruz declared a Stage 3 Water Shortage Emergency and in May instituted a water allotment of 249 gallons per family of four, per day, charging its 95,000 customers higher rates for water consumed beyond

that level. Its usage dropped 29.2 percent, from 63.4 to 44.9 GPCD, one of the biggest decreases and lowest usage rates in the state.

Less than half an hour east of Santa Cruz, the city of Watsonville has enacted only voluntary measures, asking for the same 20 percent reduction requested by Gov. Brown in a January 2014 State of Emergency declaration. The 66,000 water customers served by the city have reduced their usage by 14.3 percent, from 113.1 to 96.9 GPCD — a larger drop than many municipalities have achieved with mandatory Stage 2 restrictions.

In Southern California, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), which serves 3.9 million people, and the city of San Diego, which provides water to 1.3 million customers, have both invoked Stage 2 mandatory restrictions. The LADWP has observed an 8.3 percent drop in water use, from 101.2 to 92.8 GPCD, whereas San Diego's usage, which was lower to begin with, has dropped 3.2 percent, from 84.5 to 81.8 GPCD.

Heavy December rainfall and floods throughout parts of the state did little to relieve the drought and as of late December, most of the same restrictions were still in place.

[Editor's Note: This article was updated on Jan. 28, 2015, to correct the amount of Santa Cruz's water restriction. It was 249 gallons per *family of four* per day, not 249 gallons per person per day.]



AP

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, right, talks with reporters while touring Folsom Dam with Rep. Ami Bera, D-Calif., left, and Doris Matsui, D-Calif., center, in Folsom, Calif., Friday.

Feds flood drought-hit states with \$50 million

By Fenit Nirappil
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The federal government is making available up to \$50 million in drought-relief funds for western states, with the largest portion earmarked for parched California, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Gov. Jerry Brown announced Friday.

The additional funding includes about \$20 million for the Central Valley Water Project for efforts such as water transfers, drought monitoring for endangered species and diversifying water supplies. California is entering its fourth year of drought.

“California is ground zero for the drought. There is no state that is worse off,” Jewell said.

Farmers and local water departments can also compete for another \$14 million for projects to help reduce water use and develop response plans to continuing drought conditions.

The funding announcement came as the first major storm of 2015 moved into Northern California, bringing with it the potential for up to 10 inches of rain in places. It arrived after an exceptionally dry January. Last week’s survey of water in the snowpack, California’s primary water source, found only a quarter of its normal level.

The Department of Interior funding is a sliver of previous drought-relief commitments. Last February, President Ba-



AP

A pelican perches on one of the tractor tires used for fish habitat on Lake Perris in Perris, Calif., on Jan. 21.

rack Obama pledged \$183 million, mostly for farmers who lost livestock and food banks to help unemployed agriculture workers. Brown in March signed a \$687 million drought-relief package, including for emergency drinking water and accelerating infrastructure supplies.

Efforts to pass a federal drought-response bill in Congress failed late last year. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and other Republicans say the Obama administration’s approach to dry conditions continues to prioritize fish over farmers and other residents in California.

The State Water Resources Control Board announced this week that Californians cut monthly water use by 22 percent in December, meeting

Brown’s call to slash residential water use by 20 percent for the first time. The board may impose further limits on outdoor water use as the state tries to protect supplies, but Brown said he’s not ready for mandatory restrictions statewide.

“I’m reluctant to expand the coercive power of state authority,” Brown said. “In a democracy, it is fundamental that citizens be the driving force. It’s my job to encourage and inspire and monitor, but before we have, you know, full-scale rationing we have to have a few more problems than we currently have.”

California is only delivering 15 percent of the water requested from the state’s vast reservoir system to farmers and local agencies this year.

UPDATE: Sierra rain, snow coats region, revives Truckee River in Reno

[Marcella Corona](#), RGJ 9:50 a.m. PST February 9, 2015



A file photo showing an elevated view of vehicles moving along a street in the rain.(Photo: Stockbyte, Getty Images)

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9:30 p.m. update:

A storm that wreaked havoc on the region over the weekend continues to drop snow and rain as it moves across the far western Nevada, prompting school delays in Incline village and filling the drought-impacted Truckee River in downtown Reno, the National Weather Service reported Monday morning.

The weekend storm that blew wind gusts peaking at 134 mph, drenched the region in much needed rain and dropped snow on the mountain peaks.

Although more mild, it's expected to continue to drop rain throughout the day as it passes through, meteorologist Dawn Johnson said.

The Reno Tahoe International Airport reported about 1.17 inches of rainfall from the weekend storm, which started Friday.

About 3 to 4 inches were recorded throughout west Reno near the foothills area, Johnson said. Areas east of Reno received up to an inch of rain.

Meanwhile, about 3 to 8 inches of rain fell in the mountains west of the Sierra, while areas east received 2 to 5 inches.



Rain storms dumped lots of water into the river over the weekend. Brian Duggan/RGJ

"There were a couple of spots along the Truckee River that were nearly bank-full," Johnson said of the rainwater that filled the river in downtown Reno. "It's going to be running a lot fuller than we've seen lately, but we don't expect it to flood."

On Friday night, the river's water level was just under four feet in downtown Reno, Johnson said.

"Right now it's about 7 feet," she said. "The flood stage is about 11 feet, so we have a lot of room there."

A heavy breeze is also expected Monday with wind gusts reaching 25 to 40 mph in certain areas, prompting a wind advisory at Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake until 4 p.m. today, Johnson said.

Meanwhile, fresh snow is forecast to blanket nearby mountain tops above 7,000 feet, impacting the highest passes. Travelers can expect a kind of slushy snow in areas below 6,500 feet, Johnson said.

Snow showers were also expected to continue across the Tahoe area dropping a few additional inches before the showers diminish, forecasters said on the National Weather Service website. The added snow weather prompted a winter storm advisory near Incline Village in effect until 4 p.m. Monday.

Chain controls were placed along several Northern Nevadan roads including:

- Mount Rose Highway, from Galena Park to Incline Lake Road.
- Kingsbury Grade, from U.S. 50, also known as Lincoln Highway, heading east
- Interstate 80, from Donner Lake Road to Bunny Hill Drive

High winds along Interstate 580 toward Carson City means vehicles over 9 feet high are also prohibited. A high wind alert was also set along a portion U.S. 395 on Bowers Mansion Road.

"There's high pressure building over us, but after today, conditions will be dry pretty much for the rest of the week," Johnson said with low confidence. "There's some uncertainty on this, but we might see something coming next week."

[RENO GAZETTE JOURNAL](#)

[Snow sets course for Sierra](#)

A high pressure is expected to build across the region Tuesday and Wednesday bringing light winds and fog in the mornings. That includes areas in Reno, Carson City, Lovelock and Fallon, forecasters said on the National Weather Service website.

"There is also potential for widespread dense fog for valleys in the Tahoe Basin, especially along the (I-80) corridor through Truckee," forecaster said in a statement. "Areas northward though the Sierra Valley and the Highway 395 corridor through Susanville ma also see bouts of fog."

6 a.m. update:

Rain and snow prompted a two hour delay for Incline schools, Washoe County School District officials said Monday morning.

That included elementary, middle and high schools, Washoe County School District spokeswoman Victoria Campbell said.

There will not be any delays for any Washoe County Schools, she said

Weekend Storm Increases Lake Tahoe, Reservoir Levels

Posted: Feb 09, 2015 4:24 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Monday, February 9, 2015 7:24 PM EST Updated: Feb 09, 2015 4:30 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Monday, February 9, 2015 7:30 PM EST

By Paul Nelson

[Email](#)

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producers@ktvn.com



The weekend storm didn't just bring showers to the Truckee Meadows. It dumped 4.6 inches of precipitation at Tahoe City, just one inch away from the average for February, with nearly three weeks to go.

"I was happy to see the soils get soaked up, even at the higher level," Chad Blanchard, Federal Water Master said. "It ended up with snow levels dropping a little bit, which helped. We got some storage draining into Lake Tahoe."

Before the storm, Lake Tahoe's level was more than seven inches below its natural rim. Now, it's about three inches below the rim, after a four-inch rise over the weekend. Blanchard says with any luck, it could get back to its rim by March. That would be good news heading into spring.

"One step at a time," Blanchard said. "We're happy to get what we got. Hopefully, it will continue."

Our reservoirs also saw an increase in water. The Little Truckee, between the Stampede and Boca Reservoirs increased about 3,000 acre feet. Still, this is our fourth dry year in a row, so far.

"We were ten inches in the hole for this year," Blanchard said. "We're 30 inches in the hole for the last three years. So, we have a long ways to go to get out of the drought."

Blanchard says if we get about three more storms like this one, we could make up for this year's shortfall. While it was not a huge storm, it was still a pretty good one that can help us out, down the road.

"It was really good because we had extremely dry conditions, coming in," Blanchard said. "So, what that did is soak things up. Now, if we get some snow, we won't lose so much of it in the spring when the snow melts."

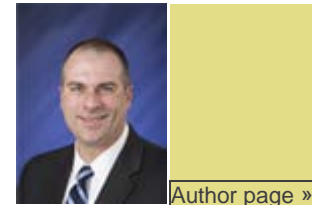
As for the Truckee River, Blanchard says we can expect the flows to go down over

Did water factor into identifying 5 great cities to grow a manufacturing business?

[Blog](#) [The Water Values](#)

- **Lewis Roca Rothgerber**
- **David T. McGimpsey**
- USA
- February 10 2015

**LEWIS ROCA
ROTHGERBER**



A recent article identified “[5 Great Cities for Growing Your Manufacturing Business.](#)” In order, they are: Reno, NV; Chattanooga, TN; Detroit, MI; “Any City,” South Carolina; and Milwaukee, WI. What do these cities have in common? With the exception of Reno, each are located in geographic areas that the U.S. Drought Monitor identifies as being relatively unaffected by drought. (The [U.S. Drought Monitor’s map](#) depicts small tinges of “abnormally dry” areas, the first stage in the drought index, in South Carolina and near Chattanooga).

In describing the cities, the article makes no mention of water resources, although Milwaukee’s water economy is identified as providing diversity but not as a factor of production. As Will Sarni and I discussed in [Session 10](#) of The Water Values Podcast, businesses are more and more taking into account water as a risk factor and including water risk in their decision-making process. Water may still not be the end-all, be-all factor when businesses make decisions and perhaps that explains its absence as a factor when identifying the cities in which to grow a manufacturing business. (The article is relatively short, so the author probably did not want to spend time identifying all the factors that went into formulating the list).

As to how water might impact manufacturing in the identified cities, let’s start with Detroit and Milwaukee. These two cities are located on the Great Lakes and have significant fresh water resources. Milwaukee boasts a vibrant water business cluster known and [The Water Council](#) (how’s that for branding?), and water-related companies like [Badger Meter](#) call Milwaukee home. For manufacturers in these cities, having the right quality of water in the amounts needed is not as significant an issue as it is in other areas of the country. Accordingly, manufacturers dependent upon water resources likely feel relatively safe about their water supplies in these cities.

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, a small abnormally dry area lies nearby according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor map](#). Chattanooga, however, finds itself situated in an area largely unaffected by drought. While the article praises Chattanooga’s telecommunications infrastructure, no mention is made of water resources.

Likewise, for “Any City,” South Carolina, only small tinges of abnormally dry areas are located [in the state](#). And the identified areas are not proximate to the main cities in South Carolina the article identifies: Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Spartanburg, and Summerville. As with Chattanooga, no mention is made of water resources. As with Detroit and Milwaukee, manufacturers dependent upon water likely deem the water risk low in Chattanooga and South Carolina.

That brings us to the top city in which to grow a manufacturing business: Reno, Nevada, which is all the way at the other end of the spectrum in the worst category of drought, [Exceptional Drought](#). Ironically, I just got off a call with a colleague from my firm’s Reno office about a water provider we’re representing, and I asked him about Reno’s recent successes in attracting business. He indicated that it was part lower cost of living than California, part proximity to

California (with Tesla, the executives could still live in California and be at the facility in 3 hours or less), part tax structure and economic development incentives, which he's helped some companies navigate. Water is certainly an issue, but these companies apparently have deemed that the water risk is manageable.

And that's perhaps the lesson with Reno topping the list. Water is a significant business risk, but that risk is manageable. We can implement pricing models that encourage conservation. We can reduce, reuse and recycle water to become significantly more efficient in our usage. Those efficiency gains can allow us to do more with less. Water risk won't be going away any time soon, and we can learn to adapt to this new normal we're experiencing with water resources.

One other note. I found it interesting that for 4 of the 5 cities identified as great cities in which to grow a manufacturing business, automobiles were the predominant industry cited: Tesla (Reno), the Big Three (Detroit), BMW (Spartanburg), and Volkswagen (Chattanooga). And the other city, Milwaukee, is home to Harley-Davidson, the maker of iconic motorcycles. I don't know what the article's underlying emphasis on the auto sector means – probably that the [U.S. auto sector is booming](#) – but it would be interesting to know what factors went into identifying these cities as great locations to grow a manufacturing business and whether and how water factored into the ultimate determination

Rain dance

Warm storms are nice, but they're no salvation

By [Georgia Fisher](#)

This article was published on [02.12.15](#).

Meteorologists have a vivid term for the sort of storm we had during the first weekend of February: an atmospheric river. The rain certainly brought Reno a welcome drink, but probably hasn't made much difference as far as the current drought is concerned.

"These are the kind of events our area really depends on to build up our water supply," said Jeff Anderson, a hydrologist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "It's just unfortunate that this one's a little too warm. The precipitation will certainly help, but it's probably not going to boost our snowpack numbers too much."

Both water supply and snow "look pretty dire right now," he said before the storm rolled in, citing a January which by many accounts was record-breaking.

Since the early 1980s, 24 NRCS data stations have measured snowpack in the Sierra. Last month, 20 of those were the driest they've ever been, and the rest showed the second-driest numbers ever recorded. Meanwhile, a measuring station near Camp Richardson got zero snow in January for the very first time. This particular snow course has been around since 1951, mind you, and at the start of 1952 it saw more than 90 inches.

"The other part of the story is that this is now the fourth dry winter, and so the reservoir storage that was good at the end of the 2011 winter has been more or less depleted," Anderson said. "Tahoe is evaporating water below its rim, so there's not even the ability to get water out, and the other reservoirs in our region are also very low. ... It's not looking good for the farmers, is what I would say, unless things turn around."

To reach normal snowpack levels by April 1, "we'd have to do better than about 90 percent of the historical record," he said. "Though chances are, we're not going to have January, February *and* March all be dry months."

So what gives?

"In terms of whether it's climate change or it's not climate change, seasonal snowpack's not really a good gauge," Anderson said. "There's so much variation from year to year. If you look at 2011, that was one of the biggest years on record. So I would just say that here's a lot of variability in our climate in the Sierras."

Valentine's Day and the subsequent week may bring more rain, said Chris Smallcomb with the National Weather Service, "so hopefully that pans out."

Droughts haven't been unusual in recent decades. But the nature of our current drought—the fact that it's so warm—has made this one especially problematic.

"When you have warm temperatures, it melts the snow faster, and it evaporates water out of plants faster, so those two things make the drought more severe," Smallcomb said. "That's why this drought is nastier than other ones recently. We're seeing these storms come in, and they're good, but what we really need are colder storms that have more snow with them."



The Emerald Bay area was unusually snow-free during a helicopter survey in late January.

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Saving Water, One Glass at a Time

Posted: Feb 11, 2015 11:38 AM PST <em class="wnDate">Wednesday, February 11, 2015 2:38 PM EST Updated: Feb 11, 2015 11:45 AM PST <em class="wnDate">Wednesday, February 11, 2015 2:45 PM EST

By Landon Miller

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How are restaurants doing their part in terms of saving water? The drought has changed the way how some places do business.

Saving water is a priority at Chuy's Mexican Kitchen. They do it, or don't do it, one glass at a time.

"Not until they ask us for a glass of water (do) we serve them water," said Jesus Gutierrez, owner of Chuy's.

Gutierrez says his customers appreciate the fact that they operate with the environment in mind. However, saving water behind the scenes has a larger impact.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 52% of a restaurant's total water usage happens inside the kitchen.

Six months ago, Uncork'd Eatery at MidTown Reno ditched the high pressure wash, and switched to a three part cleaning system where dishes are washed, rinsed, and then sanitized.

"It's just doing our part," said Tim Hargrove, owner of Uncork'd. "There is a water shortage, and we all realize that and everybody has got to do their part."

Drought Inspires Waste, Groundwater Bills

Posted: Feb 12, 2015 2:03 AM PST <em class="wnDate">Thursday, February 12, 2015 5:03 AM EST *Updated: Feb 12, 2015 2:03 AM PST* <em class="wnDate">Thursday, February 12, 2015 5:03 AM EST

Nevada water officials say the state needs to restrict water waste and underground water use in the face of lingering drought conditions.

State water engineer Jason King told the Senate Government Affairs Committee on Wednesday that Senate Bills 65 and 81 were necessary to update Nevada's outdated water laws and to combat drought.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture declared most of Nevada a natural disaster area last week due to lingering drought and officials say more trouble is coming for ranchers and farmers where irrigation cutbacks have been ordered.

The bills would change a number of laws including some affecting wells and groundwater basins

Republican Sen. Pete Goicoechea said the bills were critically important for parts of rural Nevada that have come to depend on groundwater due to the drought.

(AP)

PPIC Addresses State Water Challenges in New Multi-Topic Policy Paper Series

Submitted by Emily Allshouse on Wed, 02/11/2015 - 12:22pm

in

- [Water News](#)



California will need to address several key water policy areas to secure a safe and reliable water supply, improve the ecosystem and reduce flood risks, according to a new comprehensive multi-topic policy paper released Tuesday by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The policy paper is part of a series called “California’s Future” and highlights a total of 11 key policy challenges, including the state’s long-term water challenges. According to the report, population growth, reduced water supply reliability, conflicts between human and environmental water uses, and disagreements on water storage projects all pose tangible challenges to statewide water management. The report also notes the especially difficult challenges the state’s agricultural sector has seen since 2011, including the fallowing of approximately 500,000 acres of cropland due to the drought.

To respond to the state’s water challenges, the report suggests that long-term solutions will be needed in to address drought, instability of the Delta, ecosystem protection, water efficiency, groundwater management, flood risk exposure and funding.

With respect to the Delta, the paper speculates on the benefits on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan’s proposed “twin tunnels,” saying that they may reduce ecosystem and economic risks but only if the project is carefully managed and fully funded.

The report also outlines "critical funding gaps" of \$2 billion to \$3 billion annually, related to drinking water for disadvantaged communities, flood protection, stormwater management, aquatic ecosystem management, and integrated water management. Saying that Proposition 1 funds may help but will not be enough to address the gaps, the report considers the use of special new taxes, regulatory fees for water and voter-approved adjustments to the state's constitution to address the funding gaps longterm.

The 11-part "California's Future" series is available on PPIC's [website](#).

Hot in here? Warming climate bad news for Sierra snow

[Benjamin Spillman](#), RGJ 3:30 p.m. PST February 13, 2015

Science suggests skiers and resorts should get used to coping with thin snowpacks



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A chairlift is seen at Homewood Ski Area near Tahoe City on Feb. 10, 2015.(Photo: Jason Bean/RGJ)Buy Photo

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Ben Hatchett talks about climate as part of his job teaching mountain weather at Lake Tahoe Community College.

But Hatchett, 31, most vividly experiences the climate in the remote Sierra Nevada, where he's been backcountry skiing since he was a teenager.

In both places, the observations are troubling. At risk are the hefty snowpacks that produce an extended spring season with plenty of smooth-skiing corn snow, the type that requires cool nights and warm days to produce.

"It seems like there are less of those days occurring," Hatchett said. "You don't get those super awesome spring corn days as frequently."

Unfortunately for Hatchett, and everyone else who loves a snowy Sierra Nevada, scientists expect warming trends to continue, with some suggesting a greater likelihood for prolonged drought.

In addition to severe implications for California and Nevada water supplies, a warming climate with less dependable snowpack is bad news for ski resorts and backcountry snow exploration. It means less snow coverage in the mountains for skiing, riding, snowmobiling and snowshoes. It also presents more challenging conditions for resort operators, including later opening dates and more reliance on technology to manufacture snow and spread it over the slopes.



"We see already [very clear warming](#) of not just the planet but of California," said Peter Gleick, president and co-founder of the Oakland-based Pacific Institute and an expert on water and climate issues. "It means we get more rain and less snow, what does fall as snow is limited to higher elevations and it melts faster."

The data shows a warming trend

There are numbers to bear out what Gleick and others are saying. Among the numbers important for snow-lovers is the "mean freezing level." That's the elevation where the air temperature reaches the freezing point of 32 degrees Fahrenheit so snow can form.

Records from the [North American Freezing Level Tracker](#) show the 10-year average level at Lake Tahoe during the months of December through March rose from about 7,500 feet in 1980 to about 8,000 feet in 2010.

Since then, the tracker shows three seasons around the 7,500 level and one near 8,500 feet. This season, which is incomplete, shows a mean level around 9,000 feet, which would be the highest since 1950 when scientists started tracking the statistic.

"The last two years have been especially high freezing level," said Kelly Redmond, a professor of climatology at Desert Research Institute in Reno. "It has been creeping up, and it has been doing so for close to 25 or 30 years now."

Sierra Nevada cold zones moving up

The mean elevation at which the air near Lake Tahoe reaches freezing level from December through March has been creeping up in recent decades which makes it more likely precipitation will reach the ground as rain instead of snow.

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Another warming indicator that affects snow is the mean low temperature during spring. That's when corn snow conditions that require cold nights and warm days seem to be fewer and further in between.

[Climate data](#) for March through May in the Sierra Nevada tracked on a 10-year average show a steep increase in the daily minimum temperature. From 1980 to 1990, low temperature jumped nearly two degrees from the historical mean of about 33 degrees. That means there were fewer nights cold enough to re-freeze snow and more nights warm enough for the snow to continue melting. From 1990 to 2010, the average minimum temperature has plateaued around the new, warmer level.

"The way these things change, they don't always change smoothly," Redmond said. "Sometimes they change in jumps."

Since 2010, there have been two springs with cooler-than-the-mean low temperatures. However they were followed by three springs with warmer-than-the-mean low temperatures, including two that were among the four warmest on record.

"Overall, since about the middle '80s or so, springs have been getting warmer," Redmond said. "It kind of gets your snowmelt going earlier."

Warmer low spring time temperatures in Sierra Nevada

Low temperatures from March through May have been getting warmer in recent decades. That means a faster-melting snowpack because there are more instances in which melting can continue at night in addition to typical daytime melting.

Gleick suspects climate change might also exacerbate droughts such as the past four years of little precipitation that's devastated water supplies in California and Nevada. Warmer ocean and arctic temperatures can shift the jet stream north of the Sierra Nevada, taking with it precious rain and snow.

To Gleick, the effect of climate change is clear.

"One of the clearest projections of the impacts of climate change for the Sierra Nevada is a loss of snowpack," he said.

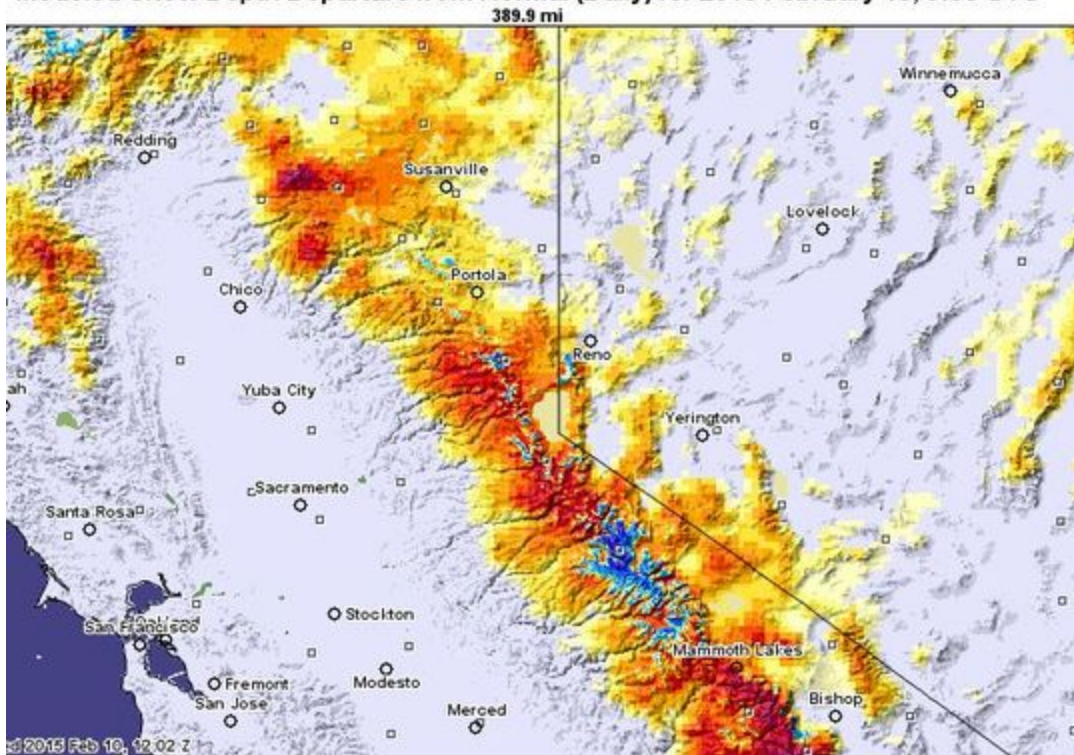
Tough times for ski resorts

Sierra Nevada ski resorts operators, particularly those at lower elevations, would face new challenges in a future with warmer temperatures and less snowpack.

Examples abound in the Sierra Nevada. Already this season, Badger Pass and Dodge Ridge ski areas in Yosemite National Park closed, as did Tahoe Donner Cross Country ski area. Homewood Mountain Resort near Lake Tahoe was closed much of the season and opened some upper elevation terrain on Friday.

Even after the recent storms, data from 2002 to now from the [National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center](#) show most of the Sierra Nevada is well below normal snow depth. The spots where snow depth registers above normal are high-elevation islands where the temperatures were low enough to cause the precipitation to fall as snow instead of rain.

"Over the long haul, this is the kind of thing we are expecting to see more of with climate change in the middle of winter," Redmond said. "Heavy (precipitation) more often falling as rain than snow."



Snow depth throughout the Sierra Nevada is thinner than normal in most places according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That's despite recent storms that dumped feet of snow the upper elevations of the range. (Photo: NOAA)

Bob Roberts, president and CEO of the California Ski Industry Association, said the past four years of drought have highlighted the challenges for operators, many of whom are seeking to adjust.

"They have been preparing for this, absolutely," Roberts said. "Everyone is strategically looking at their business models."

Vail Mountain Resorts, the largest ski operator in the country with 11 winter resorts, including three near Lake Tahoe, has stated publicly the drought has hurt pass sales at its California properties.

Lake Tahoe area ski resort elevations

In a mountain environment higher elevation tends to correlate to colder temperatures which can contribute to more natural snowfall. Below are the base and summit elevations for Lake Tahoe-area ski resorts

Snowmaking capability and local conditions also contribute to temperature levels and available snow.

The company has added activities during warmer months to diversify its revenue sources. Its Heavenly Mountain Resort added ropes courses and ziplines and is looking to add canopy tours,

a mountain bike park and additional hiking. Pete Sonntag, vice president and chief operating officer for Heavenly, pointed out Vail properties Northstar and Kirkwood also offer mountain biking and hiking.

Additionally, Sonntag said the resorts have ample snowmaking abilities for when the weather doesn't cooperate.

"Every business has external impacts, be it a competitor or some other outside force," Sonntag wrote in an email. "It's the job of anyone running a business to mitigate those impacts. Right now, we're focused on what we can have an impact on, and that's continuing to provide a great experience for skiers and riders and helping this community and local economy."



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A grooming machine is seen at the base of Homewood Ski Area near Tahoe City on Feb. 10, 2015. (Photo: Jason Bean/RGJ)

Whether non-winter sports will prove to be profitable for resorts remains to be seen. When Vail made its most recent earnings report in December company CEO Robert Katz referred to the first quarter as "historically a loss" in part because it is "driven by summer mountain activities" and not skiing and snowboarding.

Open dates are getting later

At Diamond Peak Ski Resort in Incline Village, General Manager Brad Wilson said this season's Dec. 20 opening was among the resort's latest ever.

"If you believe the science community, this may become more and more likely," Wilson said.

To maximize what snow is available, Wilson said Diamond Peak upgraded to one of the most high-tech systems of managing snow distribution on the slopes in the country.

The resort's SNOWsat system made by PistenBully lets Snowcat operators see what's happening underneath the vehicle from a screen in the cab. It helps them correct thin spots before they melt away and monitor the base more accurately than before.

"If you have a 12-foot base, you could make a lot of mistakes and not have to worry about it," Wilson said. "When you are dealing with 1-, 2-, 3-, 4-foot bases, it makes a huge difference."



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7-year-old Jiatong Cai, visiting from China, sleds down some man made snow at the base of Homewood Ski Area near Tahoe City on Feb. 10, 2015. (Photo: Jason Bean/RGJ)

Diamond Peak is also working on a new master plan that would have the resort expanding into summer activities.

While resorts can turn to technology and diversification to offset less natural snow, backcountry snowshoers, snowboarders and skiers such as Hatchett don't have that option. Their sports benefit from conditions that favor natural snow piling high and sticking around well into spring. The scientific data suggest those have been on the wane in recent decades and could become rarer in the future.

"Now it seems like there as increased frequency in days where the snow did not freeze," said Hatchett, who is also a meteorologist for the website Powdiction.com. "You go out, it is mushy ... the quality of the skiing is lower because you are skiing on mush. ... You have to go higher up into the mountains to get these good conditions."



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The Lake Tahoe shoreline is seen at Thomas F. Regan Memorial City Beach at South Lake Tahoe on Dec. 16, 2014. (Photo: Jason Bean/RGJ)

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ACWA Weighs In on Next Steps for Expiring Emergency Water Conservation Regulations

Submitted by Emily Allshouse on Wed, 02/18/2015 - 12:55pm

in

- [Conservation](#)
- [Water News](#)



With the State Water Resources Control Board considering action to extend the soon-to-expire emergency water conservation regulations for another 270 days, ACWA has provided recommendations supporting the extension and suggested additional improvements.

ACWA Special Projects Manager Dave Bolland presented ACWA's recommendations during a State Board meeting held Tuesday to discuss the role of the emergency regulations in light of the state's ongoing drought emergency.

Those recommendations include:

- Clarifying that mandatory outdoor irrigation limits should be equivalent to a twice a week irrigation schedule.
- Considering additional water use prohibitions such as prohibiting outdoor watering during rain events, prohibiting outdoor watering during daylight hours to avoid excessive evaporative loss, requiring restaurants, hotels, and all public places where food is sold to only serve drinking water only upon customer request, and requiring hotels to offer guests the option to reuse towels and linens.
- Continuing and increasing attention on public education, especially through the Save Our Water program.
- Continuing current reporting requirements, but with voluntary submission of 2007 data to provide greater understanding of pre-drought water use.
- Engaging with DWR and its Urban Stakeholder Committee to identify potential permanent conservation actions.
- Avoiding state regulated water rates and considering opportunities for funding targeted research, pilot projects and funding incentives.

State Board staff presented a summary of comments that have been received on recommended next steps. The presentation “Emergency Water Conservation Regulation Input and Potential Next Steps” is available [here](#).

Board members indicated that they want a draft of the emergency regulation incorporating changes ready for possible action at the March 17 meeting. Board members also indicated their intention to address the need for permanent regulations, additional reporting requirements, and ways to engage on other water conservation recommendations as part of a process that will proceed in April.

ACWA's comment letter is available on its website [here](#).

ACWA also provided the State Board with a [list of examples](#) illustrating the wide variety of actions being taken by local water agency actions in preparation for another dry year.

TMWA Recharges Area Aquifers

Posted: Feb 20, 2015 3:20 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Friday, February 20, 2015 6:20 PM EST *Updated: Feb 20, 2015 6:52 PM PST* <em class="wnDate">Friday, February 20, 2015 9:52 PM EST

By Paul Nelson

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The Truckee Meadows Water Authority is planning for another dry year, and part of that means pumping water back into the area's aquifers for future use. It's all part of a plan to increase our water supply, in what is becoming a fourth straight year of drought.

TMWA is recharging 17 of its 92 wells throughout Washoe County, at a faster pace than ever before. Ten million gallons of water are being stored, every day. The wells can be tapped into during drought conditions.

"We compare it to money in the bank," Paul Miller, Manager of Operations and Water Quality for TMWA said. "Everybody wants a full bank account and you don't want to use the money until you have to. So, we're enhancing our account as much as we can, right now."

Truckee River water is treated and piped to the pump houses for storage. But time is of the essence. Recharging only happens between October and March when water usage is about 25% of the peak summer average and surface water is available.

"We've done it at some base level, all along," Miller said. "We have experience with it. This year, we're trying to expand our opportunities, trying to expand the amount of locations where we put it in the ground, in preparation."

One Wingfield Springs pumphouse has been refitted with a larger pipe, increasing the volume by 3 million gallons a day. The well's water level has risen 15 feet in the last 24 hours.

"We're going to have to turn them on a little bit earlier in the season and run them a little bit harder," Bill Hauck, Senior Hydrologist for TMWA said. "This staves off any negative impacts that the earlier ground water pumping will have on the reserves."

The pumphouse can serve 1,800 households a month, if needed. Hauck says he hasn't written this winter off yet, but he's planning for another dry year.

"Hydrologically speaking, we're in a worse position than we were, last year, which means that TMWA will be asking its customers, once again, to conserve at least as much as we did last year, and likely more," Hauck said.

But Hauck says the upstream drought reserves are in just as good of shape as a year ago. Last summer, about 15% of water used, came from these wells. Recharging them doesn't just enhance underground storage. It improves the water quality.

"Use it, treat it, store it while we have it," Miller said.

Phone scam targets TMWA customers

Updated: Friday, February 20 2015, 01:40 PM PST

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RENO, Nev. - Truckee Meadows Water Authority is alerting the public to a phone scam where callers pose as TMWA employees to solicit credit card information, according to a TMWA spokesperson.

The scammers are targeting customers in the TMWA service area, and according to a TMWA press release, the callers threaten to cut water service if a credit card payment is not made immediately.

TMWA said they became aware of the scam late Thursday when an alarmed customer called to question the legitimacy. They had been threatened with water-service disconnection if they did not pay by credit card.

“So far we’ve only been contacted by two customers but it seems likely those aren’t going to be the only ones,” said Kim Mazeres, TMWA customer relations director. “It appears these are random calls within the TMWA service area, so we want everyone to know about it. The toll-free number the scammers are providing for call-back is not a TMWA number and TMWA never solicits delinquent payments from customers over the phone.”

The only valid methods of paying your TMWA bill are listed at Tmwa.com, and the only valid telephone number to pay over the phone is TMWA’s main customer service line at 775-834-8080.

If you receive an unsolicited call asking for a payment on your TMWA account, TMWA is asking that you take down the telephone number, refuse to make a payment, and call local law enforcement or TMWA at 775-

Scammers threaten to cut off customers' Reno-area water service

[David Jacobs](#), RGJ 3:45 p.m. PST February 21, 2015



Telephone scammers are threatening to cut off customers' water service(Photo: Photo: Jupiterimages, Getty Images)

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Telephone scammers are threatening to cut off water service of Truckee Meadows Water Authority customers.

Posing as TMWA employees, the scammers are threatening to cut off customers' water service if a credit card payment is not made immediately, the utility announced.

"The toll-free number the scammers are providing for call-back is not a TMWA number and TMWA never solicits delinquent payments from customers over the phone," TMWA Customer Relations Director Kim Mazeres said in a statement.

It appears that these are random calls within the TMWA service area, she said.

The utility said that:

- The only valid methods of paying a TMWA bill are listed at www.tmwa.com
- The only valid telephone number to pay over the phone is TMWA's main customer service line at 775-834-8080.

Also, anyone receiving an unsolicited call asking for a payment on a TMWA account should:

- take down the telephone number
- refuse to make a payment
- call local law enforcement or TMWA at 775-834-8080.

"So far we've only been contacted by two customers but it seems likely those aren't going to be the only ones," Mazeris said.



Petitioning City of Reno

Begin conserving Water, reduce Water usage immediately



Petition by Shane Ritter
Reno, Nevada



Supporters

[Sign Shane's petition](#)

It is likely our region will enter it's 4th straight drought year. Water resources are already critically low, and we need to begin conserving b them now, in case our snowpack continues to be below average. The Truckee river will likely run dry or critically low this year, steps must be taken now to ease the situation.

Every drop of water that can be saved now, will be water we will have this summer. Both cities also need to look at future usage. Scientific studies indicate the sierra will be 15-25% drier by the year 2050. If Reno and Sparks plan to continue to grow into the future, water needs to be the top priority, wether its importing water, or reducing usage.

[Sign Shane's petition](#)

Hydrologists hoping for ‘Miracle March’ in the Tahoe-Basin

Updated: Thursday, February 26 2015, 08:36 PM PST

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RENO -- Hydrologists are hoping for a Miracle March of wet weather in the Tahoe-Basin next month.

Thursday, water officials measured the snowpack near the Mount Rose Summit. "This will be the 4th dry year if things don't turn around and we're running out of time to turn around," said federal water master Chad Blanchard.

Blanchard said Lake Tahoe is below the rim right now and if that doesn't change soon, Truckee River levels this summer could be even lower than last year. "We really need Tahoe as far as storage to meet water supply needs throughout the seasons, so without that and with the current snowpack, it doesn't look good as far as what we're going to see for runoff this year."

Thursday's snowpack measurements show water content nearly doubled from last month to 50 percent of normal, but it's still not good enough. "Unfortunately that's not really representative of most of our regions, if you drop down a thousand or couple thousand feet, a lot of those snowpack's are actually probably less than what they were last month," said NRCS Nevada hydrologist Jeff Anderson.

Anderson said the Tahoe-Basin is 19 percent of normal snowpack, which is now the lowest on record since SNOTEL surveys began in the area in the early 1980s. And Blanchard said if the weather doesn't change, a record we don't necessarily want could be coming. "Looking at records at Tahoe City for precip we have records back to 1910, and we have never had four years of less than 90 percent of average precip."

And, some business owners are barely hanging on like Mountain Top Sports owner Curtis Brown. "Last year was the worst year ever, ever, ever, this year isn't quite as bad, but it definitely affects business and like we were talking about, it's a trickle down affect for everybody else that lives here."

Blanchard also said if it stays dry, it will once again affect recreation and agriculture throughout the region this summer

TMWA Recharging Ground Wells

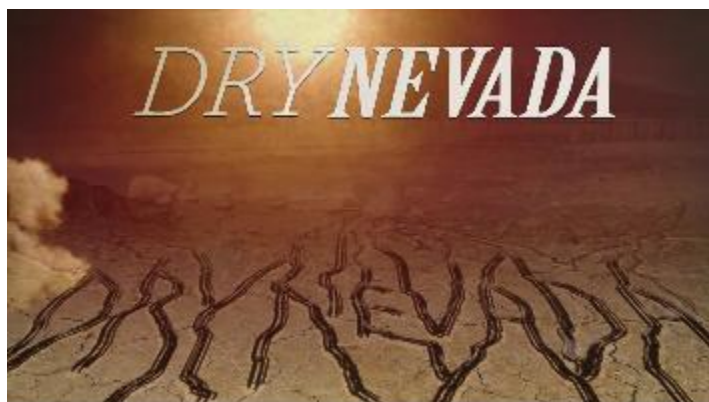
By: [Colin Lygren - Email](#)

Updated: Sat 12:52 PM, Feb 28, 2015

By: [Colin Lygren - Email](#)



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RENO, Nev.--Even if the winter storm blowing through our area turns out to be a monster, it's not going to solve our drought. TMWA knows this and has come up with a pretty cool way to save water. They're storing it underground. Normally wells are used to pull water from the ground, but right now they're working in reverse by putting water into the ground.

"We get water to go directly right back down the pump column," said Paul Miller with TMWA

TMWA is taking water from the river, treating it at the Chalk Bluff plant then sending it underground to replenish the aquifer.

"The ground water level will actually increase right here. So there will be more stored water available at this site for use," said Miller.

The well we visited was capable of accepting 550 gallons per minute. Over the 6 month recharge season, that is enough water to supply 1,000 [homes](#) for a year. TMWA has 17 wells operating right now and they're hoping to add more wells soon.

"This year we are recharging more than ever because we are anticipating our 4th year of drought, we're anticipating having to pump our production wells a little harder, later into the summer this time

around, so it gives us a cushion and a bank to pull from," said Bill Hauck, TMWA's Senior Hydrologist.

Not only is it a way to store water, it helps [protect](#) the aquifer which can be damaged when heavy pumping happens during summer months.

"We typically use surface water as much as we can but we have always used groundwater for summer peaking and emergency supply," said Miller.

Right now we have more water than we can use in the Truckee River. That wont be the case in a few months, so the water in the river now is being saved for later.

Snow Pack Survey Shows No Improvement

Posted: Feb 27, 2015 12:10 AM PST <em class="wnDate">Friday, February 27, 2015 3:10 AM EST Updated: Feb 27, 2015 12:13 AM PST <em class="wnDate">Friday, February 27, 2015 3:13 AM EST

By Amanda Ketchledge

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Results from the snow pack survey were once again disappointing. We only have one more month of winter left and experts say that after march, the chances of getting some bigger storms are very slim. It didn't take long to measure the snow pack today, that's because it's at half of where it should be.

So far our precipitation numbers have been better than last year, but when we look at our snow pack, we're significantly behind.

Experts say right now there have only been about nine and a half inches of snow fall at Tahoe City and that we would need another 50 inches, just to reach the lowest amount ever recorded.

Jeff Anderson, Hydrologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service says, "Every dry day that we have it becomes less likely that we're going to have enough time to catch up."

Anderson conducted the snow survey today and he says that it's not looking good for our water situation. About 80 percent of our water supplies come from the winter time and now residents are starting to worry.

"It really looks like it's not going to happen this year. Besides the kids not being able to play, our snow activity is really bad," said Reno resident Rebecca Carignan.

Misha Gregg is also a Reno resident and says, "Everybody's enjoying the warm weather and it's pretty dangerous for our water supply. We were at tahoe and boca and everything last summer and it's really scary."

The month of March seems to be the only hope for the Sierra. An average of four inches usually falls during this last stretch of winter, but we have had as much of 20 inches of snow from big storms in the past.

"We're definitely going to look at low run off numbers and water supply if we don't turn it around," said Chad Blanchard, Federal Water Master.

While the storm this weekend won't do much for the snow pack, it will have an impact on the roads. With wet and icy streets, make sure you give yourself plenty of time and distance from other drivers.

[by Taboola](#)

Interior Secretary Signs Water Agreement for Northern Nevada

Posted: Mar 01, 2015 2:48 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Sunday, March 1, 2015 5:48 PM EST Updated: Mar 01, 2015 2:48 PM PST
<em class="wnDate">Sunday, March 1, 2015 5:48 PM EST

By Topher Cuellar

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Interior Secretary Sally Jewell has signed an agreement to end longstanding water disputes between the federal government and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation on the Nevada-Idaho border.

The agreement signed Friday by Jewell guarantees water rights for the tribes while providing certainty for upstream water users of the East Fork of the Owyhee River.

The settlement authorizes millions in funding for tribal water development projects, including rehabilitation of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs irrigation project serving the reservation.

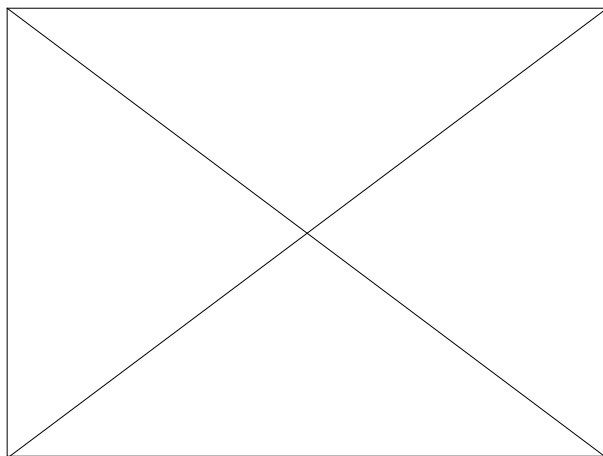
U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, who was a driving force behind it being signed into law, says the state of Nevada, individual water users and federal government now will be able to work together to develop water rights and protect and restore the Owyhee River.

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Drought continues, new worries emerge

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[Drought continues, new worries emerge](#)

Reported by: Terri Hendry
Email: thendry@mynews4.com



[Print Story](#)

Published: 3/02 6:48 pm

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Updated: 3/02 7:10 pm

RENO, Nev. (MyNews4.com & KRNV)--When it comes to easing the drought, officials are calling our weekend storm "a drop in the bucket." They said it did little to nothing to ease the situation. We're in a fourth year of drought and dry conditions are holding on. Mark Faucette, Senior Forecaster for the National Weather Service said, "We were looking at some numbers in here earlier today and the snowpack numbers are still fairly dismal for this time of the year." How dismal? He said, "Right now the snowpack in the Tahoe basin is 44% of what it was last year, not of average, but what it was last year and currently it is the lowest that it's been at this point, since we been keeping records."

The drought is of concern to the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Spokesman Chris Healy said, "This lack of moisture for almost four years will also leave a real lack of natural foods that will develop in the form of nuts and berries that would be the bears food source once we get into late summer." He said they are expecting big numbers of bears to enter into areas where there are humans because garbage and other food can provide bears with an easy and plentiful food source.

Bears aren't the only animals that are causing concern. Healy said they're expecting to see large numbers of coyotes near populated areas too. He said, "Now you add the challenge of having pets out there, and so coyotes are going to start keying in on human sources of food in this case because of the pets of humans and that's going to be a worry."

The drought will also impact rattlesnakes. "There's not going to be as much food for rattlesnakes so they're going to be closer to green areas, ditches, and stream beds," he said. Healy also added, "So when people start getting their pets out and walking around mid-April, late April, we may start seeing lots of rattlesnakes coming out earlier this year."

Another thing you will see earlier this year due to the drought is fishing season. The Department of Wildlife is stocking rivers and lakes earlier this year. Healy said, "Normally we wait until the end of March. But we are encouraging anglers to go out and catch those fish because basically we don't have a lot of other places to put them." He explains it typically takes about 30 days after stocking for a the fish to be either caught or consumed by a fish eating bird. There is worry that later in the season, the rivers and lake levels may be too low to support the fish." He said, "When you look at how much water or how little water is stored

Sierra storm didn't put dent in drought

[David Jacobs](#), RGJ 11:11 p.m. PST March 1, 2015



Looking west toward Washoe Lake on Saturday morning.(Photo: Rick Hoover/RGJ)

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The weekend storm that dumped more than 2 feet of snow to parts of the Sierra, bringing much-needed moisture, won't be remembered as a drought-denter.

"In the grand scheme of things, it's going to do very little to alleviate anything, unfortunately," said meteorologist Scott McGuire of the National Weather Service in Reno.

"The highest snowfall amounts were very localized around Lake Tahoe so in the grand scheme of things, the Sierra as a whole didn't get all that much snowfall, and it's also March 1," he said Sunday.

"We were so far behind in snowfall, not only from this season but the previous winters ahead of it, it would take a lot more snow to even get us close," McGuire said.

"It's virtually impossible for us to get back to average for this year for the snowpack, and it's impossible to alleviate the drought at this point of the winter season."

[UPDATED:Sierra snow totals](#)

The numbers

On Sunday, the Truckee River Basin's snowpack was 35 percent of normal for the date, with the Lake Tahoe Basin's snowpack at only 20 percent, according to automated measurements by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

On Thursday prior to the storm, the Truckee River Basin's snowpack was 33 percent of normal for the date, with the Lake Tahoe Basin's snowpack at only 19 percent, the measurements showed.

The storm, which arrived in the area late Friday afternoon, brought 17-24 inches of snow to Squaw Valley by Saturday evening.

Other mountain areas received more than a foot of snow. The Reno foothills received 2-5 inches.

Closer to Reno, some of the heaviest snow was in Hungry Valley at a measuring point about five miles northeast of Lemmon Valley.

By late Saturday morning, a trained weather spotter reported 15 inches of snow.

"It's legitimate...It was very, very localized," said McGuire said Sunday. "It actually was lake-effect snow enhancement off Pyramid Lake."

Help from lake-effect snow

Lake effect snow played a role in bolstering the totals for the region as a whole.

"Actually, we had lake enhancement off Pyramid, Tahoe, Topaz Lake, Walker Lake and Mono Lake all yesterday (Saturday) and last night (Saturday)," McGuire said Sunday.

"You hear about lake-effect snow off the Great Lakes all of the time. We get it here, too. It's the same exact thing."

[Snowy weekend brings smiles to Sierra](#)

A weaker weather system is expected to bring a few more light snow showers to the Reno region on Monday, the weather service reported.

"Chances for snow showers will persist across the Sierra through Monday evening as a secondary (system) quickly dives south out of the Pacific Northwest," forecasters said in their online update.

"This feature has been tracking westward off the central California coast."

Cold air in upper elevations will allow snow showers to develop through Monday afternoon, the forecasters said.

While "not expecting any significant widespread snows with this...isolated areas of heavier snowfall are again possible," the update said.

By Tuesday, drier conditions are forecast with daily highs approaching 50 in the region

California survey finds Sierra snowpack far below normal

By FENIT NIRAPPIL and KRISTIN J. BENDER
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) - California received a double dose of bad drought news on Tuesday, with state officials saying the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is far below normal and that residents again aren't coming close to meeting Gov. Jerry Brown's call for a 20 percent cut in water use.

Snow supplies about a third of the state's water and a higher winter snowpack translates to more water in California reservoirs to meet demand in summer and fall. Last weekend's Sierra snowfall pleased skiers and snowboarders but wasn't nearly enough to offset weeks of dry weather.

The latest survey makes it likely California's drought will run through a fourth year. Brown declared a drought emergency on Jan. 17, 2014, and his office continues to underline the need for sustained water conservation.

Frank Gehrke, chief of the California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program, said there were 6.7 inches of snow on the ground at the survey spot near Echo Summit, about 90 miles east of Sacramento.

"It's very meager and it is clearly flirting with being the lowest on record," he said.

The survey found a snowpack water equivalent of just 0.9 inches. During the last snow survey on Jan. 29 there was a water equivalent of 2.3 inches in the same spot.

Unless this month approximates the 1991 "Miracle March" with significantly more precipitation than normal, the traditional wet season will end on April 1 with an alarmingly low total.

"There is no reason to think we will have such a good March again this year," Gehrke said.

Meanwhile, a new report showed state water conservation slipping from December when Californians cut water use by 22 percent. Urban water use in January declined by only 9 percent compared to the same month in 2013, according to the State Water Resources Control Board.

January was unseasonably dry and brought no measurable rainfall in downtown San Francisco for the first time in history. Overall water use stayed flat compared to the rainy December.

The water board report showed conservation varied widely across the state, with communities in the South Coast area scaling back 9 percent and the San Francisco Bay Area by just 4 percent.

The monthly data helps officials monitor the effectiveness of the state's emergency conservation regulations, which include a ban on washing cars using hoses that do not

have a shut-off valve and restrictions on watering lawns. Later this month the board will consider extending and expanding these regulations.

"It's hard to sustain a sense of urgency and emergency for a longer period of time, but unfortunately we don't have a choice," water board scientist Max Gomberg said at an agency meeting Tuesday. "We have to redouble the (conservation) effort."

Drought forcing up San Francisco-Area water rates

Posted: Mar 08, 2015 9:00 AM PDT <em class="wnDate">Sunday, March 8, 2015 12:00 PM EDT *Updated: Mar 08, 2015 9:01 AM PDT*
<em class="wnDate">Sunday, March 8, 2015 12:01 PM EDT

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) - San Francisco Bay Area residents face price hikes for water as the drought continues.

Three of the area's largest water agencies have rate hikes of up to a third on their agendas.

The San Jose Mercury News reports that water agencies are spending millions of dollars more to buy water from a Southern California water bank (<http://bayareane.ws/1x6NQnn>). Programs to encourage residents to save water are costing the agencies millions of dollars more.

Beau Goldie of the Santa Clara Valley Water District says water agencies also are losing revenue because water customers are using less water.

The East Bay Municipal Utility District and the San Francisco Public Utilities District also face rate hikes.

The agencies serve 5.8 million people. That's 80 percent of the Bay Area's population.

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Water Conservation Tips for Your Home

Posted: Mar 06, 2015 7:19 PM PST <em class="wnDate">Friday, March 6, 2015 10:19 PM EST Updated: Mar 06, 2015 7:19 PM PST
<em class="wnDate">Friday, March 6, 2015 10:19 PM EST

By Chloe Beardsley

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Water is a precious commodity here in the Truckee Meadows so Channel 2 News looked into ways on how you can better conserve at home.

Since we didn't get a whole lot of rain or snows this year, experts say it's a good idea to start conserving the water we already have. "The situation now is not good. The snow pack is way behind the curve. The Lake Tahoe basin is about 19% of average. Reservoir storage upstream is bleak to say the least," senior hydrologist Bill Hauck.

It's no secret we're in our 4th year of drought, and because of that many people have been asking us on Facebook what things they can do to conserve water in their homes to help mitigate the drought.

One example is drippy faucets. If you have an upgraded kitchen you're probably in the clear because there's a cartridge inside the faucet blocks water from flowing unintentionally. But, if you have an older one, you may need a Drip Stop which replaces an old fashioned compression washer with rubber inside, which keeps the water from dripping.

Every day you typically use a shower to keep yourself clean, a sink to brush your teeth and kitchen faucet to get a drink of water. Without realizing it you could be using lots of water.

We found out ways to help you cut back on water use without having to change your routine. Tony Termini of ConservCo, a local company that specializes in conserving water says after the drippy faucets, the next place you could cut back on water is changing a shower head that flows at 2.5 gallons a minute to a lower flow shower head at 2 gallon a minute. "You'll save not only thousands of gallons of water every single year, but because you're using less water you're using less energy to heat that," said Termini.

Tony also specializes in helping hotels around the world, including right here in the Biggest Little City. "We'll take a team and audit a hotel's environment from their guest rooms to their kitchens to their golf courses. We know that we've saved them thousands and thousands of dollars over time," said Termini.

Another thing you may need to know is during a drought year, water theft always go up. "In times of drought, not only do neighbors steal water from one another but construction companies that have 50,000 gallon water tanks," said Termini. And because of that - the Hose Bibb Lock is the #1 selling tool he has to secure water on your property. "We make a product that's designed to lock up that outdoor spicket so that your neighbor can't steal water from you," said Termini. "It's a \$20 investment; it could save thousands and thousands of dollars." Most of these water conservation tools can be found at Amazon.com, Walmart, Home Depot and your local Ace Hardware store. Other ways to conserve water are wash your vehicle less often, and if you do -- use a car wash instead of your driveway.

Since this is another drought year, water restrictions similar to last summer may be put in place. "TMWA always encourages responsible water use. But once again, this year we will be asking our customers to do their part and cut back their outdoor water use by 10%," said Hauck. The Truckee Meadows Water Authority will be meeting with its board of directors on March 18th asking for approval for additional water conservation measures for summer.

Time to ‘flip the switch’? Flat-rate water meeting set

[Jeff DeLong, RGJ](#) 2:46 p.m. PDT March 9, 2015



The Truckee Meadows Water Authority hosts a public open house Tuesday regarding a proposal to phase out the area’s last flat-rate water customers.(Photo: Sue Donaldson/RGJ file)

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A proposal that would phase out the last water customers still billed at a flat rate will be explored during an open house hosted Tuesday by the primary water provider serving the Reno-Sparks area.

It’s the next step in a process that, if finalized in coming months, could have all residential and commercial customers of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority billed through water meters, which charge based on the actual amount of water consumed.

Last December, directors of the authority — jointly operated by the cities of Reno and Sparks and Washoe County — voted to initiate a process that could have everyone billed through meters by next June. The board is again expected to discuss the proposal March 18, with a first reading of new billing rules likely in April and a second reading in May.

Tuesday's open house is being held to answer questions and receive input from the public regarding a proposal that has generated significant controversy in the past, utility officials said.

Of roughly 119,000 homes and businesses now served by the utility, only about 5,556 homes, condominiums and multifamily units are still billed at a flat rate. Discussions over the need to "flip the switch" and end flat-rate billing entirely have occurred on and off over the years and have ramped up recently due to the impacts of a drought that appears to be entering its fourth year.

"It really makes sense from a standpoint of water conservation to do this now," said Mark Foree, the authority's general manager.

Flat-rate water customers typically use roughly double the amount of water compared to those billed through meters, averaging 282,000 gallons per year compared to 124,000 gallons, according to utility officials.

The drought has already forced some significant steps by the water authority. Last summer and for the first time in 20 years, the water provider was forced to tap backup drought supplies stored in upstream reservoirs to meet summer demand. The utility also asked its customers to reduce outdoor water consumption by 10 percent, a request that will likely be repeated during the coming summer.

If you go

What: Flat-rate water billing workshop.

Where: California Building, Idlewild Park, Reno.

When: 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday.

To comment by e-mail: tmwaboard@tmwa.com.

Source: Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

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NV anti-openness bill is affront to democracy: Our view

The Opinion of the RGJ Editorial Board 3 a.m. PDT March 8, 2015



Nevada Assemblyman James Oscarson goes through the many bills that will be voted on during the current session of the Nevada Legislature in Carson City on Feb. 2.(Photo: Lance Iversen/AP)

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Bills now before the Nevada Legislature would harm democracy and need to be stamped out as the enemy of transparency and openness that they are.

They would hide information from the public or make information more difficult to find out. This is the opposite of what government should be doing.

One is Senate Bill 28. It would increase the fees government agencies charge when people ask for public records that require "extraordinary" effort to produce. Almost everything about this bill is poorly conceived or harmful.

It is no exaggeration that access to public records helps keep us free. Without it, government agencies can keep the public from finding out about corruption and abuse. Being able to examine what government does keeps it accountable and open.

Record examples

Consider recent examples of public records requests made by the Reno Gazette-Journal:

- Martinez settlement.** Only because of a records request did we learn the details of how much the Washoe County School District paid Superintendent Pedro Martinez after the school board violated open meeting law in an attempt to terminate him.

- Water records.** We asked for the entire database of water usage in the Truckee Meadows. Because of our reporting, many homeowners were surprised to find themselves high on the list. They discovered problems they didn't know existed and corrected them, saving enormous amounts of water in our drought-stricken region.

- Smart meter fires.** Records requested from fire agencies helped the RGJ investigate NV Energy smart meter fires in Northern Nevada linked to singed homes and at least one injury.

- Hospital safety.** Records requests assisted an RGJ investigation into patient safety problems uncovered at Tahoe Pacific Hospital.

More examples of RGJ public records requests include seeking details about the health of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Nevada, the high number of pedestrian deaths on state roads, and the failure of a new Reno City Council member to pay his city sewer bill.

The lobbyist for cities and towns in Nevada is pushing this bill with the claim that it is necessary to recover the costs associated with record requests. No one disputes that the cost of supplies to produce reports is a reasonable request to pass on, but the bill adds fees above and beyond this.

What bill seeks

The bill creates fees if "extraordinary" effort is required and then defines "extraordinary" as a report being more than 25 pages if printed out. Many requested government reports are more than 25 pages and often run into the hundreds of pages. In other words, this bill would define the ordinary as extraordinary.

It also sets a standard that merely printing out 25 pages qualifies a worker as having done "extraordinary" work — talk about setting a low bar.

Because of loud criticism, an amendment was proposed Wednesday. It would drop the bill's original 50-cents-a-page cost to 25 cents.

It would also take out language that would charge a fee for electronic records based on the number of printed pages they would generate. A 1,000 page electronic file would have cost \$500

— or \$250, at the lower fee — just to upload, email or drag onto a flash drive, a task that takes seconds to accomplish.

While these changes make a horrible bill slightly less horrible, the amendment manages to add language that makes the original bill even worse: It would charge fees to view public records larger than 25 pages.

Think about what this means: If you don't have enough money, the government will deny you access to even look at what it's doing in your name.

More problems

The problems with the bill don't stop there.

In addition to charging for the basic supplies needed to generate a report — such as paper or computer disks — SB28 wants to tack on a personnel charge above and beyond the production costs. It would mandate that the public pay the cost of public employees' time to share a public report if the effort tops 30 minutes.

This could easily be abused. If an agency does not want embarrassing information to come out and seeks to discourage a request, three employees could spend 10 minutes talking about it and — voila — the 30-minute threshold is reached, as pointed out by Barry Smith of the Nevada Press Association.

Public record requests are an essential tool to keep government honest and accountable. SB28 increases the cost of getting public records and is ripe for abuse. Anything that makes that job harder is something anyone who cares about open government should oppose.

Making public records available is simply a cost of having an open government. To treat it like a luxury is an affront to democracy.

OTHER BILLS THAT DECREASE TRANSPARENCY

Here's a look at other troubling proposals before the Nevada Legislature that would decrease transparency, as chronicled by Barry Smith and his Nevada Press Association blog at nevadapress.wordpress.com:

•**Inmate info:** SB57 would allow the Department of Corrections to keep all information confidential that "pertains to an offender." Already, most inmate information is not public, but the bill would diminish even that.

•**Medical marijuana:** There is no bill proposed yet to fix the interpretation of Nevada law that allows applicants for medical marijuana business licenses to remain confidential. The Legislature needs to address this oversight.

•**Property tax notices:** SB95 would change the practice of publishing property tax assessments in the newspaper, a notice that historically had been used by taxpayers as a check on property valuations to make sure similar properties are assessed fairly.

•**Hospital meetings:** SB33 would exempt public hospital boards under very broad circumstances from the public meeting law that lets the public know what they did.

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Reno identifies climate change as a threat to the city



[Anjeanette Damon](#), RGJ 4:42 p.m. PDT March 9, 2015



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A chairlift is seen at Homewood Ski Area near Tahoe City on Feb. 10, 2015.(Photo: Jason Bean/RGJ, Jason Bean/RGJ)Buy Photo

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As the Reno City Council prepares for its annual strategic planning summit, it has identified climate change as a specific threat the city should address through urban planning and other measures.

A Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats analysis document the council will use at its summit Tuesday, lists climate change as a threat.

Indeed, a survey recently completed by MIT found cities are increasingly on the vanguard of reacting to climate change. Now, Reno may be joining the fray.

"There has been a lot of discussion lately at the planning level about how climate change may or may not be affected by the layout of cities," Assistant City Manager Bill Thomas said. "On the

extreme end, it involves the whole carbon footprint discussion. Some places have gotten very regulatory with their carbon footprint and some have done nothing."

[RENO GAZETTE JOURNAL](#)

[Hot in here? Warming climate bad news for Sierra snow](#)

Cities can address climate change through land use planning, by considering how transportation patterns are affected by where growth occurs, better planning for public transit or working carbon footprint mitigation requirements into the building code.

The discussion is made even more timely as the region suffers through a third year of drought.

"Certainly now the drought is something to fit into that," Thomas said.

Whether the council decides to actually incorporate climate change mitigation efforts into its urban planning policies over the next year may be discussed at its day-long meeting Tuesday.

"At this point we were just trying to brainstorm, what are the things out there that might be challenges for us," Thomas said. "And (climate change) seems to be something in many communities has been a concern."

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TMWA customer open house for possible flat rate conversion

- [Images](#)



[Print Story](#)

Published: 3/10 11:39 am

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Updated: 3/10 11:42 am

RENO, Nev. (MyNews4.com & KRNV) -- Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) has scheduled a Customer Open House for those who would like to comment or learn more about the possible conversion of all remaining flat-rate customers to metered billing. The Open House will be March 10, 3-6 p.m., at the California Building in Idlewild Park, Reno.

The address is 75 Cowan Drive, off Idlewild Drive. Currently, only about 5 percent of TMWA customers are billed at the flat rate.

At the Open House, TMWA staff will be present to discuss the timeline the Board has approved for possible implementation and answer any questions. All customer comments made that day will be formally presented to the TMWA Board of Directors. Customers can also find out how much they would pay at the metered rate as customer service staff will be present to assist. Customers can sign up for water-usage reviews to find ways to save water and reduce their water bills. Landscaping and tree experts will be available at the workshop to answer questions, as well.

TMWA Board of Directors voted at its December meeting to begin the public process to receive input on the possible conversion of all remaining flat-rate customers to metered billing.

The Board of Directors will make a final decision on whether and when to implement conversion at a public meeting to be held after all public input is received. If approved, the earliest implementation date that this conversion could occur, and the earliest water bills could be changed, would be June 2015.

The TMWA Board of Directors will also hold public meetings to consider possible amendments to TMWA's Rules that would accommodate any proposed billing changes to flat rates. It is anticipated that the Board will discuss possible flat-rate conversion at their Wednesday, March 18 meeting. If the Board decides to move forward with conversion, a first reading of any proposed rule or rate change could be scheduled as early as the Wednesday, April 15 Board meeting. If the Board pursues this timeline, a second reading and public hearing could be scheduled as early as the Thursday, May 21 Board meeting. Depending on the Board's decision, flat-rate customers could start being billed at the metered rate as early as June 1, 2015.

Customers are welcome to provide public comment at any of these meetings. Alternatively, they can also submit comment via e-mail to tmwboard@tmwa.com. Please check all times, dates and locations for TMWA Board meetings on [Tmwa.com](http://tmwa.com), with meetings typically occurring at 10 a.m. in the Sparks Council Chambers at 745 4th St. in Sparks.