

Sierra snowmelt runoff coming up short

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The El Niño-fueled storms that coated the Sierra with nearly normal snow this winter brought blasts of hope to drought-weary California.

But after the flurries stopped and the seasons changed, the melt-off from the high country has been swift and disappointingly scant, according to new water supply estimates from the state.

The Department of Water Resources now projects that the mountains will produce about three quarters of normal runoff during the months of heaviest snowmelt, shorting the rivers and reservoirs that typically provide a third of California's water – and cementing a fifth year of historic drought for the Golden State.

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