



## Dry Year Fact Sheet

January 20, 2013

### Unprecedented Conditions

The Sacramento region is experiencing unprecedented conditions. Calendar year 2013 was the driest in more than a century of record keeping. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, most of California is in a severe drought. Folsom Reservoir is below 20 percent of capacity and is expected to continue to drop to historically low levels as dry conditions persist. While we still may experience some wet weather this year, it will be unlikely to fully erase the effects of two back-to-back dry winters.

### Current Actions

Sacramento-area water providers are carefully considering the unusually dry conditions and the impact on local water supplies. Each water provider has a unique mix of water supplies, whether from Folsom Lake, the American, Sacramento or Cosumnes rivers, from underground or a combination of these. This mix influences whether and by how much customers are asked to cut back. Many have triggered their Water Shortage Contingency Plans, which increase the public's awareness about the prolonged dry streak and encourage or require customers to use less water. All water suppliers have a series of staged responses that may be implemented as the situation develops. RWA took the unprecedented step of urging all of its 21 water supplier members to reduce water use by 20 percent or more.

Several have expanded staffing to promote conservation and formed drought management teams to work with neighboring water providers, federal and state agencies and regional partners to coordinate planning and response. Many will be increasing use of alternate supplies, such as groundwater, in order to preserve water in our lakes and rivers. Water providers are also working together to evaluate how water supplies may be moved throughout the region to assist neighboring communities.

Members of the Water Forum, which include water providers, environmentalists and business leaders, have been meeting to consider ways to balance the water needs of people with those of fish and wildlife, all of which rely on the Wild and Scenic lower American River. Water Forum members came together to request the Bureau of Reclamation, which controls water flowing from Folsom Reservoir, to significantly reduce releases. Doing so will mean more water stored in Folsom Reservoir to meet the needs of over 500,000 people who rely on the reservoir for their water, including those living in Folsom, Roseville and Granite Bay. It is also hoped that these reductions will minimize the overall harm to fisheries. The Water Forum is working closely with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and fishery agencies to monitor the impacts of reduced flows on salmon and steelhead in the American River.

### Decades of Planning for Dry Conditions

While we face unprecedented conditions today, the efforts of water providers in the Sacramento region over the last two decades mean the region is better prepared to face dry periods.

- **The Water Forum Agreement:** Water providers, environmental groups, business interests and municipalities began a process after the drought of the early 1990s to resolve conflicts over the American River. The Water Forum Agreement that was reached in 2000 is an historic regional commitment to the coequal objectives of providing a safe and reliable water supply to support the region's economy and preserving the environment of the American River. The landmark agreement provides a foundation for collaborative solutions and a process to resolve future conflicts between stakeholders, especially during dry times.

- **Regional Water Management:** Water managers and a diverse group of stakeholders collaborated to develop and then update the region's comprehensive Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP). State and federal agencies recognized our leadership in regional planning by awarding more than \$70 million in grant funding to support dozens of integrated projects in the Sacramento region. These projects allow water providers to manage water resources to create regional benefits. The American River Basin Conjunctive Use Program, for example, makes it possible to preserve surface water in the American River for environmental needs during dry years by using groundwater supplies instead.
- **Water Reuse:** Water providers in the region have been leaders in the development of alternative water supplies. Some now meet nearly 10 percent of overall demand through recycled water, including leading the nation in the use of recycled water for residential landscape irrigation. Others have developed innovative agreements to put remediated groundwater from contamination plumes to beneficial uses to offset the use of potable water.
- **Water Use Reductions:** The Sacramento region significantly reduced its water use in the past decade. Per capita water use has been decreasing steadily since 2001 –from 290 gallons per person per day in 2001 to 218 gallons per person per day in 2010. As part of the Water Forum agreement, each water provider in the region committed to implementing a comprehensive water efficiency program. More than a decade later, water providers are dedicated to continuing the downward trend in water use.
- **Water Metering:** As a result of aggressive meter retrofit programs, the Sacramento region is now more than 80 percent metered, with most water provider service areas fully metered. With metering came state-of-the-art technology that allows water providers to target water conservation programs more effectively.
- **Urban Water Management Plans:** California water providers serving 3,000 or more connections are required to prepare and adopt an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) every five years. These plans outline actions for responding to drought conditions, as well as drought planning for multiple dry-year periods.

### **Tips for Using Less Water in Winter**

Residents and businesses must also do their part to save water every day, which helps stretch supplies and preserves water in the local waterways that help make the Sacramento region unique. Following are tips for wise watering during the winter season:

- **Limit landscape watering** to only once a week or not at all, following your water provider's guidelines. Plants typically don't need as much water this time of year. Lower temperatures, shorter daylight hours and moisture from fog and condensation all combine to reduce the water demands of a typical landscape. If you have the type of lawn that is dormant during the winter, most likely it does not need supplemental water.
- **Reduce water use inside** by washing only full loads of clothes, turning off the water while cleaning dishes, brushing teeth or shaving, and repairing leaky toilets and faucets.
- **Make longer-term investments in water efficiency** by replacing older toilets, clothes washers, dishwashers and showerheads with high-efficiency models, or by upgrading water-wasting sprinklers and irrigation equipment. Many water providers offer rebates to help offset costs.

***Learn which water providers have triggered Water Shortage Contingency Plans and tips for using water wisely at [BeWaterSmart.info](http://BeWaterSmart.info).***

***About the Regional Water Authority:*** RWA is a joint powers authority representing two dozen water providers and affiliates in the greater Sacramento area. Its primary mission is to help its members protect and enhance the reliability, availability, affordability and quality of water resources.