

Snow needs to fall now for drought relief

By Brian K. Sullivan, BloombergBusiness

The drought relief for California widely expected from El Nino in early 2016 will be far more effective if a chill descends soon – ideally with a bit of snow.

“If we can get some snow on the ground and some cold nights, it will set up the snowpack and get cool air pooling,” said California State Climatologist Mike Anderson.

Cool air, especially at high altitudes, will help ensure snow falls and stays on the ground in the mountains through the winter, as needed to supply the state’s reservoirs. While that may seem like a non-issue given the height of the mountains and the tradition of heavy snows there, recent years have seen some worrisome trends.

During the winter of 2014-15, the three-month average temperature in the Sierra region topped the freezing mark of 32 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time in records dating to 1950, data compiled by Anderson show.

California as a whole posted its warmest February on record and both December and January came in among the top 10, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information in Asheville, N.C.

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