

Calif. ends 1 of driest-ever water years

By AP

SACRAMENTO – California officials are urging residents and businesses to keep conserving water as the state ends another extremely dry “water year” with no guarantee the coming year will be any wetter.

The 2014 water year that ended Tuesday was one of the driest on record, with the state getting less than 60 percent of the average precipitation, according to the state Department of Water Resources. The 2015 water year began Wednesday.

The state’s major reservoirs collectively held only 57 percent of average water storage on Sept. 1, officials said.

Department Director Mark Cowin said “day-to-day conservation – wise, sparing use of water – is essential as we face the possibility of a fourth dry winter,” which is typically California’s rainy season.

Water officials say recent storms, while encouraging, haven’t eased the state’s water woes and forecasters can’t predict if California will get enough major storms to end the record drought.

Earlier this year, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a statewide drought emergency and called on residents to reduce water usage. The state and federal government have drastically reduced water deliveries to Central Valley farms, and the state water board approved fines of up to \$500 for wasting water.

In September, the governor signed legislation that would for the first time regulate groundwater in California, prompted by

concerns that increased pumping is depleting aquifers and causing land to sink.