
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority

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The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority serves 28 member public agencies, 26 of which contract with Reclamation for water supply from the CVP. These agencies deliver water to approximately 1.2 million acres of farmland, 2 million California residents, and millions of waterfowl dependent upon the nearly 200,000 acres of managed wetlands within the Pacific Flyway.

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(The following is a statement by the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority on the updated Central Valley Project water allocation)

Water allocation inches up despite abundant supplies in reservoirs

LOS BANOS, CA - Today, the United States Bureau of Reclamation inched up the allocation for south-of-Delta Central Valley Project (CVP) agricultural water service contractors by raising the expected amount of water to be delivered from 40% to 45%. The new allocation is still less than reasonably could be made by Reclamation. Last year's record hydrologic year left a tremendous amount of water in the system, yet allocations remain low for many Central Valley Project water users.

"Water users today were dismayed by the relatively small allocation increase announced by Reclamation," said Cannon Michael, chairman of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority. "It is unbelievable that the statewide average for CVP reservoirs is almost 108 percent of normal, yet South of Delta farmers are left with a 45 percent allocation," he said.

The last hydrologic year, 2017, was the wettest year on record in the Sacramento River watershed, and presently, most CVP reservoirs remain above their historic average.

With the abundance of water, the 45% allocation reveals that regulations, not the availability of water, are creating supply shortages and impediments to the efficient operation of the CVP.

"If the system cannot provide an adequate amount of water when water levels are above average, then clearly changes need to be made to the regulations governing the CVP," said Frances Mizuno,

Interim Executive Director of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority.

The allocations this year are particularly harmful to communities served by CVP water because they depend on higher allocations in years of water abundance to offset lower allocations in dry years. "The state's groundwater aquifers need to be replenished when supplies are available but that cannot happen if water deliveries are limited when surface water is available to deliver to farmers," said Mizuno.

"Reclamation, along with other federal agencies must reevaluate the decision-making process when these conservative and restrictive operations create enormous hardships for agricultural, urban and environmental water users," said Michael. "The federal government continues to tell us about declining in fish populations and yet it resorts to the same ineffective policies of the past," he said.

Communities served by the CVP have received progressively lower allocations which has impacted groundwater and water quality. And, farmers have been forced to fallow land and cut food production due to the uncertainty around water deliveries.

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