

## **Drought and the Delta: A Report on Dry Year Conditions – Anticipating Drought Impacts on the Reliability of California’s Water Supplies and the Delta Ecosystem**

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**Summary:** A panel of experts from the Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Water Forum will discuss current drought conditions, what measures are being put in place or could be triggered to respond to the drought, how these conditions may affect the operation of water projects that influence the Delta, and the implications for one area that depends on water from the Delta and its watershed.

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### **Background**

At Council meetings in June and July, 2013, you heard from representatives of the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and local water agencies about dry year water conditions, water project operations in the Delta, and the impacts to agricultural and urban users and the Delta ecosystem. At that time, fearing that by the end of summer key reservoirs would be at record low levels, the Council asked for regular updates on drought conditions, water operations, and the related impacts on water users and the Delta ecosystem.

As we enter the new year, the drought we feared may be upon us. 2013 concluded as the driest on record in California. Reservoirs are low, important aquifers are depleted, and the Delta’s wildlife and fish are suffering. Storms that can significantly relieve these conditions aren’t in sight. Already, water operators and users are adapting to meager water reserves, reduced flows, and inadequate urban and agricultural supplies. Worse may be in store, especially where water users have not improved local storage, developed alternative water supplies from recycling or other sources, managed aquifers wisely, or better matched water demand to supplies through water conservation.

It is the intent of this series of presentations to provide the Council with information to better understand how current conditions impact the Delta and the coequal goals. The presentations may, over the course of the dry period, suggest actions that could be taken to improve the reliability of water supplies or protect the Delta ecosystem now or during future dry years. These may provide the basis for the Council to make recommendations to agencies that manage water supplies or the Delta ecosystem, for referrals to the Delta Plan implementation committee, or for future updates of the Delta Plan.

### **Today’s Briefing**

At today’s meeting Bill Croyle, DWR’s recently named drought manager, will brief the Council on current drought conditions and DWR’s preparations for coordinating drought

response measures with other agencies. Craig Wilson, the SWRCB's Delta Watermaster, will remind the Council about how the dry year may affect water quality standards and the administration of water rights in the Delta and its tributaries. The Bureau of Reclamation's Paul Fujitani, Deputy Operations Manager in the Central Valley Office, will explain how the dry year is affecting its operations and ability to serve water users and protect fish and wildlife. Finally, Tom Gohring, executive director of the Water Forum, a Sacramento regional water manager, will highlight impacts in his region.

During the panel's presentation or in follow up discussion, the Council may wish to consider these questions:

- What actions to adapt to the drought and mitigate its effects are most consistent with the coequal goals?
- Which Delta Plan policies and recommendations are most relevant to the drought response, and how can the Council encourage action on them?
- Is there a role for the Council or its implementation committee in coordinating agency actions that respond to the drought?
- How can the effects of the drought on water users and the Delta be tracked and reported in order to understand and apply its lessons to improve water and environmental management?

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