

# Another dry year ahead, state officials warn water agencies

By **John M. Ahn, Environment & Energy Publishing, 11-20-13**

Public water agencies in California should gird for another dry year in 2014, California officials said, given current low storage levels.

Water agencies that supply 25 million people and 700,000 acres of farmland should plan for a tiny portion of their requested deliveries to come from the State Water Project, officials said. Today's initial allocation of 5 percent of requested supplies is the lowest ever, equal to projections made in 2009 after a drought.

Water officials said if dry conditions persist, that will increase the chance of drinking water shortages for rural water systems. Major wildfires could also increase, they said, as well as the risk of land subsidence where agencies turn to groundwater pumping.

"If things improve with this winter's storms," said Department of Water Resources Director Mark Terry, "but there is no guarantee that 2014 won't be our third consecutive dry year. Today's allocation is a warning that California's fickle weather demands that we make year-round conservation a way of life."

The state's major reservoirs are well below average capacities for this time of year, officials said. Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's principal reservoir, is at 41 percent of capacity, which is two-thirds below historical levels.

In 2012, final allocations were 35 percent, compared to 65 percent in 2012. The 29 public water agencies that receive supplies from state reservoirs have requested 4.17 million acre-feet this year, equal to last year's total. In 2012, supplies eventually increased to 50 percent due to wetter-than-expected conditions.

Terry said the low allocation underscores the need to shore up the state's water infrastructure. Agencies should build tunnels underneath the state's main water hub, the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, and encourage agencies to store more water during wet times, they said.

"If we had a more modern water delivery system in place, like that proposed under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, we would have more water in storage and today's announcement wouldn't be so dire," said Terry. Terry is the general manager of the State Water Contractors.