Central Valley Water Storage At Low Level

Oakdale Leader, 10/12/22

After a third straight year of severe drought, the Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project begins the 2023 water year with 3.6 million acre-feet of water in storage — one of the lowest starting points in recent years. The CVP's major reservoirs are (from north to south) Trinity, Shasta, Folsom, New Melones, Millerton, and the federal share of San Luis Reservoir. The water year begins Oct. 1 each year and ends Sept. 30.

"The 2022 water year was wetter than 2020 and 2021 in some areas of the state, but it was still well below average and came on such a large water supply deficit that it earned the title as the worst three-year drought on record with some of the driest winter months on record," said Ernest Conant, regional director of the California-Great Basin region. "In order to navigate through this record-breaking drought, we had to modify operations outside of those considered in previous droughts and take a fresh look at every component of the CVP including facilities, contractors and environmental requirements."

The 2022 water year began with an atmospheric river that brought record rain to Northern California in October 2021. That was followed by a blast of winter storms in December that produced more than 6 feet of Sierra snow by the end of the month. Then, the storm door slammed shut, ushering three months of record dryness in northern California. The snowpack, vital to the state's water supply, was virtually non-existent by April 1.

Reclamation responded with a 0% allocation to CVP agricultural contractors, an agreement to significantly reduce releases from Shasta and Trinity reservoirs to prioritize storage conservation and temperature management, reducing deliveries to Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, and releasing water from Friant Dam to fulfill obligations to senior water right holders, the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors.

In anticipation of continued drought in 2023, Reclamation will pursue a water management strategy that emphasizes providing supplies for health and safety needs; maintaining suitable water quality in the Delta, which is the source of municipal drinking water for many communities; protecting species by meeting environmental requirements; conserving storage to meet future critical needs; and urban and agricultural water supplies.

The CVP is the largest single source of irrigation water in California, typically supplying water to about 3 million acres of agricultural land in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. The CVP also provides urban water for millions of people and industrial water, including that essential to the San Francisco Bay Area's economy. Water from the CVP is also vital for the environment, wildlife and fishery restoration, including providing water to 19 refuges in the Central Valley, and hydroelectric power production.

During the 2022 water year, CVP powerplants generated about 2 billion kilowatt-hours, very much below an average year of about 4.5 billion kilowatt-hours. Project use is

anticipated to have consumed about 20 percent of this energy; the remaining energy was made available to public agency contractors serve by the Western Area Power Administration.

Reclamation continues to work with federal and state partner agencies and CVP water and power customers to prepare for potentially ongoing drought conditions. Another consecutive dry water year will require conservative planning and assertive multiagency action.

California's COVID State of Emergency Ends February 28, 2023

CSDA eNews, 10/18/22

On Monday, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced that the COVID-19-related state of emergency proclaimed back in March 2020 would come to an end, terminating at the end of February 2023. The state of emergency remained in place throughout the pandemic, fostering the state's response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and serving as the basis for several initiatives related to public health. Now, with the state of emergency ending, any current initiatives relying on the active state of emergency for their operation will cease to remain in effect. Importantly, this will include local agencies who transition to remote meetings using the framework enacted by the passage of Assembly Bill 361 (R. Rivas, 2021); after February 28, 2023 these agencies will no longer be able to cite the COVID-19 state of emergency as the basis for their AB 361 resolutions, meaning that these agencies will be required to hold in-person meetings, remote meetings under the typical procedures (i.e., the procedures as they generally existed before the pandemic), or, after January 1, 2023, they may opt to use the procedures created by Assembly Bill 2449 (Rubio, 2022). While the provisions of AB 361 themselves technically remain in law until the end of 2023, those provisions require an active state of emergency for their operation.

The relevant text of AB 361 can be found at California Government Code section 54953 (e)(1), which reads as follows (emphasis added):

> (e) (1) A local agency may use teleconferencing without complying with the requirements of paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) if the legislative body complies with the requirements of paragraph (2) of this subdivision in any of the following circumstances:
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> > (A) The legislative body holds a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency, and state or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing.
> > (B) The legislative body holds a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency for the purpose of determining, by majority vote, whether as a result of the emergency, meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees.
> > (C) The legislative body holds a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency and has determined, by majority vote, pursuant to subparagraph (B), that, as a result of the emergency, meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees.

The reference "paragraph (3) of subdivision (b)" is to the typical Brown Act requirements (e.g., that meeting agenda notices be posted at each remote meeting site). "[P]aragraph (2)" refers to the procedural requirements of AB 361-compliant meetings.

Agencies currently relying on AB 361's provisions for their remote meetings should begin preparations for the transition to alternative meeting procedures. Those agencies looking to continue meeting remotely under non-emergency circumstances should become familiar with the terms of AB 2449; CSDA has previously written about AB 2449 in an earlier eNews article. Agencies may wish to collaborate with their colleagues and share plans and preparations for adjusting their meeting procedures on CSDA's Open Forum.

Newsom advisor warns of climate threats to farming

AgAlert, 10/12/22

California is preparing for a drier future.

Climate impacts affecting the state, such as drought, a shrinking snowpack, higher temperatures and wildfires, were central to a discussion last week by California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross and members of the state board of food and agriculture.

“California’s water supply strategy focuses on developing new water supplies, expanding storage, reducing demand and improving overall data and management,” Ross said. “As we look at a hotter and drier future, I know that California’s farmers and ranchers will continue to adapt and lead the nation in water-use efficiency and conservation.”

Speaking at the Oct. 4 board meeting, Kayla Ungar, CDFA special advisor for climate, water and drought, discussed Gov. Gavin Newsom’s water-supply strategy released in August. The plan outlines the state’s priority actions to adapt and protect water supplies in the face of a hotter, drier climate, she explained. She suggested that “more impacts are coming” from climate change.

Anticipated impacts, she said, include a temperature increase of up to 4.4 to 5.9 degrees, more heat events and a one-third decline in snowpack, even if precipitation remains stable. That would result in a 10% reduction in the state’s existing water supply by 2040. In addition, California expects to deal with rising sea levels and more wildfires, she said.

“Together, these impacts are an existential threat to agriculture and in particular, eight out of the 20 major crops grown in California, including almonds, wine grapes, table grapes, strawberries, hay, walnuts, freestone peaches and cherries,” Ungar said. “California’s managed water supply is currently 60 to 90 million acre-feet per year. The impact of a drier climate means the disappearance of about 6 to 9 million acre-feet of water supply.”

Newsom’s water-supply strategy prioritizes actions to capture, recycle, desalinize and conserve more water, and includes increasing storage by creating space for up to 4 million acre-feet, so the state can capitalize on big storms and store water for dry periods.

Other goals include building the water-storage projects voters approved in the 2014 Proposition 1 water bond, plus raising San Luis Reservoir and expanding groundwater recharge.

“To match the pace of climate change, California must move smarter and faster to update our water systems,” Ungar said.

Climate scientist Jonathan Overpeck made a presentation to the board about aridification, or the gradual change from a wetter to a drier climate. “I think things are changing dramatically,” said Overpeck, the Samuel A. Graham dean of the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan.

“It turns out, though, that warming is making the droughts a lot worse, more frequent and persistent,” Overpeck said. “The same warming is what’s leading to more wildfires, more heat waves and much worse tropical cyclone or hurricane disasters.”

While the severity of the warming is not the same everywhere, Overpeck said, warming has increased by about 1 degree Celsius or 2 degrees Fahrenheit. A failure to rein in climate change means warming could increase even more.

“In much of the West, much of the planet, the growing season has lengthened,” Overpeck said. “Spring comes earlier, winter comes later in the year, and that means, for example, in the headwaters of the Colorado River that the growing season is six weeks longer than it used to be. If it’s hot and dry enough, long enough, or it’s not raining, then you’re actually going to wilt and kill plants.”

California forests are experiencing more tree mortality due to warming, he said, adding that the snowpack is being lost to the atmosphere, and groundwater aquifers are becoming depleted.

“We have to cut our water use, but it’s not enough,” he said, adding that water security risks are affecting the entire planet.

“It’s going to be overwhelmed by climate change, so the sooner we get everyone acting on climate change just as aggressively or more than California, the sooner we are going to stabilize our sustainable water supplies and keep them from shrinking,” Overpeck said.

Newsom’s 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio called for voluntary agreements, a collaborative approach and an alternative to the 55% unimpaired flows for tributaries sought by the California State Water Resources Control Board.

David Guy, president of the Northern California Water Association, said “there’s a ton of momentum”for the voluntary agreement framework for the Sacramento River tributaries.

“We’ve actually already completed some projects under the voluntary agreement process, and there’s several more that are already in the pipeline under construction in all four rivers,” Guy said of the agreements, which include a portfolio of flows and projects to reactivate the landscape.

“All of this works in harmony,” Guy added. “Those of you who are farmers, you can farm in the spring and summer and in the fall. You put some water out for decomposition or for some other purposes that can really help birds in the Pacific Flyway.”

Guy said a governance proposal for the effort was submitted to the state water board. Once approved, he said, the plan would be an eight-year agreement with the potential for an extension to 15 years.

During the meeting, the board heard from California recipients of federal climate-smart commodity programs that will be implemented in state. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to $2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of funding. Projects from the second funding pool will be announced later this year.

Looking ahead to the 2023 water year, California State Board of Food and Agriculture President Don Cameron said “California agriculture must do its part to reduce overall demand, while maintaining family farms, markets, communities and our overall food security.”

“We remain hopeful for a drought-ending season,” Cameron added. “But understand that business as usual is a not a path forward.”

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