CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 3, 2014

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First Snow Survey of 2014 Shows Dry Conditions

California Braces for Possible Third Dry Year

SACRAMENTO – As California's dry weather pushes into the new year, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) today announced that its first snow survey of the winter found more bare ground than snow.

Manual and electronic readings record the snowpack's statewide water content at about 20 percent of average for this time of year. That is a mere 7 percent of the average April 1 measurement, when the snowpack normally is at its peak before melting into streams and reservoirs to provide a third of the water used by California's cities and farms.

"While we hope conditions improve, we are fully mobilized to streamline water transfers and take every action possible to ease the effects of dry weather on farms, homes and businesses as we face a possible third consecutive dry year," said DWR Director Mark Cowin. "And every Californian can help by making water conservation a daily habit."

The last time California's statewide snowpack was this dry was in 2012 when it also was 20 percent of the historical average. The readings today and in 2012 are the driest on record.

Today's electronic readings indicate that water content in the northern mountains is 11 percent of normal for the date and 4 percent of the April 1 average. Electronic readings in the central Sierra show 21 percent of normal for the date and 8 percent of the April 1 average. The numbers for the southern Sierra are 30 percent of average for the date and 10 percent of the April 1 average.

In addition to the sparse snowpack, many areas of California ended calendar year 2013 with the lowest rainfall amounts on record. Normally one of California's wettest spots with an average annual rainfall of nearly 100 inches, Gasquet Ranger Station in Del Norte County ended the year with only 43.46 inches. Sacramento, which normally gets about 18 inches, ended up with 5.74 inches of precipitation. And downtown Los Angeles, which since 1906 has averaged 14.74 inches of rain, ended the year with 3.4 inches, beating the previous low of 4.08 inches recorded in 1953.

DWR and cooperating agencies conduct manual snow surveys around the first of the month from January to May. The manual measurements supplement and check the accuracy of real-time electronic readings.

Results of today's manual readings by DWR off Highway 50 near Echo Summit are as follows:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	7.9 inches	2 inches	15
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	9.3 inches	2.3 inches	20
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	15.4 inches	3.6 inches	31
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	inches	inches	Missing

Historic Comparison
The average January 1 snowpack water content at Phillips Station is about 12 inches and the April 1 average 27.6 inches. Phillps had its lowest water content reading of 0.1 inch in 2012, in a snow depth of only 0.6 inches. On January 2 last year (2013) at Phillips there were 12.1 inches of water in 48.8 inches of snow. Besides 2012, the driest years at Phillips were 1987 (0.9 inches of snowpack water content), 1981 (2 inches), 1976 (2.7 inches) and 2000 (3 inches). Records at Phillips go back 50 years

DWR currently estimates it will be able to deliver only 5 percent of the slightly more than 4 million acre-feet of State Water Project (SWP) water requested for calendar year 2014 by the 29 public agencies that collectively supply more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland. It is hoped the initial 5 percent delivery estimate – tied with calendar year 2010 for the lowest initial allocation ever -- will increase as winter storms develop. The initial 2010 delivery estimate, made on the heels of the 2007-2009 drought, was eventually increased to 50 percent as winter storms developed.

The final SWP allocation for calendar year 2013 was 35 percent of the slightly more than 4 million acre-feet requested. In 2012, the final allocation was 65 percent. It was 80 percent in 2011, up dramatically from an initial allocation of 25 percent. The final allocation was 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 Delta pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish – was in 2006.

DWR weather watchers note that it's early in the season and this winter could still turn out wet. The concern, however, is that irrigation-dependent San Joaquin Valley farms and some other areas will be hard hit if we have another dry year without the cushion of reservoir storage that we had in calendar year 2013 due to the storms in late 2012 before California began sliding toward drought.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's (SWP) principal reservoir, today is at only 36 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity (57 percent of its historical average for the date). Shasta Lake north of Redding, California's and the federal Central Valley Project's (CVP) largest reservoir, is at 37 percent of its 4.5 million acre-foot capacity (57 percent of average for the date). San Luis Reservoir, a critical south-of-Delta reservoir for both the SWP and CVP, is a mere 30 percent of its 2 million acre-foot capacity (43 percent of average for the date) due both to dry weather and Delta pumping restrictions last winter to protect salmon and Delta smelt. Delta water is pumped into the off-stream reservoir in winter and early spring for summer use in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

The continuing dry weather prompted Director Cowin on December 13 to mobilize DWR's drought management team "to offset potentially devastating impacts to citizen health, well-being and our economy."

Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. has united DWR and other agencies in an Interagency Drought Task Force.

DWR and other agencies will streamline transfers of water from areas of relative abundance to areas of critical need, monitor water supply impacts in small rural communities whose groundwater sources are stressed by prolonged dry conditions, and take other steps to mitigate the effects of dry weather.

Electronic snowpack readings are available on the Internet at:
http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/snowapp/sweq.action

Electronic reservoir readings may be found at:
http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action

For a broader snapshot of current and historical weather conditions, see DWR's "Water Conditions" and "Drought" pages:

Water Conditions Page: http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/

Drought Page: http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/

Note to News Media: DWR will make HDV footage of the Snow Survey available at:
ftp://ftp.water.ca.gov/PAO_video_downloads/Snow%20Surveys%202014/

Footage should be posted by 1 p.m.

For questions about the footage, contact DWR Videographer Albert Madrid at (916) 717-9833, Albert.Madrid@water.ca.gov

For everyday tips on conserving water, click on "Save Our Water."

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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.