

Storms significantly boosting Sierra snowpack



Frank Gehrke is the state's official snow survey taker.
Photo/LTN file

By Lake Tahoe News

It doesn't matter that the water content of the snow near Echo Summit is 130 percent of average; officials aren't about to say the drought is anywhere near over.

"While the recent rains and growing snowpack are wonderful to behold, we won't know until spring what effect it will have on the bottom line for California's unprecedented drought," Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, said in a statement. "Until we can tally that ledger, we have to keep conserving water every way we can. Every drop saved today is one that we may be very glad we have tomorrow."

The manual reading was taken this morning in the snowfield near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe. The snow depth was 76.2 inches, with the water content at 25.4 inches.

Those numbers are significantly higher than a year ago and above normal for this time of year. In 2015, the water content was 2.5 inches. Water content has averaged 19.5 inches for the

last 50 years.

The last time this area recorded these kinds of numbers was in 2005 – snow depth was 77.1 inches, water content 29.9 inches.

Statewide the water content is 20.4 inches, which is 114 percent of normal for Feb. 2.

Snow is so vital because in normal years it supplies about 30 percent of California's drinking and irrigation water. Most reservoirs in the state remain below average for this time of year.