



Monthly Drought Update
February 3, 2015
San Luis Obispo County

Note: Information provided in this update varies by date.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

U.S. Drought Monitor Status:

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor report released January 22, 2015, indicates San Luis Obispo County remains at the **D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating**. Approximately 94% of the state remains at a level D2 Severe Drought or worse with more than 39% of the state in a D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating. Due to the recent dry spell throughout the state, the percentage of the state in a D4 intensity level increased from 32% since the last update.

San Luis Obispo County Precipitation Totals (in inches):

Sub-Region	Area / Rain Station	Average Annual Rainfall	2014-15 Water Year (July 2014-June 2015)	
			Cumulative Total	% of Total Average
North Coast	Cambria (ALERT #717)	22.0	9.49	43%
	Whale Rock Reservoir (County Site #166.1)	16.0	5.78	36%
Inland	Paso Robles (County Site #10.0)	14.1	6.59	47%
	NE Atascadero (ALERT #711)	17.0	4.13 *	24% *
	Atascadero MWC (County Site #34.0)	17.5	6.30	36%
	Santa Margarita (ALERT #723)	24.0	6.81	28%
	Salinas Dam (County Site #94)	20.9	6.53	31%
South Coast	SLO Reservoir (ALERT #749)	24.0	6.54	27%
	Lopez Recreation Area (ALERT #707)	23.0	5.92	26%
	West of Nipomo (CIMIS #202)	14.8	5.14	35%
	Nipomo East (ALERT #728)	18.0	6.26	35%

Notes: This table contains provisional data from automated gauges and has not been verified. All units reported in inches. Report generated at 3:00pm on 1/14/2015.

* Due to an equipment malfunction, not all rain was recorded at this site.

Near-term Outlook for Precipitation:

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center indicates a 50-60% probability that El Niño conditions will develop during the next two months, which is roughly the same probability as previous reports. However, prediction suggests that if El Niño develops this winter, it will be a weak El Niño event which has little historical correlation to increased rain and snow. The Winter Precipitation Outlook favors a >33% chance of above average rainfall for Southern California, while the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook has worsened and is now calling for the drought to persist or intensify.

Reservoir Levels (% of capacity):

Note: Historical averages calculated using data from the following time frame:

Nacimiento: 1959 – 2013; Lopez: 1994-2013; Salinas: 1987-2013; and Whale Rock: 1985-2013.

Reservoir	% of Capacity	Current Acre Feet Storage
Nacimiento	23%	86,760
Whale Rock	45%	17,568
Lopez	41%	20,300
Salinas	19%	4,609

Source: www.slocountywater.org County of San Luis Obispo

STATE WATER

Status: The Department of Water Resources (DWR) increased expected water deliveries in 2015 to most customers of the State Water Project (SWP) from 10% of their requested amounts to 15%. San Luis Reservoir is currently at 49% capacity, which is a substantial improvement from previous reports.

Actions: The Public Works Department has released a 2015 projected delivery schedule and met with sub-contractors to discuss 2015 projected deliveries with a zero delivery scenario. Staff is calculating what a potential increase to 15% deliveries would look like and will coordinate with sub-contractors as more information arises.

VULNERABLE WATER SYSTEMS

County Service Areas (CSA's):

Santa Margarita (CSA 23)

- Drought response level remains at ALERT status.
- Primary pumping is from shallow well No. 4; water is also being pumped from deep well No. 3 to reduce needs from well No. 4. State officials have also authorized the use of shallow wells 1 & 2 should the need arise.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.
- Staff is monitoring conditions for a potential status change to CRITICAL.

Shandon (CSA 16)

- Two wells currently provide all water to the Shandon community and continued to be monitored.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Cayucos (CSA 10A)

- Supply is available from Whale Rock and one on-site well. Staff has given a presentation to the Advisory Committee and business groups regarding conserving this supply.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Avila Valley (CSA 12)

- Adequate supply is available from Lopez and State water "carryover" water sources for this year and next.

Chorro Valley Institutions (CMC, Animal Services, Sheriff, County Operations, Camp San Luis, Cuesta College, County Office of Education):

- 2014 State water carryover water is available and being provided.
- The existing distribution system is being evaluated to assure water losses are minimized.
- CMC is at 100% design of their water treatment plant upgrade project and will soon go out to bid.
- 2015 State Water and District carryover will provide supply for next year.
- Discussions with City of SLO to exchange Nacimiento for Whale Rock are being initiated if State Water is insufficient in 2016.

Non-County Operated:

- **Cambria Community Services District**

Status: Emergency San Simeon Creek Brackish Water Supply Project went online on January 20, 2015. The district is now seeking a permit to operate it permanently.

- **San Simeon Community Services District**

Status: CSD voluntarily dropped out of emergency grant project for recycled water project.

- **Heritage Ranch Community Services District**
Status: The Nacimiento River is the only available water source for the community of Heritage Ranch. An emergency inter-tie will be funded with emergency grant funds.
- **Rural Paso Robles residents**
Status: Continuing to identify water-trucking options and examine outreach efforts. See County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation Website for drought relief update information.

IMPACTS

Agricultural Impacts:

Staff from the County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures and the University of California Cooperative Extension collaborated to review responses to a voluntary question included as part of the yearly crop report survey from the Agricultural Commissioner's office. To date, 93 crop report surveys have been returned to the Ag Commissioner's office. In 2014, UC Cooperative Extension delivered a monthly survey to a limited number of key leaders in the agricultural community, so it was important to confirm our 2014 reports with information from a broader cross-section of the agricultural community. Responses in the crop report survey have generally confirmed responses from key stakeholders, many indicating loss of production and income. Tree and vine growers report plant dieback and death in some commodities, including avocados and walnuts. Avocado growers report stumping trees because of lack of water and hauling water to irrigate trees. Citrus and avocado growers reported increased irrigation requirements because of lack of rainfall, and increased irrigation costs. Production was lower due to reduced crop and smaller fruit. Grain and hay producers reported grazing planted acreage due to poor growth or idling ground due to lack of water. Livestock producers report selling animals, buying feed and hauling water. To date, two respondents indicated no changes in well levels, several indicated well levels were decreasing, and one respondent indicated their well had gone dry.

Agricultural Assistance

According to staff at the USDA Farm Service Agency, as of January 16, 2015, the following programs are active in providing assistance. The programs are briefly summarized as follows:

LFP – Livestock Forage Disaster Program: provides payments for grazing losses. Current eligibility is for 4 months of payments. A fifth month may be added early in February and staff encourages producers to call before coming in.

ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: provides relief for losses due to adverse weather conditions.

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS): provides funds for land conservation planning and implementation of conservation practices.

NAP – Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: provides cash payments to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or planting did not occur due to natural disasters. Most deadlines have passed for 2015. Staff indicated that over 130 producers are currently insured through NAP

For information about the assistance programs, contact the USDA Farm Service Agency at 805- 434-0398.

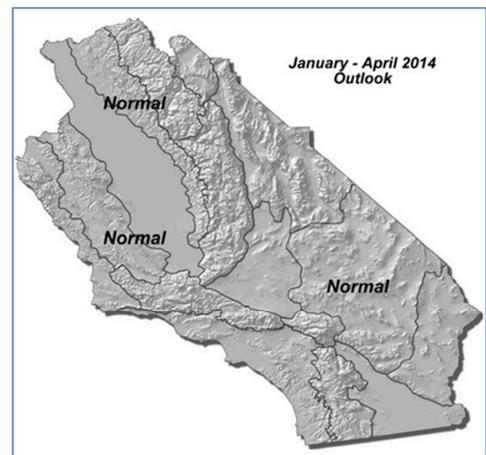
Fire Danger:

Fire Danger

CAL FIRE responded to 5,620 fires across the State in 2014, burning 90,606 acres in State Responsibility Area. This is above the year-to-date average of 4,681 fires and 88,169 acres. Current fire information indicates there are currently no uncontained state fires.

In San Luis Obispo County in 2014, CAL FIRE responded to 130 wildfires, which burned 124 acres. Since 2007, averages for this same period are 171 wildfires burning 1,068 acres.

Equipment/Staffing:



Attachment 1

Locally, CAL FIRE remains at winter preparedness staffing levels with two additional wildland engines remained staffed and available for State mission activities including vegetation management and other fire prevention work. The open burn season continues which means no CAL FIRE burn permit is required and agricultural and backyard burning can be conducted with only an APCD burn permit.

Live Fuel Moisture (LFM)

(LFM is the moisture content of live vegetation expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight.)

LFM values have improved but remain just above critical levels (60%) in most areas. Despite significant precipitation in November and December, LFM values are expected to follow seasonal trends and increase slowly as plants respond to cooler weather and shorter days. Fall/winter dormancy prevents most species from responding quickly to precipitation and LFM values are not expected to increase substantially until next spring's growing cycle.

Overall, the recent dry weather pattern and the presence of low live and dead fuel moistures has produced fuel conditions that are considered available for burning. However, the presence of widespread green grass should continue to mitigate the possibility of fires spreading, at least for a few more weeks. This benefit could be short-lived if there is little or no rainfall in coming weeks, as green grass in some areas is already showing symptoms of dessication by turning lighter shades of green.

Dead Fuel Moisture

(The moisture content of dead organic fuels is another important component of the relative fire danger. As with LFM above, dead fuel moisture levels are a good indicator of how likely fuels are to ignite and how intensely they will burn. 100-hr fuel refers to vegetation between 1 and 3 inches in diameter and 1000-hr fuel is 3-6 inches. When the fuel moisture content is low, fires start easily and will spread rapidly.)

After rising to above average levels following last month's storms, dead fuels are once again below average and decreasing due to the current dry weather.

Temperatures/Relative Humidity (RH)

(When combined with other factors influencing the fire environment such as wind, steep topography, and low fuel moisture levels, hot temperatures and low RH can significantly increase the fire danger by increasing fire initiation, spread rates, burning intensity, and difficulty of control.)

Mild winter weather and shorter days have continued to minimize the fire danger overall due to an increase in cool, humid conditions.

Energy Release Component (ERC)

(ERC is an index related to how hot a fire could burn. It is directly related to the 24-hour, potential worst case, total available energy (BTUs) at the head of a fire. The ERC can serve as a good characterization of fire season as it tracks seasonal fire danger trends well. ERC has low variability, and is the best fire danger component for indicating the effects of intermediate to long-term drying on fire behavior.)

The recent dry weather has decreased the dead fuel moistures and increased ERC values to above average levels which has increased relative fire danger in the past couple of weeks.

Economic:

In an effort to coordinate local and state response to drought impacts the following surveys are being utilized by the County:

Drought Business Impact Survey

The San Luis Obispo County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is gathering information on local drought-related job impacts. This is part of a statewide survey by the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) as part of an ongoing online survey to inform the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force of the drought's ripple effects. The WIB's Drought Business Impact survey is available at <http://sloworkforce.com/drought-survey/>. Local Workforce Investment Boards, workforce partners, and other local workforce entities are encouraged to complete the survey regularly to keep the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force up to date on the local area. The WIB is conducting outreach to chambers of commerce and other business services agencies for assistance in outreach to businesses and employers regarding the drought survey. Though the WIB is hearing that there are impacts, the county does not

have any "reportable" impacts due to the State's requirements for reporting (i.e. specific business name, address, etc.).

Domestic Water Issues-Intake Form

The Governor's Drought Task Force created an online intake form for local, state, or tribal and federal agencies to document domestic water issues. The information is intended to inform and coordinate state response and mitigate drought impacts. Data collected is considered confidential and access is restricted. Individuals with domestic water issues are encouraged to contact County Environmental Health at (805) 781-5544.

Anonymous Supplemental Domestic Water Issues Online Survey

The County Drought Task Force created a supplemental anonymous survey. The survey does not ask for any identifying information and is intended to support our request for federal disaster assistance for individuals. Individuals who wish to remain anonymous are encouraged to complete the supplemental survey online www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update or by phone by calling (805) 781-5011.

To date, the County has received 80 responses to the supplemental survey. Of the 77 respondents, 34% report that one or more wells have gone dry and 12% report they are trucking in water. It is important to note that the survey is voluntary and as a result, responses are not representative of the county population.

STATE & FEDERAL KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

DWR Increases 2015 Allocation to Water Contractors

December storm runoff and close coordination among federal and state agencies to take advantage of it will allow the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to increase expected water deliveries in 2015 to most customers of the State Water Project (SWP) from 10 percent of their requested amounts to 15 percent. The new allocation replaces the initial allocation of 10 percent announced on December 1. Should dry conditions return, DWR may reallocate SWP supplies to meet critical human health and safety needs.

State Water Board Reports Improvement in Urban Water Conservation Rates for November Groundwater Resources Depleted by Drought

On January 6, the State Water Board released water conservation rates for the month of November as reported by large urban retail water agencies under the Emergency Conservation Regulation adopted in July 2014. The State Water Board is now considering whether it should require additional conservation actions in 2015 based on information received at the December 17 conservation workshop.

COUNTY DROUGHT TASK FORCE KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

County Office of Emergency Services:

San Luis Obispo County OES continues to coordinate with Cal OES to provide updates on the drought situation, respond to specific information requests to Cal OES, and coordinate local emergency needs. In addition, County OES continues to gather local situation status information and drought costs throughout the county in order to send the information to Cal OES.

Emergency Actions:

No new emergency actions have been taken specific to the drought in this reporting period.

County Facilities Usage & Conservation Actions:

Since the last update, that county has taken the following actions:

- Fixture Replacement: To date, staff has retrofitted 44 buildings with low-flow fixtures, saving an estimated 4,500 gallons per week.
- Water Conservation: Staff Responded to a call at the Health Campus located at 2180 Johnson Avenue, and replaced a 30-foot section of leaking water line, which was approximately 18 inches below the surface. The new water line saved 16,000 gallons of water through leak repair.
- Energy and Water Manager Professional Services Contract: The Energy & Water Manager Services consultant contractor is meeting with Public Works to collect water usage data at the County Operations Center. Next step is to perform a utility bill analysis to find any anomalies with billing or data.

Attachment 1

- County Parks: Staff has continued to minimize watering on landscape and sports fields.

Drought Contingency Planning:

The Public Health Department, the Public Works Department, and CAL FIRE/County Fire continue to develop plans to ensure there is adequate supply of water for firefighting and domestic water use in the event that a community does not have enough water. Water availability information from small public water systems has been categorized into three categories; Watch, Vulnerable, and Critical. The information has been placed into a GIS mapping layer for contingency planning. Since the last update, Public Health surveyed the large water systems' impacts of the drought on delivery of water to their customers. These systems are regulated by the State. There are 36 large water systems in San Luis Obispo County. Staff was able to get responses from 33 of them. Staff is updating the GIS layer to include the large water systems.

County Public Outreach Actions:

Information regarding current and upcoming drought relief programs for rural homeowners has been placed on the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage. Rural Development, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), delivers a number of programs to help improve the quality of life in rural communities throughout the nation. These programs may also help rural communities, businesses and individuals impacted by California's ongoing drought conditions. For additional resources and information on applying for any of these programs, please visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca> or the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage at http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm.

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues and communicate the call for a 20% voluntary reduction in water usage, the County continues to examine multiple channels of communication for water conservation outreach efforts.

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

County of San Luis Obispo Drought Conditions and Water Conservation
(http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm)

State's Water Conservation Campaign; Save our Water
(www.saveourh2o.org)

California's Drought Information Clearinghouse; Dought.CA.Gov
(<http://ca.gov/drought/>)

California Department of Food and Agriculture; Drought information
(www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/)

California Department of Water Resources; Current Water Conditions
(www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/)

California State Water Resources Control Board; Water Rights, Drought Info and Actions
(www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml)

California Department of Public Health; Drinking Water CDPH Drinking Water Program
(www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx)

USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information; USDA Programs
(http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE)

UC Cooperative Extension Drought Information Resources; Drought Information Resources
(http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/)

