

State water managers juggle flooding v. storage concerns

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

In a state often torn between flood and drought, spring is a reprieve. Winter storms are done, and a thirsty summer seems a distant worry.

Not so this year. The calendar may say spring, but the clouds disagree. Stubborn storms promise ample water supplies, but they bring a real threat of flooding to the state for the first time in five years.

For California's water managers, it is a perilous time.

This spring is especially vexing because the state's reservoirs are full, the snowpack is mountainous at 146 percent of average, and yet more storms loom, including another expected today.

That means a delicate juggling act, and a little guesswork, to serve two masters: flood control and water storage.

Water managers must let out just enough water at just the right time. The aim is to make room for the next storm without taxing levees downstream, and without wasting water that might be needed for lawns and crops this summer.

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