

Editorial: Climate change needs to be part of water policy

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The scene at Folsom Lake isn't pretty, and it's sure to become far uglier if Mother Nature doesn't save the state with a wet winter.

Barring any early storms, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation expects the lake to fall to one-fourth its capacity, or 241,000 acre-feet, by December. With another dry winter, the lake could drop to what is known as "dead pool" – too low for local water agencies to procure water from it.

More than half a million people in the region depend on Folsom Lake for water, and cold water supplies in the reservoir are crucial for fish downstream, including imperiled steelhead and salmon. The lower the lake drops, the more the anxiety meter rises – alarm that threatens to turn into a serious water battle between local water agencies, the Bureau of Reclamation and the state Department of Water Resources.

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