

Wet winter quenching California's thirst

By Jim Carlton, Wall Street Journal

After three years of debilitating drought, California appears headed into a second straight wet year, giving a boost to ski resorts, farms and communities that languished during the dry spell in the fiscally troubled state.

Since California's rainy season began Oct. 1, the state has received roughly double the mountain snowfall it normally gets, according to state estimates.

That means the rainy season is off to its best start in at least five years, with 16 of California's 24 major reservoirs equipped with flood controls already beginning to release water so they can take on spring runoff, state water officials say.



South Lake Tahoe residents have been doing plenty of shoveling and blowing this winter.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The bounty is providing a shot in the arm to many local economies across California, the nation's most populous state, which is struggling to recover from the recession.

Combined with last year's abundant rainfall, officials of some water districts, including the Santa Clara Valley Water District in San Jose, Calif., have dropped mandatory rationing restrictions. That particularly helps farming-related businesses, which are more dependent on water than most other parts of the economy, economists say.

Ski resorts are reporting visits and revenue above what they had anticipated, said Bob Roberts, executive director of the California Ski Industry Association.

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