

HHIA - Utility Report for Meeting on 2020.02.24

Main San Gabriel Key Water Well Level updates:

Current: (As of 2020.02.14), **210.6** ft. (71.32% to High).

**** Historic Low: 169.4 ft. (on 2018.11.21)**

Historic High: 295.30 ft. on 1983.07.20 (Since entry of judgment in 1973)

Related link:

<http://www.watermaster.org/>

California Natural Resources Agency

State Agencies Present Framework for Voluntary Agreements to Improve Habitat and Flow in the Delta and Key Watersheds

Published Date: **Feb 04, 2020**

SACRAMENTO — The California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency today shared a framework for potential voluntary agreements to improve river flows and habitat to help recover salmon and other native fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its key watersheds.

The framework outlines a 15-year program that would provide substantial new flows for the environment to help recover fish populations, create 60,000 acres of new and restored habitat, and generate more than \$5 billion in new funding for environmental improvements and science.

It expands on previous commitments of flows, habitat restoration and funding described in public documents in March and July.

“This framework is an important milestone, but there is much work ahead to shape it into a legally enforceable program,” California Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot said. “We’re committed to developing successful voluntary agreements because they hold the promise of improving environmental conditions more quickly and holistically than regulatory requirements, while providing more certainty to communities, farms and businesses.”

The State Water Resources Control Board is required to update its Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan to protect native fish, wildlife and other “beneficial uses” of water, including municipal, domestic and agricultural water supplies.

The framework shared today seeks to implement the Bay-Delta Plan through an integrated program that includes expansive habitat creation, significant new flows for the environment above existing conditions, substantial funding for environmental improvements and a new, collaborative science program for monitoring and adaptive management.

“The decline of salmon and native species in the Delta and its major rivers requires immediate action,” California Secretary for Environmental Protection Jared Blumenfeld said. “This science driven framework has the potential to achieve landscape-scale improvements and deliver water and habitat on a faster timeline than the traditional regulatory pathway.”

The framework provides for up to 900,000 acre-feet of new flows for the environment above existing conditions in dry, below-normal and above-normal water year types, and several hundred thousand acre-feet in critical and wet years to help recover fish populations.

It also provides for 60,000 acres of new habitat, from targeted improvements in tributaries to large landscape-level restoration in the Sacramento Valley. Habitat improvements include creation of spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and smelt, completion of high-priority fish screen projects, restoration and reactivation of flood plains, projects to address predation, and fish passage improvements.

In addition, the framework outlines \$5.2 billion in investments funded by water users, the state and the federal government to improve environmental conditions and science and adaptive management. It also establishes a governance program to strategically deploy flows and habitat, implement a science program and develop strategic plans and annual reports.

In coming weeks and months, the California Natural Resources Agency and CalEPA will work with water users and other participants to refine the proposed framework into a legally enforcement program. The refined document will then be submitted to the State Water Board where it will undergo a third-party scientific review, environmental review and a public approval process by the State Water Board.

More on the framework is available at <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Voluntary-Agreements>

Related link:

<https://resources.ca.gov/Newsroom/Page-Content/News-List/Framework-for-Voluntary-Agreements-to-Improve-Habitat-and-Flow-in-the-Delta-and-Key-Watersheds>

LA Times

Is California headed back into drought, or did we never really leave one?

By Paul Duginski

Feb 15, 2020

The most recent U.S. Drought Monitor, issued on Thursday, shows an oval-shaped patch of Central California slipping back into moderate drought. This is after a couple months where the Drought Monitor showed the state to be almost drought-free.

The 2018-19 water year that came to a close last June was good — above average in many places in the state — but not great. The 2019-20 water year got off to a fast start with a couple of potent storms, and Southern California was above seasonal norms even as Northern California lagged. Then January and February — two of the state's wettest months — turned bone dry. And February looks unlikely to overcome its arid habits before the month ends, even though the calendar has given it an extra day this year in which to try.

A persistent ridge of high pressure has taken up residence in the eastern Pacific, and it shows no sign of budging. It is diverting storms into the Pacific Northwest region, which means more dry weather for California.

But did the drought in California ever really end? Climatologist and weather expert Bill Patzert thinks Southern California continues to be mired in a two-decade drought, and he uses rainfall figures for downtown Los Angeles to illustrate his point.

Over a period of 143 years, the average annual rainfall recorded in downtown Los Angeles has been 14.93 inches. Rainfall figures for downtown Los Angeles from 1999 to 2019 show many more disappointingly dry years than robustly wet ones.

During the 21 years ending with the 2019 season, 14 years have been below average, and only seven have been above, according to Patzert, who until recently was with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. In fact, three of the driest years since 1878 occurred during this period: 2002, 2007 and 2018. The period from 2012 to 2016 accounted for the five driest consecutive years on record, when the average rainfall each year was only 7.74 inches, or 50% of normal.

Between 1999 and 2019, downtown Los Angeles was a total of almost 52 inches below average, Patzert points out. "That's like losing 3½ average years of rainfall over the last 21 years."

The lower rainfall brought the average for those years down to 12.47 inches per year — 2.47 inches short of normal each year, on average. "That's mucho groundwater, irrigation for crops, lots of dead lawns and mass mortality in the great forests of California," said Patzert.

"This drought did not simply come and go every other year, it has continued to deepen for two decades," Patzert explained. "And the impacts have been long-lasting for urban dwellers, farmers, water managers and especially firefighters."

The effects of persistent drought last a long time. For example, Lake Mead, a key reservoir formed by the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River, supplies water to millions of people in Arizona, California and Nevada, including Los Angeles. In 1999, its level was 1,212 feet above sea level. Now it's at 1,094 feet — 118 feet lower — which represents a 50% drop in the volume of the lake. It will take decades for the reservoir to recover, Patzert warns.

"That's ominous because the population served by water from the Colorado River has exploded since the 1950s," said Patzert. "Lake Mead is our drought monitor for the American Southwest."

Patzert emphasizes that although one or two dry years can be punishing, a slowly building, large-scale drought is much more damaging. Long, major droughts are not zero or 50% below-normal rain. Droughts are when you drop from an average of 14.93 inches of rain per year to 12.47 inches — a subtle 16% decrease in average rain for 21 years, he explained. The two-decade drop in the level of Lake Mead is the result.

"History and science show us that droughts are large, long-lasting, and they wax and wane," said Patzert. "This is especially true in the American West. The great Dust Bowl started in 1930 and lasted for almost a decade. California experienced on-again, off-again drought from the mid-1940s through the late 1970s. During these prolonged dry spells, a single wet year or two can provide temporary relief but will not break a multiyear drought.

"Droughts build incrementally, and recovery happens in slow motion, not with one wet year," he said. "Droughts fool you. You think you're out, and they pull you back in."

Related link:

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-02-15/is-california-headed-back-into-drought-or-did-we-never-really-leave-one>

CA State Water Boards Press Releases

California Marks Key Step Toward Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Management

Critically overdrafted groundwater basins are required to submit groundwater sustainability plans to the state by January 31, 2020

*Plans outline how the basins will reach sustainability over the next 20 years
Groundwater makes up about 40 percent of California's total water use and years of overpumping has led to subsidence, sea water intrusion, degraded water quality and other negative effects*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Local agencies representing 19 of the state's most stressed groundwater basins are required to submit plans to the state by midnight tonight on how they will manage their basins to achieve sustainability by 2040. Several plans were submitted early and were posted online today, starting a public comment period which closes on April 15, 2020. The remaining plans will be posted online in the coming weeks for a 75-day public comment period.

Overpumping of groundwater has led to a variety of negative effects including reduced groundwater levels, seawater intrusion, and degraded water quality. It has also led to subsidence, which causes damage to critical water infrastructure. In some cases, years of over-pumping have left entire California communities and farms without safe and reliable local water supplies.

“Groundwater is a critical component of the state's water supply resources,” said Karla Nemeth, director of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). “California's groundwater basins must be managed for long-term sustainability rather than for short-term need.”

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law in 2014, requires locally led Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to develop groundwater sustainability plans outlining actions and implementation measures to halt overdraft and bring groundwater basins into sustainable conditions. Plans for critically overdrafted basins are due today, Jan. 31, 2020. High- and medium-priority basins have until 2022 to submit plans and are required to reach sustainability by 2042. SGMA allows for more than one GSP to be prepared for a single basin as long as the GSAs demonstrate the plans work together through a coordination agreement.

“The premise of SGMA is that local agencies are best suited to craft plans to sustainably manage groundwater basins,” said Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. “If the state finds a groundwater plan is unlikely to achieve sustainability, the Water Board will temporarily step in to work with the local agency and DWR to bring the basin back into compliance.”

GSAs are submitting plans to DWR, the lead state agency providing compliance and regulatory oversight. The State Water Resources Control Board can intervene in basins when local management of groundwater is not successful.

Once a plan is submitted, DWR has 20 days to post it on the website, at which point the plans are open to public comment for 75 days. GSAs will begin implementing their plans immediately after they adopt them.

SGMA directs DWR to evaluate and assess all plans to determine whether each plan is adequate, based on best available science and information, and whether implementation of the plan is likely to achieve the groundwater basin's sustainability goal. More information about the plan submittal and review process and the significance of managing groundwater for long-term sustainability is contained on DWR's website.

Groundwater accounts for about 40 percent of the state's water use in a normal year and up to 60 percent during dry years. Groundwater is the only water supply for approximately a third of California residents, and many municipal, agricultural, and disadvantaged communities rely on groundwater for all of their water supply needs. Implementation of SGMA is an important component of Governor Newsom's recently released draft Water Resilience Portfolio.

"Groundwater storage will become even more important as California's changing climate produces less snow and more rain," Nemeth said. "Groundwater acts as a drought buffer by providing water that is available to use when surface water supplies are diminished."

Related link:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/press_room/press_releases/2020.html

Rowland Water District

"WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER BOTTLE?"

January 31, 2020 – Rowland Water District is launching a creative conservation program aimed at reaching students at a place they know well: the drinking fountain. "What's in Your Bottle?" features retrofitted filling stations at both Rowland and Blandford Elementary Schools. The District hopes that the concept of 'Ready, Set, Refill' will help students quickly learn the importance of reducing their dependency on plastic water bottles.

"This program aligns with our 'What's Your Water Footprint?' campaign and is designed to raise awareness in our schools about the incredibly large amount of plastic that is wasted during the course of each day," says Brittne Van De Car, Public Affairs Representative for Rowland Water District. "Unfortunately for our environment, this product ends up in the ocean and is harmful to sea life, so we wanted to have this conversation with our students so they are aware of the positive impact that they can have on their own communities by choosing to refill and reuse their water bottles."

Plumber Gary Garcia, Jr., President of The Plumbers Connection, Inc. in Montclair, was tasked with retrofitting the filling stations at both schools. The stations are designed to enhance sustainability by minimizing dependency on disposable plastic bottles.

"The filling station is outfitted with a special ticker which shows how many plastic bottles have been saved by using the new filling station," explains Garcia. They are mounted above the pre-existing water fountains, are easy to use and the bottles fill quickly."

By next year, District schools who want to participate in the program will enter a lottery system, with the goal to retrofit most of the older drinking fountains to new, chilled filling stations.

“Ultimately, two schools each year will be awarded the retrofit, and Rowland will cover 100% of the cost of labor, installation (electrical and plumbing), and the actual cost of the filling station. The goal is also to provide each student with a reusable bottle once we have completed the project,” Van De Car adds.

For more information about this program or about Rowland Water District visit www.rowlandwater.com

Related link:

<https://www.rowlandwater.com/whats-in-your-water-bottle/>

Report by *Ted Chang*
HHIA Board, Utility Director