

A sign the drought is easing: California officials to ship more water to farms, cities

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State officials said Thursday they will increase deliveries to farms and cities that belong to the State Water Project—a sign that this winter's rain and snow has eased drought conditions in California.

The Department of Water Resources said farm and municipal [water](#) districts can expect to receive 15% of requested supplies this year from the state project, an elaborate network of dams and canals.

The announcement came weeks after the department announced an initial allocation of zero, saying it would only deliver enough water to meet "critical health and safety needs" to a handful of urban districts such as the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. It marked the first time in the State Water Project's history that the initial allocation was zero.

December's storms made the difference. San Luis Reservoir in Merced County, which plays a key role in feeding the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, has added 310,000 acre-feet of water since Dec. 1. An acre-foot is 326,000 gallons.

Still, the reservoir is at just 55% of average for mid-January.

Karla Nemeth, director of the Department of Water Resources, said "severe drought is not over. Dry conditions have already returned in January. Californians must continue to conserve as the state plans for a third dry year."

Earlier this month the State Water Resources Control Board approved new regulations that could result in \$500 fines for Californians who over-water their lawns, wash their cars without a shutoff nozzle or engage in other wasteful practices.

State officials have warned that if dry conditions persist this year, Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration would likely impose broader mandatory conservation rules on urban Californians. During the last drought, then-Gov. Jerry Brown ordered urban customers to reduce usage by 25%.

The State Water Project delivered just a 5% allocation for all of 2021.

The other big water provider in California, the federal government's Central Valley Project, has yet to announce an initial allocation for this year.

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