CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Workshop on Improving Drought Prediction Scheduled April 29-May 1 in San Diego

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is co-sponsoring a workshop with the Western States Water Council, in coordination with the Western Governors' Association, on improving drought prediction at seasonal to inter-annual timescales. The workshop will be held on April 29 – May 1 in San Diego. Logistics information and the agenda may be found at: www.westernstateswater.org/wswc-cdwr-wga-improving-drought-prediction-workshop. The workshop will begin at 1 p.m. on April 29 and end at noon on May 1.

The purpose of the workshop is to help the western states and federal water and science agencies identify and scope actions that could assist in improving drought prediction at the near-term time scales important for operational drought preparedness and response. Topics to be discussed at the meeting will include work being performed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Integrated Drought Information Systems program, opportunities for making better use of existing climate information, possible synergies with forecasting performed for purposes other than water supply prediction, and potential new approaches on various aspects of the science. Also discussed will be the status of ongoing drought conditions in the Colorado River Basin and the factors causing last summer's widespread Midwestern drought.

Improving drought prediction would be valuable in planning for the potential of a third dry year in California, as would happen if water year 2014 were dry. Water year 2013 is California's second dry year, following a dry 2012. Although storage in most of the state's major reservoirs is good due to a wet early start to the water year, the record dry conditions occurring later in the winter resulted in diminished Sierra-Cascade snowpack and consequent forecasts of low spring runoff. Water users most immediately affected by this year's dry conditions include non-irrigated agricultural operations such as livestock grazing, irrigated agriculture on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, and small water systems with unreliable groundwater sources. Allocations for State Water Project contractors stand at 35 percent of contractors' requested amounts; federal Central Valley Project south-of-Delta agricultural allocations stand at 20 percent of requested amounts. Additionally, increased wildfire risk is another consequence of dry conditions.

This year's dry status emphasizes the need to conserve and prepare for the potential of a dry 2014. Impacts of a third dry year would be expected to be more widespread, as storage in reservoirs and groundwater basins is depleted and soil moisture levels continue to decline. Previously, California's most recent three-year dry sequence was the 2007-09 drought.

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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.