



News for Immediate Release

January 26, 2009

Contacts: Don Strickland, Information Officer (916) 653-9515
Ted Thomas, Information Officer (916) 653-9712
Elissa Lynn, Senior Meteorologist (916) 574-2221
Frank Gehrke, Snow Surveys Office (916) 952-4044 (on-site cell phone number on day of survey)
Amy Norris, Information Officer (916) 654-3755

DWR Schedules Second Snow Survey of 2008-2009 Season

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct its second snow survey of the season at 11 a.m., Thursday, January 29, 2009, near Lake Tahoe.

Survey Location and Results

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

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

Water Supply Threats

California's snowpack water content is particularly significant this year because the state has endured two years of drought and reservoirs are low. Because less-than-normal water supply conditions exist, the initial State Water Project (SWP) allocation for 2009 was placed at only 15 percent of water contractors' requested amounts. The results of this survey will impact future allocations. Precipitation to date is at only 77 percent of normal statewide, threatening another dry year, while unseasonably warm and dry conditions are rapidly eroding the snowpack.

Besides dry conditions, regulatory restrictions to protect native fish species are severely impacting SWP deliveries. Most recently, the National Marine Fisheries Service released a draft of its Biological Opinion (BiOp) to protect salmon and steelhead, which could further reduce water delivery. Previous restrictions include the Fish and Wildlife Service BiOp to protect Delta smelt that could reduce deliveries from 20 to 50 percent.

Regardless of snowpack conditions, it is clear water deliveries through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta will remain in jeopardy because of regulatory uncertainty. DWR is working towards a comprehensive solution that must include additional water storage and alternate conveyance. These measures would increase water supply reliability for farms and businesses, and benefit fisheries. Alternate conveyance would allow water deliveries, while avoiding pumping hazards to the most sensitive fish species.

About Snow Surveying

Snow-water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation

industry, with much needed data.

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

In addition to this single manually measured site, reporters can find the latest real-time estimations of statewide water content posted on the Internet at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snowsurvey_sno/DLYSWEQ

-0-

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.