

Atmospheric river en route to Sierra

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Water vapor – Mississippi River-size amounts of it flowing at hurricane speeds miles above the Earth – is hurtling across the Pacific, an atmospheric river poised to drench a parched Northern California and the Sacramento region as early as Thursday night.

A crack team of science experts is going along for the ride, part of an experiment known as CalWater 2015, many of whom gathered at McClellan Park near Sacramento on Tuesday in preparation for the major weather event and the vital information they hope to pull from the phenomenon.

“It’s a real milestone for us. Nothing of this scope has happened,” said Marty Ralph, director of the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, of the project he’s helping to lead. “One of the drivers of CalWater was the uncertainty of climate projections. We haven’t had the data to measure the strength and structure of ARs. ... There’s so much potential for the monitoring of atmospheric rivers.”

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