

6 THINGS TO KNOW!

About California's Recent Snowpack Survey

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Just a few short months ago, Californians were living under mandatory water-saving regulations, and the state had endured the three driest years on record. Reservoirs were depleted, and emergency conservation measures seemed like a sure bet.

Fast forward from December 2022 to April 2023, and winter storms continue to roll throughout the western United States, dumping snow on the mountains and rescuing California from the most severe drought in recent memory. The April snowpack survey recorded 126.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water

equivalent of 54 inches. That's the most snowpack the state has seen since the '50s (when they started measuring regularly).

But how much is too much? Without adequate storage and infrastructure for conveyance, the bounties of this wet season are presenting a different set of issues, including severe flood risk to areas of the state, especially the Southern San Joaquin Valley.

Here is what you should know as the pendulum swings back from drought emergency to flood concern.

1

SNOWPACK IS BETTER THAN EVER

The southern mountains have received three years of snow so far, with snowpack in the Sierras ranging from 191% -298% of normal from north to south.

2

WINTER STORMS FLOOD THE STATE.

Newsworthy blizzards and more than a dozen atmospheric river storms swept across the state in just a few short months, breaking longstanding precipitation records.

3

STATE RESERVOIRS ARE FILLING.

The State's key reservoirs are filling fast. Shasta, Oroville, and Folsom are all well above 100% of average and further south, reservoirs like New Melones, San Luis, and Don Pedro are quickly following suit.

4

FLOOD CONCERNS ARE GROWING.

Forecasters predict at least one more swath of storms in the days ahead. Warmer temperatures with more precipitation will make snowmelt faster, raising the concern for flood risks.

5

DON'T COUNT DROUGHT OUT.

While California's drought map has certainly improved, some groundwater basins remain critically low. Premature snowmelt will prevent capturing and delivering water that will ultimately end up in the ocean. Meanwhile, the Colorado River Basin is so strained that even this barrage of atmospheric rivers only offers hope.

6

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONVEYENCE INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED.

Water providers are rolling back restrictions and turning off emergency measures, yet we still need more tools to manage supplies when they are abundant and a place to store them for the next drought.



Photo by: Frederic J. Brown