

**BAY AREA WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

February 7, 2025

Correspondence and media coverage of interest between January 27, 2025 and February 4, 2025

Correspondence

From: Kali Krishnan, Highland, Ca
Cika Cook, Cabria, Ca
To: BAWSCA Board of Directors
Date: February 4, 2025 and January 21, 2025
Subject: Restore Remote Public Comment at BAWSCA

From: Peter Drekmeier, Tuolumne River Trust, Policy Director
To: SFPUC Commission President and Commission Members
cc: BAWSCA Board of Directors
Palo Alto Utilities Advisory Commission
SFPUC Citizens' Advisory Committee
Date: January 27, 2025
Subject: Item 5a (*SFPUC Jan. 28th Mtg*): San Francisco Water Supply Planning

Press Release

From: Department of Water Resources
Date: January 31, 2025
Subject: Snowpack Dips Well Below Average in Second Snow Survey of the Season

From: Department of Water Resources
Date: January 28, 2025
Subject: State Water Project Increases Allocation Forecast for Millions of Californians

Water Supply Conditions:

Date: January 31, 2025
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: Unusually dry January poses threat to California water supplies

Water Supply Management:

Date: January 31, 2025
Source: Politico
Article: Trump says he opened California's water. Local officials say he nearly flooded them

Date: January 30, 2025
Source: Los Angeles Daily News
Article: State to allocate more water from Northern California, increasing supplies, denting drought woes

Water Supply Management, cont'd.:

Date: January 29, 2025

Source: ABC10

Article: California water experts respond to Pres. Trump's claims on the state's water supply

From: [Kali Krishnan \(kalimaria3@gmail.com\) Sent You a Personal Message](mailto:kalimaria3@gmail.com)
To: bawscaboardofdirectors
Subject: Restore Remote Public Comment at BAWSCA
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 5:34:24 PM

Dear BAWSCA Board of Directors,

Dear Board Members,

The removal of remote participation in BAWSCA Board meetings has reduced the transparency of the agency and has excluded the voices of the elderly, working-class, and caregiving community members from sharing their vital perspectives on the actions BAWSCA takes.

Remote participation became the new normal during the pandemic and remains in place in the majority of California cities. BAWSCA has made great progress by returning livestreams of Board meetings and the Agency must continue by implementing remote public comment services. As BAWSCA considers continuing its anti-environmental lawsuit against the State Water Board and chooses to support environmentally harmful voluntary agreements (VAs), the Board must remain transparent and ensure the voices of marginalized communities are heard at public meetings.

The Board must restore remote participation, including remote public comment. Thank you for recognizing the impact that remote participation has on increasing the accessibility and transparency of BAWSCA.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Kali Krishnan
28825 lemon street
Highland, CA 92346
kalimaria3@gmail.com
(909) 845-0159

This message was sent by KnowWho, as a service provider, on behalf of an individual associated with Sierra Club. If you need more information, please contact Member Care at Sierra Club at member.care@sierraclub.org or (415) 977-5673.

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From: [Cika Cook \(cikacook@gmail.com\) Sent You a Personal Message](mailto:cikacook@gmail.com)
To: bawscaboardofdirectors
Subject: Restore Remote Public Comment at BAWSCA
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 12:19:27 AM

Dear BAWSCA Board of Directors,

Dear Board Members,

The removal of remote participation in BAWSCA Board meetings has reduced the transparency of the agency and has excluded the voices of the elderly, working-class, and caregiving community members from sharing their vital perspectives on the actions BAWSCA takes.

Remote participation became the new normal during the pandemic and remains in place in the majority of California cities. BAWSCA has made great progress by returning livestreams of Board meetings and the Agency must continue by implementing remote public comment services. As BAWSCA considers continuing its anti-environmental lawsuit against the State Water Board and chooses to support environmentally harmful voluntary agreements (VAs), the Board must remain transparent and ensure the voices of marginalized communities are heard at public meetings.

The Board must restore remote participation, including remote public comment. Thank you for recognizing the impact that remote participation has on increasing the accessibility and transparency of BAWSCA.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Cika Cook
2156 Andover Pl.
Cambria, CA 93428
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(805) 835-6111

This message was sent by KnowWho, as a service provider, on behalf of an individual associated with Sierra Club. If you need more information, please contact Member Care at Sierra Club at member.care@sierraclub.org or (415) 977-5673.

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January 27, 2025

President Kate Stacy and Commissioners
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Via email: commission@sfwater.org

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Bart Westcott
Brad Wurtz

Re: [Item 5a](#): San Francisco Water Supply Planning.

Dear President Stacy and Commissioners:

Palo Alto recently spent half a million dollars to produce a One Water Plan. The Plan was premised on the following statement:

“Based upon the City’s forecasted water demand presented in the City’s 2020 UWMP and projections of water supply availability provided by SFPUC at the time, the City anticipates the need to implement water use reductions of approximately 50 percent from pre-drought usage levels in dry years post Bay-Delta Plan implementation.”

The 50% rationing figure espoused by the SFPUC is based on the manufactured Design Drought, which might occur once in 8,000 years. Furthermore, it’s based on unrealistic demand projections, acknowledged in the SFPUC’s own document – “[Water Enterprise and Finance Bureau Water Demand Projections](#)” (July 5, 2022) – as “an outside bound.”

The SFPUC’s unreasonable drought planning scenario is already leading wholesale customers to invest in costly and unwise planning. Palo Alto’s One Water Plan will likely just sit on a shelf. Making matters worse, the SFPUC’s Alternative Water Supply (AWS) Plan suggests the possible need to develop 92 to 122 mgd of AWS at a cost of \$17 to \$25 billion – an imprudent investment that would lead to a financial fiasco of epic proportion.

The Design Drought is clearly beyond conservative, yet despite seven conclusive deep-dive SFPUC workshops between 2020 and 2022, the Commission declined to even discuss the prudence of the Design Drought. This was an extreme disservice to ratepayers, wholesale customers and the Bay-Delta ecosystem.

Please schedule a workshop ASAP to focus on the practicality of the Design Drought before more money is squandered on unnecessary studies or the development of unneeded infrastructure.

Following are a few comments on tomorrow’s staff presentation.

Slide 3 – Wise Water Use and Regular Planning

SFPUC Statement: “San Francisco currently averages 41 gallons of residential per capita use, and Wholesale Customers average 55.1 gpcd (a 52% decrease since 1975-78 in residential per capita use).”

TRT Response: In 1979, a water demand study by Brown & Caldwell projected demand would reach 425 mgd by 2030. Last year, the SFPUC delivered only 184 mgd to the Bay Area. SFPUC demand projections have always been highly inflated. In response to inflated historic demand projections, the SFPUC invested in a massive amount of reservoir storage (enough to last six years). The SFPUC is well positioned for the Bay Delta Plan, which would have a much smaller impact on water supply than over-projected water demand. According to the SFPUC’s Long-Term Vulnerability Assessment (LTVA), the impact of the Bay Delta Plan on supply would be the equivalent of a 15% increase in demand.

SFPUC Statement: “Urban Water Management Planning: Every 5 years, all water agencies need to demonstrate that they have enough supply to accommodate anticipated growth over the ensuing 25 years.”

TRT Response: For the 2020 UWMP, the SFPUC attempted to use contractual obligations (265 mgd) to represent current demand (198 mgd). TRT uncovered this deception, and the SFPUC was forced to use actual demand projections. This simple, honest correction reduced the perceived potential rationing in Year 3 of a drought by 27%.

UWMPs require water providers to assess whether they could meet projected future demand under a repeat of their worst “Five-Consecutive-Year Drought.” TRT has demonstrated that the SFPUC could manage its worst Six-Consecutive-Year Drought (1987-92) with the Bay Delta Plan in place without requiring any rationing. Rationing would extend the SFPUC’s water supply to last more than seven years, and a modest investment in AWS would ensure an even longer drought could be managed.

TRT and our allies invested a lot of time reviewing the 2020 UWMP and identifying flaws. We advocated for a workshop prior to the UWMP being finalized, but SFPUC staff stalled. The workshop did finally occur on July 16, 2021 – 16 days after the UWMP was submitted. Let’s not allow this to happen again.

Slide 4 – Smart Operations and Water Supply

SFPUC Statement: “Our management decisions and planning are guided by “Water First”, Experience, and Risk Management.”

TRT Response: The SFPUC’s Water First policy has been extremely successful. According to the following information (presented by SFPUC staff on July 12, 2021), precipitation in 2020/21 was

almost identical to 1976/77. Yet on June 10, 2021, the SFPUC had 917 thousand acre feet (TAF) of water in storage compared to 563 TAF on the same date in 1977. The 354 TAF difference is enough water to last one-and-a-half years. Despite big improvements in water management, the SFPUC has never adjusted its thinking.



How Dry Has It Been?

- Comparison between 2020 & 2021 and 1976 & 1977
- Two-year Hetch Hetchy precipitation totals:
 - 1976 & 1977: 39.14 inches
 - 2020 & 2021: 39.28 inches



Storage Comparisons: 1977 to 2021

- March 21, 1977
 - Hetch Hetchy: 24,500 AF (dead pool)
- March 21, 2021
 - Hetch Hetchy: 179,700 AF (Water First!)
- June 10, 1977
 - Hetch Hetchy: 128,900 AF
 - Total Hetchy System: 563,298 AF
- June 10, 2021
 - Hetch Hetchy: 321,302 AF
 - Total Hetchy System: 917,455 AF

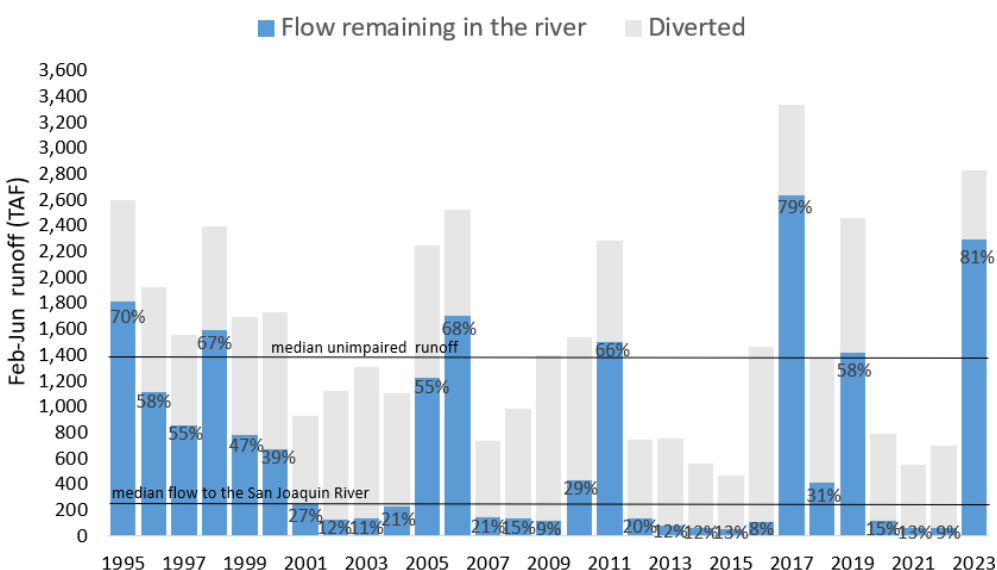
SFPUC Statement: “Risk Management: How bad can conditions get, knowing that we cannot operate to zero storage at any point?”

TRT Response: While planning for a worse drought is prudent, there are reasonable limits. The SFPUC’s de facto policy of “reliability at all cost” is driving the agency toward insolvency. In November 2021, when the SFPUC declared a “Water Shortage Emergency,” there was enough water in storage to last 4.5 years. Storage never dropped below four years-worth, yet the SFPUC imposed a drought surcharge on San Francisco customers. The SFPUC then irrationally assumed the surcharge would extend into FY 2023/24, but when it didn’t, the SFPUC faced a \$20 million deficit.

The SFPUC’s paranoia over running out of water has led to a practice of “hoard and spill.” Whenever the reservoirs aren’t all topped off, the SFPUC only releases minimum baseflows, creating terrible conditions for fish. You’ll see from the graph below that the pattern repeats every time there’s a dry year sequence. For example, between 2012 and 2016 (five years) unimpaired flow in the lower Tuolumne average just 12%. Then in 2017, all the water that was conserved during the drought (and much more) had to be spilled, leading to 79% of unimpaired flow. This is no way to manage an ecosystem.

Tuolumne River

Graph courtesy of The Bay Institute - www.bay.org



Slide 8 – Consequences of Being Wrong

SFPUC Statement: Quote by Anson Moran (January 1994): “When considering all the factors associated with the City’s entitlements to water, its physical system and the dire consequences of just being wrong in the forecasting of the length of drought that may hit the City, I cannot agree with any comment that the City’s operation rule is overly conservative.”

TRT Response: This quote is from 30 years ago and shows that even then the Design Drought was criticized for being overly conservative. Much has changed since the Design Drought was conceived, including the following:

- Water demand heading into the six-year drought of record (1987-92) was at a peak of 293 mgd. Demand has been under 200 mgd for the past ten years.
- The Water First policy was implemented.
- Cherry Lake (273 TAF of storage – ¾ the capacity of Hetch Hetchy) was drained for maintenance in 1989, adding to the challenge of the six-year drought.
- The SFPUC’s Long-Term Vulnerability Assessment (LTVA – climate change study) was completed in 2021, finding “no clear direction of change in mean annual precipitation over the planning horizon.”

Despite all these major changes, the SFPUC has refused to even consider possible amendments to the Design Drought.

Slide 9 – Challenges Ahead

SFPUC Statement: “Population will continue to grow (e.g. State Housing General Plan Elements).”

TRT Response: According to the SFPUC’s 2020 UWMP, between 2005 and 2020 the population of San Francisco grew from 781,806 to 899,732. That amounted to 15% growth over a 15-year period, or 1% per year. The 2020 UWMP projected San Francisco’s population would grow by 25% over the next 15 years, reaching 1,251,214 by 2035. That’s a substantially higher growth rate of 1.67% per year. This obviously is not happening. The 2020 UWMP forecasted San Francisco’s population would grow by 39% over 25 years, but the California Department of Finance forecasted growth of only 10% – a huge difference, and worthy of analysis.

SFPUC Statement: “Climate Change: Studies indicate shifts to more precipitation as rain than snow and more extreme events.”

TRT Response: The LTVA projects a three-week shift in runoff by 2070. TRT modeled what would happen if the Design Drought occurred and runoff came three weeks earlier. We found that the SFPUC would pick up more than a years-worth of water over the course of the Design Drought (at the expense of the Irrigation Districts). This is because a fair amount of runoff would shift from a two-month period in the spring when the Districts are entitled to the first 4,000 cfs of runoff to earlier in the year when they are only entitled to the first 2,400 cfs. SFPUC staff have refused to respond to our analysis.

Slide 10 – Alternative Water Supply Plan for the Regional Water System

SFPUC Statement: “[The AWS Plan] is a living planning document that gives decision-makers information regarding potential future water supply issues and potential actions to augment the Regional Water System supplies to retain our current, appropriate risk management approach.”

TRT Response: The AWS Plan is a political document aimed at supporting the SFPUC’s false narrative that the Bay Delta Plan would lead to either extreme rationing or the need to invest heavily in expensive AWS. The Plan only provides an extreme worst-case scenario, depriving the Commission and others of all the facts needed to make wise decisions. The AWS Plan does not include a cost/benefit analysis, leading wholesale customers like Palo Alto to make expensive and unnecessary investments.

The Plan only includes figures SFPUC staff have acknowledged to be an “outside envelope”. SFPUC demand projections have been inflated by an average of 22% over the past 25 years, yet the AWS Plan does not include a range in potential future demand (sensitivity analysis). Using SFPUC Finance Bureau sales projections rather than Water Enterprise demand projections would knock 37 mgd off of perceived need. According to the SFPUC’s [“Water Enterprise and](#)

[Finance Bureau Water Demand Projections](#),” “the [Water Enterprise] projections [used in the UWMP] represent an outside bound of whatever demand will occur in the next 25 years...For budgeting and rate setting we use [Finance Bureau] demand projections that are as close to actual as we can make them.”

Removing one year from the Design Drought (it would still be the most conservative plan in the state) would knock another 25 mgd off the perceived need for AWS.

Conclusion

Please direct staff to respond to the issues raised in this letter, and to schedule a workshop to address these issues. Your ratepayers and wholesale customers will be pleased.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Peter Drekmeier".

Peter Drekmeier
Policy Director
peter@tuolumne.org

Cc: BAWSCA Board of Directors
Palo Alto Utilities Advisory Commission
SFPUC Citizens' Advisory Committee



News Releases
January 31, 2025

Contact:

Jason Ince, Information Officer, Public Affairs, Department of Water Resources
(916) 820-8138 | media@water.ca.gov

Snowpack Dips Well Below Average in Second Snow Survey of the Season



DWR Staff conducting the second snow survey at Phillips Station on January 31, 2025.

Extremely Dry Conditions in January Put Dent in Early Season Start, with Big Regional Differences Remaining

Effective Water Management Keeps Statewide Reservoirs Near or Above Average

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today conducted the second snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 22.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water

equivalent of 8 inches, which is 46 percent of average for this location. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of DWR’s water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 65 percent of average for this date.

On January 1, the statewide snowpack was 108 percent of average after a series of large storms in November and December boosted snow totals in the Northern Sierra, but significant regional differences kept the Central Sierra just below average and the Southern Sierra well below average. An excessively dry January has pushed the Northern Sierra back to near average, the Central Sierra to 58 percent of average, and has led the Southern Sierra Nevada to fall to under 50 percent of average.

“Despite a good start to the snowpack in the Northern Sierra in November and December, we can look back as recently as 2013 and 2021 to show how quickly conditions can change for the drier,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “California missed out on critical snow-building storms in January which has pushed the state down below average for this time of year. While we are excited to see some storm activity in the coming days, sustained periods of no precipitation can dry the state out very quickly. For each day it’s not snowing or raining, we are not keeping up with what we need.”

DWR’s electronic readings from 130 stations placed throughout the Sierra Nevada indicate that the statewide snowpack’s snow water equivalent is 10.5 inches, or 65 percent of average for

this date. While forecasts show storm activity may pick up in February, California has seen several years in recent history with large early season snow totals, only for predominantly dry conditions to dominate the rest of the season.

California has effectively managed its reservoirs to keep storage above average for this time of year. Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir, is currently at 126 percent of average for this time of year. San Luis Reservoir, which is jointly operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, is at 101 percent of average for this time of year. Reservoirs in Southern California are also near or above their historical averages.

Measuring California's snowpack is a key component that guides how California's water supplies are managed. The data and measurements collected help inform water supply and snowmelt runoff forecasts, known as Bulletin 120, that help water managers plan for how much water will eventually reach state reservoirs in the spring and summer. This information is also a key piece in calculating State Water Project allocation forecasts each month.

Despite some recent rain, Southern California is still well below average for yearly precipitation. To prepare for any weather the region may see the rest of the season, DWR has deployed over 30 Watershed Protection Specialists to assist with the Watershed and Debris Flow Task Force organized by the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). Members of this task force, including DWR, CalOES, CAL FIRE and over 400 members of the California Conservation Corps, have been working around the clock to protect watersheds around burn scars, place materials to mitigate the risk of debris flows and ensure regional infrastructure including debris flow basins are prepared for incoming storm activity.

On average, California's snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why California's snowpack is often referred to as California's "frozen reservoir." Data from these snow surveys and forecasts produced by DWR's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit are important factors in determining how DWR manages the state's water resources.

DWR conducts four or five media-oriented snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for February 28.

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For California's current hydrological conditions, visit <https://cww.water.ca.gov>



News Releases
January 28, 2025

Contact:
Public Affairs Office, Department of Water Resources
media@water.ca.gov

State Water Project Increases Allocation Forecast for Millions of Californians



The California Aqueduct bifurcates in the West Branch and East Branch as it travels into the Southern California region at the border of Kern and Los Angeles Counties. Photo taken May 12, 2023.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Today, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an update to the State Water Project (SWP) allocation forecast for 2025. The allocation has increased to 20 percent of requested supplies, up from 15 percent in December. The SWP provides water to 29 public water agencies that serve 27 million Californians.

While January has been incredibly dry across California, storm runoff into the state's reservoirs came in higher than forecasted at the end of December allowing for a modest allocation increase. Storms in late November and early December had a positive impact by saturating the ground, allowing for storms through

December to more efficiently runoff into reservoirs.

More storms are needed, and the long-range forecast does hint at a return to wet conditions in early February that could bring much-needed rain and snow.

"We are in the middle of our biggest months for precipitation for California, and unfortunately January has been very dry, putting a significant dent in our season," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. "A return to wet weather is critical for our season's success and it will take many more storms to make up the deficit and further boost water supply deliveries."

Despite the dry conditions, California has effectively managed its reservoirs to keep storage above average for this time of year. Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir, is currently at 127 percent of average for this time of year. San Luis Reservoir, which is jointly operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, is at 102 percent of average for this time of year. Reservoirs in Southern California are also near or above their historical averages.

Each year, DWR provides SWP allocation forecasts based on available water storage, projected water supply, and water demands. Allocations are updated monthly as snowpack, rainfall, and runoff information is assessed, with a final allocation typically determined in May or June. As the winter progresses, if California sees an increase in rain and snowfall, the allocation forecast may increase. Learn more about how the State Water Project allocation process works at <https://water.ca.gov/News/Blog/2025/Jan-25/Get-the-Facts-About-the-State-Water-Project-Allocation>.

The allocation forecast notice to State Water Contractors and historical data on SWP allocations are available at <https://water.ca.gov/programs/state-water-project/management/swp-water-contractors>.

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Unusually dry January poses threat to California water supplies

San Francisco Chronicle | January 31, 2025 | Kurtis Alexander



Vehicles navigate snowbanks in Mount Shasta in Siskiyou County on Nov. 21. California's wet season started off strong but has since relented. Carlos Avila Gonzalez/The Chronicle

California's unusually dry January has begun to cast a shadow over water supplies.

State water managers on Friday, when they conduct California's monthly snow survey, expect to find just two-thirds of average snowpack in the state's high country, a shortfall that will hobble runoff into rivers and reservoirs over the coming year.

While water experts note that two months of winter weather are still to come and additional snowfall could quickly bolster water supplies — a pair of atmospheric rivers is in the forecast — January is typically the wettest month of California's limited wet season. Losing out on major storms during this period means a lot of catch-up.

"It all depends on what happens next," said Letitia Grenier, director and senior fellow at the Water Policy Center at the Public Policy Institute of California. "If we don't see any (more) rain, it would be a huge deal. But seeing the atmospheric rivers come in could be really great for offsetting the dry January."

Additionally, say Grenier and other water experts, statewide reservoir storage remains slightly above average, due to the past two years, which have been mostly wet. This means that even if the rainy season underperforms, dire water shortages aren't expected this year.

On Thursday, about halfway through the wet season, the snow water equivalent, meaning how much water the snow would produce if melted, averaged 10.9 inches across the Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades and Trinity mountains, according to the California Department of Water Resources, which conducts the state's snow surveys. This is 67% of average, significantly down from 108% of average at the start of January.

Shockingly, some ski resorts have reported getting only a few inches of snow the entire month.

The Department of Water Resources tracks the snowpack through a network of 130 sensors that provide real-time data. These measurements are supplemented by manual snow measurements, including those scheduled for Friday.

The snowpack provides about a third of the state's total water supply.

"We are in the middle of our biggest months for precipitation for California, and unfortunately January has been very dry, putting a significant dent in our season," said Karla Nemeth, director of the Department of Water Resources, in a prepared statement this week. "A return to wet weather is critical for our season's success and it will take many more storms to make up the deficit and further boost water supply deliveries."

The state's hydrological fortunes have varied dramatically between north and south this season. With most storms hugging the top half of California, the northernmost mountains have logged 95% of average snowpack to date, according to the Department of Water Resources, compared to 46% in the southernmost mountains. The central Sierra has recorded 59% of average snowpack.

The disparity between north and south was highlighted in the near-record dry weather in Los Angeles, contributing to the region's deadly wildfires.

Parts of Los Angeles County as well as neighboring counties, including Orange, San Diego, and Riverside counties, were deemed this week to be in "extreme drought" by the U.S. Drought Monitor. The classification is just one notch short of the most severe category of "exceptional drought" and is rare in wintertime.

Some parts of the Bay Area have been categorized as "abnormally dry" after January's lack of rain. But most of the region as well as most of Northern California remains free of dry or drought conditions, according to the Drought Monitor.

Meanwhile, the state's largest reservoir, Lake Shasta, held 118% of its water average for this time of year. The second largest, Lake Oroville, held 126% of its average for the date.

Jay Lund, vice director for the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis, said most of California's reservoirs, despite what the weather brings in coming months, will have enough in storage to make their usual deliveries this year. The concern, he said, is if this wet season remains dry and the season is dry again next year.

"Given how many dry years we've had in the last decade or so, I suspect water managers will be a little stingy and want to save water," he said.

The Bay Area's biggest suppliers say they're monitoring snowpack conditions vigilantly and being prudent with deliveries. Both the snow-dependent supplies of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the East Bay Municipal Utility District currently stand at slightly above average for the date.

"We refilled our reservoirs last year, and we are optimistic that a normal or just-below-normal scenario would not trigger drought restrictions," said Andrea Pook, spokeswoman for EBMUD. "If we are average for the remainder of the season, we believe we can fill our system."

The National Weather Service says the storm window in Northern California will likely open up on Friday, bringing rain to the Bay Area this weekend and potentially several feet of snow to the Sierra by Sunday. Another wet system is forecast early next week.

The Climate Prediction Center, a division of the weather service that makes longer-term but less reliable forecasts, says the remainder of the wet season could go either way in California. The trend that has left the far north wet and the far south dry, however, is likely to continue, forecasters say.

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Trump says he opened California's water. Local officials say he nearly flooded them.
Politico | January 31, 2025 | Camille von Kaenel and Annie Snider



The Army Corps of Engineers scaled back its releases from Lake Kaweah, pictured in 2021, after local water managers said it could cause flood damage. | Brian Melley/AP

SACRAMENTO, California — President Donald Trump declared victory on Friday in his long-running water war with California, boasting he sent billions of gallons south — but local officials say they narrowly prevented him from possibly flooding farms.

“Today, 1.6 billion gallons and, in 3 days, it will be 5.2 billion gallons. Everybody should be happy about this long fought Victory! I only wish they listened to me six years ago — There would have been no fire!” he said in a post on his social media site.

Local officials had to talk the Army Corps of Engineers down after it abruptly alerted them Thursday afternoon it was about to increase flows from two reservoirs to maximum capacity — a move the agency said was in response to Trump directing the federal government to “maximize” water supplies.

Before the Corps ratcheted down its plan, local authorities scrambled to move equipment and warn farms about possible flooding, said Victor Hernandez, who oversees water management on one of the rivers, the Kaweah in Tulare County. He said the Corps gave him one hour notice on Thursday.

“I’ve been here 25 years, and I’ve never been given notice that quick,” Hernandez said. “That was alarming and scary.”

The incident is the latest chapter in an ongoing feud between Trump and state authorities that has been turbo-charged by the Los Angeles fires, which the president has used to reignite long-running complaints about water management that had nothing to do with the response to the disaster.

An Army Corps spokesperson tied the releases to Trump’s executive order on Sunday directing all federal agencies to maximize water deliveries in order to respond to the fires that started in Los Angeles earlier this month.

“Consistent with the direction in the Executive Order on Emergency Measures to Provide Water Resources in California, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is releasing water from Terminus Dam at Lake Kaweah and Schafer Dam at Success Lake to ensure California has water available to respond to the wildfires,” Gene Pawlik said in a statement.

While releasing water from reservoirs before a big storm, like the one expected to hit Northern California this weekend, is standard flood-control procedure to avoid overflowing dams, Hernandez said the Army Corps’ Thursday plan would have released far more water than needed. He said releasing the water at the capacity the Corps had planned to would have flooded both the Kaweah and Tule rivers, where the Corps’ reservoirs are located.

“Channel capacity is very dangerous,” Hernandez said. “People don’t understand that [with] channel capacity, you’re going to have flood damage down below.”

Trump since his first term and during his presidential campaigns has repeatedly vowed to send more water to Central Valley farmers in the state’s conservative heartland. He incorrectly blamed the temporary lack of water in Los Angeles hydrants during wildfires earlier this month on the state’s water management policies, though the state’s reservoirs are at or near historic levels right now and the hydrants went dry because of the high local demand. He’s also threatened to withhold disaster aid unless California goes along with his moves to deliver more water.

Officials from his Department of Government Efficiency visited a federal water-pumping station in Northern California on Monday, after which Trump posted on Truth Social that “The United States Military just entered the Great State of California and, under Emergency Powers, TURNED ON THE WATER.” California officials clarified Monday that the federal pumps had been down due to electrical maintenance.

But a former senior Bureau of Reclamation official said moves like the one in Tulare County could endanger property and lives. Reclamation is the primary federal agency with authority over delivering water in the West, while the Army Corps is largely responsible for flood control.

“Something really bad could happen because of their nonsensical approach,” the former official, who was granted anonymity because of the issue’s political sensitivity, said. “Floods are real. This isn’t playing around with a software company.”

Rick Brown, the public affairs officer for the Army Corps of Engineers in Sacramento, said Friday the two reservoirs had hit water levels high enough on Thursday to trigger standard flood control releases.

He referred further questions about the decision to maximize water releases to Army Corps headquarters.

Hernandez said he was told by Jenny Fromm, the Army Corp’s chief water manager in Sacramento, that the decision came from “somewhere above.” The White House did not respond to a request for comment on whether it ordered the releases.

Hernandez said that after he resisted the decision, Fromm told him the Corps would release the water at a third of the original planned speed, rather than at maximum capacity. Aaron Fukuda, the general manager of the Tulare Irrigation District, also confirmed the Army Corps reduced flood releases after local officials pushed back.

Firefighters had almost completely contained the Palisades and Eaton fires as of early Friday. The Army Corps did not respond to a question about how the water would reach Los Angeles, about 200 miles away. Hernandez said the water would go to Tulare Lake, a dry lakebed that last filled up during record-high rainfall in 2023.

Other water experts said it would have been nearly impossible to divert the water to Los Angeles at the speed the Corps originally planned to release it. There is a rarely used state valve that can redirect Tulare Lake floodwaters into the aqueduct that carries water further south into Los Angeles, but neither state nor federal officials responded to a question asking if they would turn it on.

Hernandez said he thinks the current releases are still too much because, he said, the reservoir has enough capacity to absorb any coming storm and would not overflow.

Dumping the water from Lake Kaweah and Success Lake poses a flood risk to downstream communities, he said, like the town of Porterville, which nearly flooded during rainstorms in 2023. It also reduces the amount of irrigation water available to farmers during the driest months of the year. The snowpack in the Southern Sierra Nevada that California depends on for water

supplies in the summer has dipped to 47 percent of average for this time of year after a dry January, according to state estimates released Friday.

“We need to keep every bit that we have, because this potentially is irrigation water that we have up there,” Hernandez said.

He said he and board members at his water district had called on members of Congress to intervene, including Democratic Rep. Jim Costa and Republican Reps. David Valadao and Vince Fong. None responded to requests for comment.

Democratic Sen. Alex Padilla sent Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, whose Defense Department oversees the Army Corps, a letter on Friday night asking him who directed the releases, how the water would be transported to Los Angeles, how much notice was given and what the impact would be on local communities.

“Unscheduled water releases require close coordination with local officials and safety personnel, as well as downstream agricultural water users, in order to reduce flood risks to communities and farms,” wrote Padilla. “Based on the urgent concerns I have heard from my constituents, as well as recent reporting, it appears that gravely insufficient notification was given, recklessly endangering residents downstream.”

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State to allocate more water from Northern California, increasing supplies, denting drought woes

The State Water Project, a 700-mile north-south aqueduct, will send billions more gallons to SoCal

Los Angeles Daily News | January 30, 2025 | Steve Scauzillo



Water in the California Aqueduct flows past homes in Palmdale on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025. (Photo by Dean Musgrove, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

A modest bump in the allocation of water being released from Northern California will make billions of additional gallons available to Southern California water agencies, according to state and local experts. The extra amount may help serve as drought insurance for years ahead, water managers say.

The state Department of Water Resources announced on Tuesday, Jan. 28 it has raised the allotment of requested supplies delivered by the State Water Project from 15% to 20%, which amounts to a total allocation of about 526,709 acre-feet for Southern California water agencies for 2025, or just under 172 billion gallons of water.

Of that amount, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the largest wholesaler of water in the state, is scheduled to receive 382,300 acre-feet, the most of any agency, the DWR reported. Previously, under the 15% allocation set in December, MWD was to receive 286,725

acre-feet, meaning MWD's allocation jumped by about 96,000 acre-feet or about 31 billion gallons.

One-acre foot equals 325,851 gallons and is enough to supply three families in Southern California for a year. The State Water Project provides water to 29 public water agencies, serving 27 million Californians.

"It is very good news," said Bob DiPrimio, president of the San Gabriel Valley Water Co., which serves 290,000 people in 16 cities. "It is a good sign."

While drought conditions persist in Southern California despite the past weekend's rain and snow storms, storms in late November and December in Northern California — a major source of local water supplies — produced runoff that topped off reservoirs already nearing or above historic levels, according to state water resources agencies and water contractors.

The raising of the allocation was the result of assessing the positive effects of more rain and snow that fell in Northern California, a typical evaluation done yearly by state water agencies. While President Trump said turning a valve will bring more water into Southern California for fighting fires, water experts said there is no "valve" that moves water from the Pacific Northwest into California.

Also, there is no shortage of water in Southern California. As of Friday, all of the major reservoirs in SoCal were above their historic average levels, with the largest, Diamond Valley, 97% full. Also, almost all key Northern California reservoirs feeding the SWP are at levels exceeding historic averages.

"This has been debunked over and over again in the past two weeks," said Peter Gleick, president emeritus of the Pacific Institute, a non-profit water research center based in Oakland, last week. "There is zero connection between firefighting water needs and California's water policy."

As of Jan. 29, the following key reservoirs that provide water to the State Water Project — also known as the California Aqueduct, which channels water about 700 miles to Southern California — were filled above historic to-date averages: Shasta, 118%; Oroville, 126%; Trinity, 123%; San Luis, 102%.

In Southern California, reservoirs are also at or above levels expected at this time of year: Castaic Lake, 98% and Diamond Valley near Hemet, 133%.

The recent wetter weather in Southern California has helped firefighters bring the Eaton and Palisades fires that have caused the destruction of thousands of homes just about to full containment, with only mop up of hot spots continuing, according to Cal Fire.

While Southern California has returned to dry conditions, the DWR said more storms are needed to send more Northern California water to the south. And the long-range forecast hints at wet conditions returning in early February in the state.

“We are in the middle of our biggest months for precipitation for California, and unfortunately January has been very dry, putting a significant dent in our season,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “A return to wet weather is critical for our season’s success and it will take many more storms to make up the deficit and further boost water supply deliveries.”

About 27 state water contractors buy water from the SWP, and they are located in Northern, Central and Southern California. They are cautiously optimistic that more storms, particularly in the Sierra Nevada, will result in more water flowing down the state aqueduct.

“We are hopeful that incoming storms will allow for additional allocation increases this season. With each adjustment, our members get more of the water supplies they need to serve the homes, businesses, and farms of a combined 27 million Californians,” said Jennifer Pierre, general manager of the state water contractors, in a statement released on Wednesday, Jan. 29.

Shivaji Deshmukh, general manager of the Chino-based Inland Empire Utilities Agency, called the development “promising,” but said challenges remain. “However, we need to stay mindful that our region has a semi-arid climate and water supply can drastically be affected by such climate characteristics,” he said in an emailed response.

Three Valleys Municipal Water District is a wholesale water agency that delivers mostly imported water from the SWP to half a million people via retail water companies serving Glendora, San Dimas, Pomona, Claremont, Diamond Bar, Rowland Heights, La Verne and parts of Covina.

It buys Northern California water from Metropolitan’s Weymouth Treatment Plant in La Verne, where the water is treated. It also treats SWP water at its Miramar Treatment Plant in Claremont.

“At a 20% allocation, we are not going to have any cuts by any means,” said Matt Litchfield, Three Valleys general manager. “Metropolitan has enough water to meet our needs.”

Another factor besides filling above-ground reservoirs with SWP water is local well water. In Southern California, vast underground aquifers are tapped by wells, which draw up water served to households.

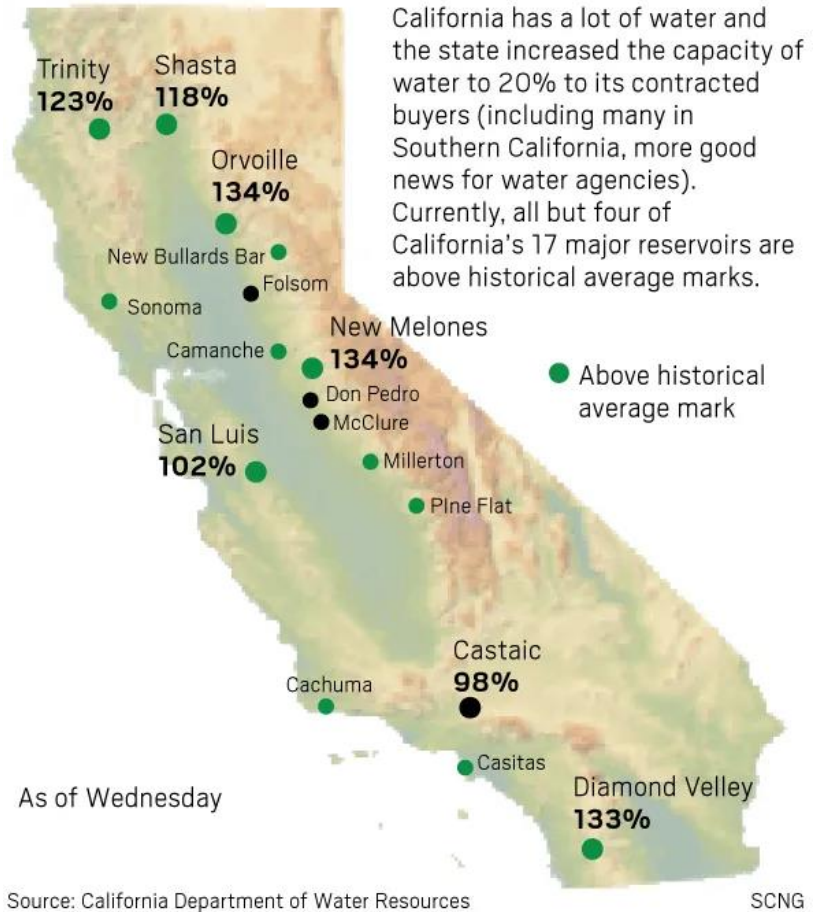
DiPrimio’s agency, for example, relies on wells sunk into the Main San Gabriel Basin, a very large aquifer that he calls an underground, invisible reservoir, which holds 9 million acre-feet of water.

The rains of the last two California winters has produced a considerable supply of water, both locally and from Northern California and the Colorado River Basin, which was used to pour into spreading grounds that allow for seepage into the aquifer for storage.

“The Main San Gabriel Basin is a huge underground reservoir and it is in the best shape it has been in the last 10 years,” he said. The key well, used to measure the underground water level, has been at the highest level in 10 years, he added.

Local rain and snowmelt from last weekend may not reach these spreading grounds because the watershed was so dry the soil sucked up most of the moisture. But the next rainfall and spring snowmelt may be primed to reach groundwater storage sites, he said. “This will add to the local water supplies, eventually,” he added.

Major state reservoirs’ water supply



But when it comes to Southern California water managers, their eyes are on the weather forecast in Northern California. Litchfield said meteorologists predict “a significant storm” that could bring more snow to the Sierra Nevada, which turns into runoff down the 700-mile conduit.

“Then we will see a better allocation of say, 25%,” he said, adding the caveat: “But you never know.”

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California water experts respond to Pres. Trump's claims on the state's water supply
Experts say California's water system is very complicated and moving water is more difficult than it seems.

ABC10 | January 29, 2025 | Jeannie Nguyen

CALIFORNIA, USA — President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed he is boosting California's water supply through executive orders, but experts argue the efforts will make little difference.

"California has two major water projects. One of them is the federal project, which is called the Central Valley Project, and the other is run by the state, which is the State Water Project. Both projects basically take water from the same areas, which is in the Sacramento Valley, and that water has to pass through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta," said Jeffrey Mount, a founding director of the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis and PPIC senior fellow.

Mount said the system is closely intertwined, delivering water to different parts of the state.

"Here's two sets of two facilities which are practically side-by-side and often actually exchange water. They work under what's called a coordinated operating agreement," Mount said.

President Trump has said more water from the north would have helped the Los Angeles fires, but Mount argues Trump's executive orders will do little to nothing for Southern California.

"The flow and water quality standards are set forward by the federal government and the state government. It's very closely intertwined. It's very difficult to disentangle these two," Mount said.

He also addressed Trump's Truth Social post this week when he claimed the military entered California and "turned on the water."

"There is no big valve or anything that the Army can come in and turn that will result in gobs of water. And the reason is that this water system in California is highly constrained," Mount said.

Just this week, the Department of Government Efficiency took credit for doubling the water pumped towards Southern California after pumps had been turned off. Experts say that claim is very misleading.

"Let's be clear about what happened. They shut down the pumps for the federal project, in particular, for maintenance. They do that all the time," Mount said.

While there are a lot of questions about Trump's executive order, the Westlands Water District believes Trump's order will ultimately help the Central Valley because of potential changes to the Central Valley Project.

"I think this executive order would help Central Valley farmers and communities, but I think it would help also the entire state by taking a fresh look and making sure that we're maximizing water supplies to to everyone," said Allison Febbo, with the Westlands Water District.

The State Water Project announced they're increasing their water deliveries this year. The state's Department of Water Resources said they've increased deliveries to 20% of the requested supplies, up from 15%, because storm runoff into the state's reservoirs was higher than forecasted. They added in another news release this week that California reservoir levels are at historic highs, contrary to what President Trump has been saying.

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