

Sierra snowpack on pace to shatter record low of 2015



Street sweepers have been more prevalent this winter than snowplows in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

As relentless sunshine continued to pound California on Thursday, the Sierra Nevada hit a reckoning point: There's less snowpack now than on the same date three years ago, when the winter went down as the driest in recorded history and sent shudders through cities, farmlands and the state Capitol.

The troubling lack of snow during the winter of 2014-15 not only shortchanged the state's drinking-water reservoirs but left the Sierra nearly unrecognizable. Normally white-blanketed forests and meadows remained a springtime green, and mountain roads were free of ice.

The picture has become increasingly similar this year. Tahoe's ski resorts have been forced to close many low-elevation runs while working their snow-making machines overtime, and rangers at Yosemite National Park have had to apologize to guests for the lack of snow powering famed waterfalls.

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