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Third 2013 Snow Survey Scheduled for February 28

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct this winter's third snow survey on Thursday, February 28.

It is expected that manual measurements of snowpack water content will corroborate the low electronic readings from remote sensors up and down the state's mountain ranges.

Electronic readings today indicate that statewide, water content in the snowpack is only 68 percent of normal for the date, and 58 percent of the average April 1 measurement when the snowpack is normally at its peak before the spring melt.

Surveyors from DWR and cooperating agencies will fan out to numerous sites for the third of five manual snow surveys made each winter to forecast the amount of frozen water that will trickle into streams, reservoirs and aquifers when the snow melts this spring and early summer.

One focus of media attention will be the manual survey scheduled for 11 a.m. off Highway 50 near Echo Summit. Reporters and photographers driving to this site – Phillips Station at Highway 50 and Sierra at Tahoe Road approximately 90 miles east of Sacramento – should park along Highway 50 and are advised to bring snowshoes or cross-country skis. Results should be available by 1 p.m.

Through February 22, the Northern Sierra 8-Station Precipitation Index shows that the total combined precipitation from January and February of this water year is only 2.2 inches, or about 13 percent of the two month total average. With the current outlook through the end of the month showing dry conditions, this would end up as the driest January and February combined total on record (since 1920). The next driest was 1991 with 4.0 inches.

DWR currently estimates that it will be able to deliver 40 percent of the slightly more than 4 million acre-feet of State Water Project water requested for this calendar year by the 29 public agencies that supply more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland. The delivery estimate may increase as more winter storms develop.

The final allocation of State Water Project water in calendar year 2012 was 65 percent of requested deliveries. The allocation was 80 percent in 2011, 50 percent in 2010, 40 percent in 2009, 35 percent in 2008 and 60 percent in 2007. The last 100 percent allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years because of restrictions on Delta export pumping to protect sensitive fish species – was in 2006.

Despite the dwindling snowpack, most key storage reservoirs are above or near historic levels for the date. An exception is San Luis Reservoir, a critical offstream reservoir south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that is only at 70 percent of its historic level for the date. San Luis normally is filled by pumping from the Delta, which has been restricted to protect Delta smelt.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's principal storage reservoir, is at 113 percent of average for the date (80 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity), Lake Shasta north of Redding, the federal Central Valley Project's largest reservoir with a capacity of 4.5 million acre-feet, is at 108 percent of its normal storage level for the date (79 percent of capacity).

Electronic snowpack readings are available on the Internet at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>

Electronic reservoir level readings may be found at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action>

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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.