

New Water Year Begins Amid Preparations for Continued Drought

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Aerial photo of Lake Oroville on Aug. 4, 2022 at 41 percent of total capacity.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Conserving water has become a way of life in California, especially as projections forecast warmer, drier conditions. The State’s new water year has begun and with it comes fresh concerns about a fourth year of extreme drought for the state.

California’s water year runs from October 1 to September 30 and is the official 12-month timeframe used by water managers to compile and compare hydrologic records.

Water Year 2022 ended on Friday and featured continued extreme drought with historically dry months and a record-shattering heatwave. Now, the focus shifts to the months ahead with state officials preparing for a fourth dry year.

Over the past 12 months, California saw extreme swings between record-breaking storms and dry conditions driven by our changing climate. In October 2021, parts of Northern California experienced the highest single-day rain totals ever, followed by a dry November and then a record snowfall in parts of the Sierra in December. Conditions took a turn again with the driest January, February, and March in over 100 years.

Despite some rain recorded in parts of California in September, uncertainty remains about what the new water year may bring. Long-range forecasting suggests warmer and drier than average conditions to persist.

“This is our new climate reality, and we must adapt. As California transitions to a hotter, drier future, our extreme swings from wet and dry conditions will continue,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “We are preparing now for continued extreme drought and working with our federal, state, local, and academic partners to plan for a future where we see less overall precipitation and more rain than snow.”

Water Year 2022 ended with statewide precipitation at 76 percent of average. Statewide reservoir storage is 69 percent of average for this time of year. Lake Oroville, the State Water Project’s largest reservoir, sits at 64 percent of average for this time of year.

The current drought from 2020 to 2022 is now the driest three-year period on record, breaking the old record set by the previous drought from 2013 to 2015. This extended, extreme drought is having an impact on all Californians, especially the State’s most vulnerable communities. California is aggressively addressing the urgent need for financial and technical support for water resilience projects across California. To date, DWR has provided over \$480 million in grant funding through its [Small Community](#) and [Urban and Multi-benefit Drought Relief](#) programs. This summer, the Legislature approved hundreds of millions in additional funding and programs to support these communities.

Californians can all do their part to adapt to the hotter, drier future by making water conservation a way of life. Governor Newsom has asked all Californians to reduce water usage at home by 15 percent. Learn more at [saveourwater.com](#). DWR also [recently announced a series of actions](#) to make water conservation more affordable through financial assistance and tax exemptions.

State water officials will provide an update to the media on current dry conditions and the outlook for this winter. DWR will also outline actions being taken now to better prepare for a hotter, drier future. **The media briefing will be held via Zoom at 1 p.m. today.** Credentialed media can register at https://ca-water-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcsce-tqj8sGNQmPNGyb0S8b9_Po0Tduh8Z.

Californians can access current water conditions in real time at [California Water Watch](#), a new website launched by DWR. This website will help Californians see their local hydrological conditions, forecasts, and water conditions down to their address or their local watershed. The site presents data from a variety of sources and allows the public to obtain a quick snapshot of local and statewide water conditions. [Complete data for Water Year 2022 is available now.](#)

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