

Second Snow Survey of Season Indicates Dry Year Ahead



California is heading toward a third dry year, according to the latest snow survey conducted by the California Department of Water Resources Jan. 29. The [survey](#) showed snow water content in the Sierras is just 61% of normal for this time of year statewide.

"We may be at the start of the worst California drought in modern history," said DWR Director Lester Snow. "It's imperative for Californians to conserve water immediately at home and in their businesses."

Last year at this time, snowpack was 111% of average statewide. But the extremely dry spring that followed in 2008 resulted in a second year of drought.

"I'm not encouraged by this year so far," Frank Gehrke, chief of the California Cooperative Snow Surveys, told reporters at the Phillips Station survey near Lake Tahoe. "Originally, we thought we'd need 120% of average water content to get us back to normal. Now we know it's more than that. Like the state budget deficit, each day that goes by without a solution makes the problem bigger."

DWR's initial allocation announcement of 15% to State Water Project contractors in 2009 will likely be revised downward in the coming weeks. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is expected to make its allocation announcement to Central Valley Project contractors on Feb. 20.