



NEWS RELEASE

Association of California Water Agencies

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Latest Snow Survey Ratchets Up Concern

Water Agencies Brace for Shortages as Drought, Regulatory Issues Cut Supplies

Sacramento – Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Executive Director Timothy Quinn issued the following statement today on the latest snow survey results announced by the Department of Water Resources. The Sierra snowpack – a critical source of water for much of California – is at just 61% of average for this time of year. With eight weeks left in what is normally the wettest part of the season, a third drought year is increasingly likely.

“The latest snowpack numbers are more bad news for local water agencies. Unless the pattern changes drastically in the next few weeks, we are heading for tough times. The list of water agencies adopting mandatory restrictions on water use continues to grow, and I expect to see dozens more added to it by May.

“We have weathered multi-year droughts before, but what’s different in 2009 is that water agencies already have dipped into their water reserves as a result of measures to protect species. Those reserves, intended for drought and emergencies, had to be tapped because water deliveries were limited to protect species.

“Additional restrictions are expected soon for longfin smelt, which was recommended for listing this week, and for salmon and steelhead, which will be the subject of a new biological opinion in March. The combined effect of drought and regulatory action is putting us in uncharted territory.

“Water agencies have invested heavily since the last drought in tools and programs to prepare for dry times. But today’s situation goes well beyond that preparation. Many of our members will have little choice but to impose severe water use restrictions on their customers this year. Job losses and economic impacts already are mounting, and will only grow more severe. Every day, it becomes more and more urgent that we find a long-term solution that works for the environment and the economy.”

More on drought response measures by ACWA members is available at www.acwa.com.

ACWA is a statewide association of public agencies whose 450 members are responsible for about 90% of the water delivered in California. For more information, visit www.acwa.com.

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