

Snowpack at 106%; water allocations increase

With the Sierra snowpack's water content above average, the Department of Water Resources on Thursday increased its State Water Project allocation to 20 percent.

"As the water picture for this year becomes clearer, we can increase our deliveries to farms and communities throughout the state,"



Lake Oroville
on March 21,
2010.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

DWR Director Mark Cowin said in a press release. "But the aftermath of three years of drought and regulatory restrictions on Delta pumping to protect fish species will keep this year's allocation far below normal. This underscores, once again, the need to implement long-term solutions to improve water supply reliability."

Manual and electronic snow survey readings from April 1 indicate that statewide snowpack water content is 106 percent of normal for the date. This time last year, the reading was 81 percent of normal.

Results of today's manual snow survey by DWR off Highway 50

near Echo Summit are as follows:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	71.5 inches	32.3 inches	97
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	65.7 inches	25.9 inches	92
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	82.9 inches	31.8 inches	102
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	missing	missing	missing

Electronic sensors show northern Sierra snow water equivalents at 126 percent of normal for the date, central Sierra at 92 percent, and southern Sierra at 105 percent.

Snowpack water content normally is at its peak the first of April, although DWR makes a final manual survey the first of May, and electronic readings report conditions daily. DWR may be able to increase the State Water Project allocation to more than 20 percent as hydrologists refine runoff projections from today's snowpack readings and conditions continue to develop.

Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's principal reservoir, is recovering slowly after three consecutive dry years. Its storage level today is at 47 percent of capacity, 60 percent of normal for the date.

In addition, fishery agency restrictions on Delta pumping continue to reduce the amount of water that can be delivered to contractors and customers in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California. The final State Water Project allocation, to be set later this spring, will partially depend on how the pumping restrictions to protect fish including Delta smelt, salmon and longfin smelt are applied.

In 2009, the State Water Project delivered 40 percent of customer requests.