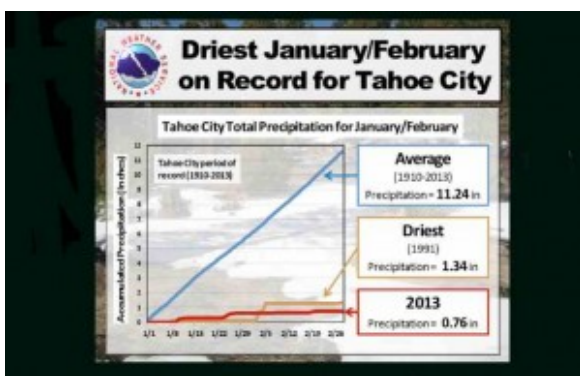


# Dry January-February sets records

By Kathryn Reed

It's another record snow year in Lake Tahoe and the greater Sierra Nevada. It's just not the kind of record anyone wants to brag about.



Graphic/National Weather Service Reno

The National Weather Service in Reno has been collecting data from a station in Tahoe City since 1910. And with a matter of hours to go and no precipitation in sight for the rest of February, the first two months of 2013 will go down as the driest (0.76 inches) since stats have been collected there. The record was 1.34 inches in 1991, while the average is 11.24 inches. (See graphic to left.)

Snow surveyors across the Sierra found the same thing Feb. 28 as the water content was tabulated at various spots. Normally the reading this time of year builds on the totals from the previous two months. Not the case on Thursday.

Statewide, the snowpack water content is at 66 percent of average. It's even worse at the Echo Summit location near Sierra-at-Tahoe where it came in at 54 percent of average. The

snow measured 29 inches deep with 12.4 inches of water content at Phillips Station.

The Department of Water Resources, which conducts the snow surveys, has data dating to 1920. The driest January-February was in 1991, when 4 inches of precip fell from the mountainous area near Shasta Lake to the American River basin. For 2013, 2.2 inches of rain has fallen since December.

There is no substantial precipitation in the forecast to turn the tide. Reno weather officials say a small storm will move into the Lake Tahoe Basin on Saturday night, with another one rolling in Wednesday. But they said the snow totals are not expected to amount to much.

Despite the dismal snowpack, Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's principal storage reservoir, is at 113 percent of average and Lake Shasta by Redding, the federal Central Valley Project's largest reservoir, is at 108 percent of its normal storage level.

The snow survey measurements by the Department of Water Resources determine how much water is released from Northern California reservoirs to irrigate crops and provide potable water for Southern California. Estimates by DWR are that it will be able to deliver 40 percent of the slightly more than 4 million acre-feet of State Water Project water requested for this calendar year by the 29 public agencies that supply more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland.