

## Water supply not a sure thing

*The weather is fickle, and the politicians planning our state's water future are apparently too foolish to realize that.*

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There wasn't much of a ripple this week in the endless conversation about water in California, when the latest snowpack numbers came out.

The Department of Water Resources measures the snow in the mountains monthly through the winter because it plays a significant role in the state's plumbing. Effectively, the snowpack is the biggest reservoir in the state, storing frozen water and delivering it gradually to the rivers and more traditional reservoirs as the snow melts in spring and summer

The January numbers were pretty good — about 93 percent of normal for the date. But that's down from 146 percent of average in December. That drop was in just a single month and shows how widely variable something we depend on can be.

Yet the players drafting plans for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta just kept trucking along, focused on the environmental needs there and the water demands at the ends of the pipes and canals heading south.

Those are the "co-equal" goals of that endeavor: restoring the delta and providing a reliable water supply. What the drop in snowpack should have reminded them is that there's no such thing as a reliable water supply when you're depending on Mother Nature. You have to give her a hand if that's the idea.

In a state like California, where the rain and snow vanish for half the year, you have to save the moisture when it falls for the time when it does not. Saving involves storage, and increasing our ability to do that doesn't seem to be on the table.

Yes, there's a \$10 billion water bond earmarked for the 2014 ballot — the same one we were supposed to vote on in 2010. But there's very little money in there for storage; it's not going to increase the supply by a drop. The bond's full of pork that'll only have one long-term effect: increasing the state's debt.

Instead, Gov. Jerry Brown proposes a \$14 billion pair of pipes under the delta capable of drawing more water from the Sacramento River than is in the Sacramento River six months of many years.

A smaller pipe has been proposed by a coalition of water users and environmental groups, but the big users say it couldn't move enough water. They need the big pipes ... even though often there isn't enough water available to fill them.

This is the disconnect from reality that California faces. As a state, we look at demand and delivery and ignore supply. That's a combination that's guaranteed to cause problems as the population keeps growing.