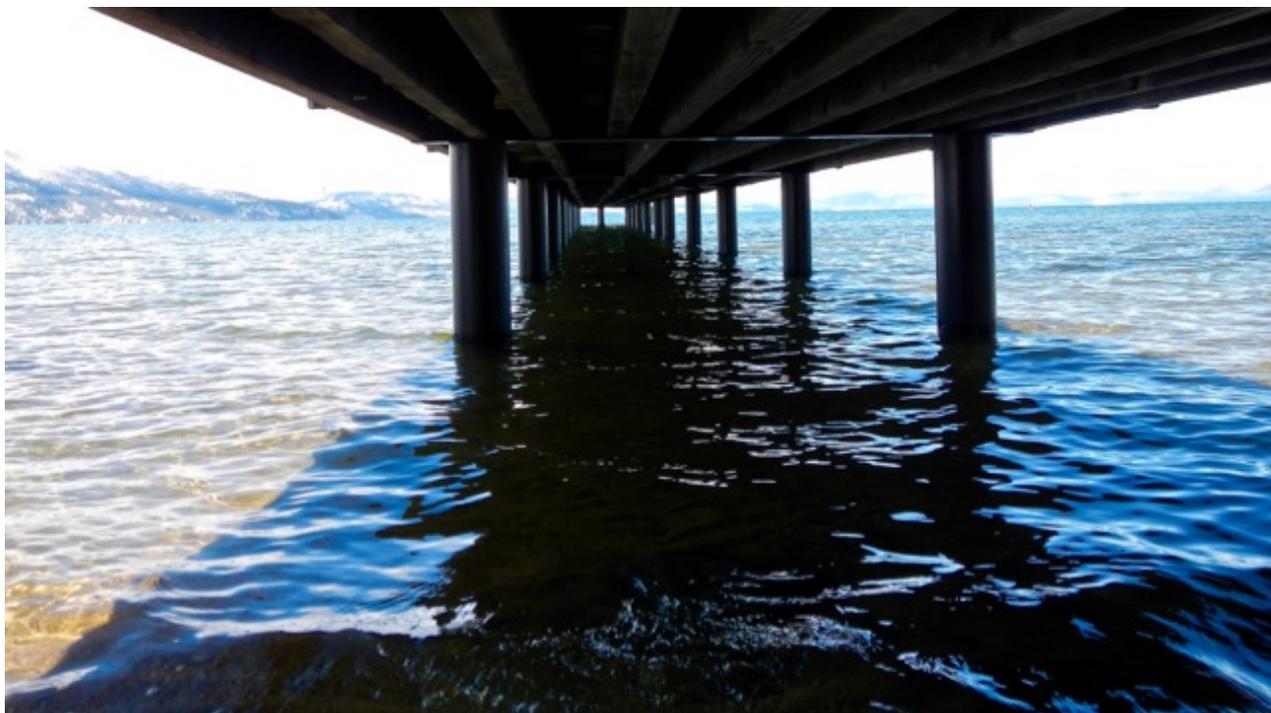


Sierra water content 183% of average



It wasn't that long ago that there was no water under the Tahoe Keys pier. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

The snow – it won't stop. For people living in the Sierra it's becoming the winter that won't end. For water users downstream, it means the spigot won't be turned off during the dry summer months.

Under snowy grey skies on Thursday the snow survey near Sierra-at-Tahoe revealed water content of 46.1 inches. This is 183 percent of the average of 25.2 inches for the Phillips Station location.

This was a dramatically different scenario compared to two years ago when **Gov. Jerry Brown** attended the reading and there was barren ground.

“This is an extremely good year from the snowpack standpoint,” Frank Gehrke, who does the snow surveys near Echo Summit for the state Department of Water Resources, said March 30. He said this year’s snowpack ranks in the upper quarter of historic snowpacks.

Even so, the governor’s emergency drought declaration is still in effect. There are parts of California that still have not fully recovered from the drought.

Statewide, the water equivalent is 45.8 inches or 164 percent of average for this date. This is the highest level since 2011.

Water content is what the depth of water would be if the entire snowpack melted instantaneously.

It’s normal for this final measurement of the season to be the deepest of the four that are taken throughout the winter. This was true this year – increasing from 6 inches to 28 to 43.5.

But that escalation was not found during the drought years, which severely impacted the municipalities and farms that depend on the runoff.

As the snow begins to melt, flooding may be the next problem – locally and downstream.