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CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY DRIES UP

Snowpack Levels at 61% of Average; State Water Contractors Urge Long-Term Delta Fix Along With Conservation

Sacramento, CA – The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) released its latest snow survey results today showing Sierra Nevada snowpack levels at just 61 percent of normal, giving public water agencies a dismal outlook on weather conditions. The State Water Contractors member agencies rely heavily on snowpack runoff from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to supply water to millions of Californians and 750,000 acres of agricultural land. Today's snow survey reinforces that light rain and snow will not make up for California's severe dry conditions.

"Unfortunately, last week's precipitation barely produced a drop in the bucket," said Laura King Moon, assistant general manager of the State Water Contractors. "It would take a miracle to get the amount of rainfall we need in the next few months to get us out of this drought. And even then, regulatory constraints would keep us from accessing the water we need."

California has faced a seemingly endless series of hits to its water supply since late 2007. Ongoing dry conditions have brought the state's reservoirs to their lowest levels in years – some of the largest reservoirs are only near a quarter of their capacity. Drastic restrictions on how much water the state can deliver through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta), California's primary water delivery hub, have prevented agencies from delivering enough water to replenish depleting reservoirs. The lack of water has triggered major economic losses throughout the state and leaves water agencies facing an uphill battle in 2009.

"Water agencies will be digging deep into their reserves, some for the third year in a row, to meet their customers' needs, and many areas will see more and more restrictions on their water usage," added Moon. "For now, we need to pray for rain -- we also need to fix the system so we can get more environmental and human benefit out of the rain and snow when they happen."

While Californians do their part to further conserve this year, state leaders are mapping out a plan to fix the ailing Delta estuary and our primary water delivery system. Through the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), public water agencies, environmental organizations, and state and federal agencies are exploring an eco-friendly way of conveying water around the Delta, rather than through it.

The BDCP is a comprehensive conservation plan for the Delta and will provide a basis for addressing the many threats to the Delta needed for fishery and ecosystem recovery, while finding a way to continue to deliver water to Californians throughout the state.

For more information on the BDCP, please visit <http://www.resources.ca.gov/bdcp/>.

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The State Water Contractors is a statewide, non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern California that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project. Collectively the State Water Contractors deliver water to more than 25 million residents throughout the state and more than 750,000 acres of agricultural lands. For more information on the State Water Contractors, please visit www.swc.org.