

Sierra snowpack below normal; better than '15



Snow has been on the ground for each of this season's snow surveys. Photo/LTN file

By Lake Tahoe News

Even though there was white stuff to walk on during the final snow survey of the season today, the lack of water content will likely mean California is headed for a fifth year of drought.

The snow depth in the field by the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe on March 30 was 58.4 inches, with a water content of 26 inches. That amounts to 97 percent of average. Statewide the water content is at 80 percent.

While this is a dramatic difference than a year ago when Gov. Jerry Brown stood in a dirt field at Phillips Station, the

odds of much more moisture adding to the snowpack are not good.

A year ago, the snowpack was 5 percent of average. This led to the governor to institute dramatic water cutbacks in an effort to conserve. Those rules remain in effect even though some areas believe the rules should be loosened because of the amount of rain that fallen in the winter and filled the reservoirs.

With longer and warmer days, the snow will begin to melt faster. Peak runoff is usually in May. Temps are supposed to be in the 50s the rest of the week, reaching nearly 60 by the end of week.

The importance of the snow lasting as long as possible is that then there is more to fill the reservoirs downstream. In normal years the snowpack accounts for about 30 percent of California's water needs.