CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sierra Nevada Snowpack Is Virtually Gone; Water Content Now Is Only 5 Percent of Historic Average, Lowest Since 1950

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) found no snow whatsoever today during its manual survey for the media at 6,800 feet in the Sierra Nevada. This was the first time in 75 years of early-April measurements at the Phillips snow course that no snow was found there.

Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. observed the survey, which confirmed electronic readings showing the statewide snowpack with less water content today than any April 1st since 1950.

Attending the survey with Governor Brown was DWR Director Mark Cowin, who said Californians can expect to receive almost no water from the meager snowpack as it melts in the coming weeks.

“Today’s survey underscores the severity of California’s drought,” he said. “Water conservation must become a way of life during the worst drought in most Californians’ lifetimes.”

Today’s readings are historically significant, since the snowpack traditionally is at its peak by early April before it begins to melt. Electronic readings today found that the statewide snowpack holds only 1.4 inches of water content, just 5 percent of the historical average of 28.3 inches for April 1. The previous low for the date was 25 percent in 2014 and 1977.

The Phillips snow course, which has been surveyed since 1941, has averaged 66.5 inches in early-April measurements there. Four years ago today, the measured depth at Phillips was 124.4 inches. The deepest April 1st Phillips measurement was 150.7 inches in 1983, and the lowest previously was 1.04 inches in 1988. Photos of previous surveys at Phillips **can be found here.** Images from today’s survey will be posted at that link as soon as possible.

Electronic readings indicate the water content of the northern Sierra snowpack today is 1.4 inches, 5 percent of average for the date. The central and southern Sierra readings were 1.5 inches (5 percent of average) and 1.3 inches (5 percent) respectively.

Today’s manual survey was the fourth of the season conducted for the news media at the Phillips snow course just off Highway 50 near Sierra at Tahoe Road 90 miles east of Sacramento. When

DWR conducted the first three manual surveys on December 30, January 29 and March 3, the statewide water content in the snowpack was 50 percent, 25 percent and 19 percent respectively of the historical averages for those dates. The decline reflects California's significantly lower precipitation and the warming trend that made this winter the warmest in the state's recorded history. What precipitation there was fell mostly as rain due to warmer temperatures.

In what were considered normal precipitation years, the snowpack supplied about 30 percent of California's water needs as it melts in the spring and summer. The greater the snowpack water content, the greater the likelihood California's reservoirs will receive ample runoff as the snowpack melts to meet the state's water demand in the summer and fall.

Little precipitation has fallen in Northern California since early February. The eight weather stations there that have been monitored for generations have recorded 31.7 inches since the beginning of Water Year 2015 on October 1. That is 76 percent of the historical average for April 1. Further south, the five-station San Joaquin index has recorded 13.7 inches, 41 percent of normal for today's date, and the six-station index in the Tulare Basin is similarly far below normal – 10.3 inches, or 42 percent of the April 1 average there.

California's historically wettest winter months have already passed, and the drought is now firmly rooted in its fourth consecutive year.

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

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	Unknown	--	--
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	0 inches	0 inches	N/A
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	Unknown	--	--
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	0 inches	0 inches	N/A

The major water supply reservoirs are storing more water this year than last but are still far below the historical average for early March. Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's (SWP) principal reservoir, now holds 51 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity (67 percent of its historical average for the date). Shasta Lake north of Redding and the federal Central Valley Project's (CVP) largest reservoir, is at 59 percent of its 4.5 million acre-foot capacity (73 percent of its historic average). San Luis Reservoir, which serves both the SWP and CVP, holds much more water than it did one year ago due to recent water deliveries to the reservoir as a component of the agencies' drought management strategy. San Luis holds 66 percent of its 2 million acre-foot capacity (73 percent of normal for the date).

Governor Brown declared a **drought State of Emergency** on January 17, 2014 and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. He called on all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent.

The Water Resources Control Board on March 17 announced new restrictions on water use, including limiting outdoor watering to two days per week and prohibiting lawn watering during rainfall and during the next two days. The new rules also prohibit restaurants from offering water unless customers ask, and hotels must offer guests the opportunity to decline freshly laundered towels and sheets.

Conservation – the wise, sparing use of water – remains California's most reliable drought management tool. Each individual act of conservation, such as letting the lawn go brown or replacing a washer in a faucet to stop a leak, makes a difference over time.

Californians can learn easy ways to save water every day by visiting SaveOurWater.com. California's efforts to deal with the effects of the drought can be found at drought.ca.gov.

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

Reservoir conditions are found here:
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:
California's Most Significant Droughts--Comparing Historical and Recent Conditions:
http://water.ca.gov/waterconditions/docs/California_Signficant_Droughts_2015_small.pdf

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

Drought Breaking News Page:
http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/index.cfm

Everyday water conservation tips may be found by clicking on Save Our Water at:
http://www.saveourwater.com

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Visit SaveOurWater.com to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit http://drought.ca.gov to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought. 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.