

## INFORMATION ITEM

### 2018 Water Year Outlook

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**Summary:** A panel of water managers and experts will provide an overview of Water Year 2018 to date, current water supply conditions, and initial water delivery allocations.

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#### **Background**

After years of drought conditions and critically dry years (2013 to 2015), followed by a historic wet year (2016) and an above normal year (2017), the 2018 water year started with odds against it, in general, due to warmer-than-average and drier-than average climate conditions. In early October 2017, these conditions along with strong north winds created extreme fire conditions, which contributed to several wildfires such as the Tubbs fire that impacted many communities such as in the City of Santa Rosa in Sonoma County and areas in Napa County. In November 2017, the northern part of the state had above-average precipitation while below-average conditions persisted everywhere else in the state. Between December 2017 and February 2018, the state continued to experience warmer-than-average and drier-than average conditions; thus, the statewide average for precipitation was at 50% of the historical average.

The State then had a bit of a “Miracle March” with climate conditions that were cooler-than-average and wetter-than average. The statewide average for precipitation was 172 percent of the historical average. Precipitation continued in April 2018. Despite the above-normal precipitation received in March and April, warm temperatures increased runoff and snowmelt in the Northern Sierra, resulting in diminished snowpack for this time of year. Despite the variable precipitation patterns during the current water year and a diminishing snowpack thus far, water supply allocations were increased. In April 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Central Valley Project raised its allocation from 20 percent to 40 percent for South of Delta agriculture contractors. Similarly, the Department of Water Resources’ State Water Project raised its allocation from 15 percent to 30 percent for the water year.

#### **Today’s Briefing**

Over the last several years, Staff and external experts provided briefings to the Council on water supply, the health of the Delta ecosystem, and policy considerations relevant to water management and the coequal goals. Although this current water year is not yet complete, historically the state has received the majority of precipitation and snowpack attributed to the State’s water supply by this point in time.

The purpose of today's meeting is to inform the Council about the status of California's current and forecast water supply conditions and allocations, discuss how conditions may affect the Delta ecosystem, and highlight the continued construction work at Oroville Dam and other key water management infrastructure in the State. Additionally, the Council will hear a presentation from Sonoma County Water Agency on a joint pilot program with the US Army Corps of Engineers called Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) program. Started in 2016, the FIRO program is a proposed management strategy that uses data from watershed monitoring and modern weather and water forecasting to help water managers selectively retain or release water from reservoirs in a manner that reflects current and forecasted conditions. FIRO research could lead to better informed meteorology and predictability of weather systems that may have some direct bearing or application to reservoir management.

Today's panel members include:

- **John Leahigh**, Chief of the State Water Project Operations Planning Office at the Department of Water Resources. John will discuss current water allocations and the water supply outlook for the State Water Project, as well as recent events at Oroville Dam.
- **Steve Ritchie**, Assistant General Manager (Water) of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Steve will discuss his water agency, how they manage water from their Hetch-Hetchy Reservoir in the Sierras, and what is forecasted for the current water year.
- **Jay Jasperse**, Chief Engineer and Director of Groundwater Management for the Sonoma County Water Agency. Jay will discuss his water agency and the pilot FIRO program.

The Council may wish to consider the following questions during this discussion:

- How have the managed, lower-than-historical water levels at Oroville reservoir impacted the State Water Project's (SWP) ability to allocate water supply for this type of water year?
- In light of the managed, lower-than-historical water levels at Oroville reservoir, how has the SWP coordinated with the federal Central Valley Project to meet flow and water quality requirements in the Delta?
- How has the San Francisco Public Utility Commission addressed changing conditions due to climate change for its reservoir operations, delivery system infrastructure, and future water supply demands?
- What was the impetus for the FIRO program and who was the initial entity to begin the discussions? How was that initial entity able to bring various other entities to the table to begin negotiations to make this pilot project feasible?
- Could the FIRO program be scalable and applicable for other reservoirs? What

could be some of the roadblocks to implement this pilot program at other reservoirs?

**Fiscal Information**

Not applicable.

**List of Attachments**

None

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