

NEWS CLIPS

Published December 30, 2016



**Resource Conservation and Public
Outreach**

Organized by date

L.A.'s wettest month in years will continue through to New Year's Eve



Clouds fill the sky over Los Angeles as seen from the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

Nicole Santa Cruz Contact Reporter
LA Times 12/30/2016

Los Angeles County could see between a quarter-inch and half-inch of rain Friday as the first of two anticipated storm systems passes through the region this weekend, according to the National Weather Service.

The rainfall will add to what is already the wettest month recorded in downtown Los Angeles since December 2010, said David Sweet, a weather service meteorologist. So far this month, the area has seen 4 inches of rain, nearly double the historical average for December.

On Friday, there's an 80% chance of rain forecast at 4 a.m., with a possibility of showers returning Friday night, Sweet said.

On Saturday afternoon, a second storm system coming from the northwest is expected to pass through, bringing a 40% chance of showers into the evening.

Temperatures will fall to about 65 degrees on Friday and 50 to 60 degrees on Saturday, Sweet said.

Snow levels could drop to about 4,000 feet in the foothills of the Antelope Valley, according to forecasts.

The weather service also warned of possible wintry driving conditions Saturday along the Grapevine area of the 5 Freeway and the Cajon Pass area of the 15 Freeway.

Last week, some areas of Los Angeles saw as much as 2 inches of rain, according to the weather service. The storms contributed to [nightmarish conditions at Los Angeles International Airport](#), where bad weather, crowded airspace, security scares and construction caused some flights to be delayed or rerouted. The rain also caused the usual road congestion and accidents.

In an area that has been hit hard by five years of severe drought, the wet winter has been a welcome development.

Steady, moderate rain over weeks and months this year is what has pulled 15% of the state — all of it up north — out of drought conditions, according to the weather service and the U.S. Drought Report. The rains have helped recharge reservoirs that feed the two massive systems that move water from the northern Sierra to the state's cities and farmlands.

L.A.'s rain isn't expected to stay for long though. New Year's Day is forecast to be mostly sunny.

Snowpack stays low, but it's still early

SCOTT SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 12/28/2016

FRESNO, Calif. - It's too soon to declare an end to California's five-year drought despite the heaviest rain in three decades falling early in the wet season, officials said Tuesday.

The Sierra Nevada snowpack, which provides roughly one-third of California's water supply, measures at 72 percent of normal for water content, according to the state's Department of Water Resources' electronic monitors.

The weather during next the three months will determine whether California enters a sixth year of drought that has led residents to let their lawns turn brown and left some farmers without water to irrigate their crops.

"California needs sustained above average precipitation and a decent snowpack to overcome the previous years of drought," state climatologist Michael Anderson said in a statement.

California had the wettest October in 30 years with heavy rains in the north end of the state, raising hopes of a robust wet season to follow. December delivered a rebound from below-average rain in November, he said.

Forecasters, however, say that they'll know better if California is rebounding from the years long drought by April 1, when the snowpack is typically its deepest and wettest.

State water monitors say they will trudge through the Sierra snowpack — now standing at 10.5 inches deep — to perform a manual survey of the snowpack Jan. 3.

County gets \$3 million for Matilija Dam removal

CHERI CARLSON

Ventura County Star 12/27/2016

Plans to demolish Matilija Dam moved another step forward last week.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife announced that it will award \$3.3 million to the project, one of 44 selected to get Proposition 1 funds this year. The initiative was passed by California voters in 2014 to provide money for water quality and supply projects and restoration work.

Matilija Dam, completed in 1948, was designed to create a reservoir but filled with sediment and quickly became obsolete. For years, there has been widespread support to tear down the dam above Ojai. The problem is what to do with the about 8 million cubic yards of sediment that has built up behind it.

Groups agreed to a plan in March, and the \$3.3 million will pay for environmental reviews and permits, as well as engineering and designs, said Peter Sheydayi, the dam removal project manager from Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

Another project was OK'd by Congress in 2007 but stalled a few years ago after costs climbed. Representatives from government agencies, nonprofit groups, property owners and others continued meeting and agreed on the new plan earlier this year.

It calls for boring two tunnels at the base of the dam and blasting open those holes during a big storm, allowing a lot of the fine sediment to wash through.

If enough sediment washes away, the dam could be removed the next year.

Officials still have to find a way to pay for the work. In November, the Hewlett Foundation's Open Rivers Fund awarded \$175,000 to the Matilija Coalition to be used on several fronts, from writing grant proposals to pay for the project to funding community outreach efforts.

The state grant announced last week likely will be awarded around May, Sheydayi said. In the meantime, officials will work to nail down a funding plan, he said.

Earthweek:

Diary of a Changing World

Week ending Friday, December 23, 2016

By Steve Newman

Ventura County Star 12/27/2016

Oldest Water

Scientists from the University of Toronto say they have found the planet's oldest water, which is about 2 billion years old, deep in a Canadian mine.

Researchers had earlier found water that was about 500 million years less ancient and not quite as deep in the same Ontario mine.

"It won't kill you if you drink it, but it would taste absolutely disgusting," said lead researcher Barbara Sherwood Lollar.

Thank You

After another year of drought, LVMWD customers continue to use water wisely.

The Board of Directors, District management, staff and Little Drop would like to

Thank You
for your ongoing efforts.



Wishing you and yours the best for 2017.

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U.S. and Mexico push to extend accord on Colorado River

By Sandra Dibble
DECEMBER 23, 2016, 7:30 PM
LA Times



An image from July 2015 shows boaters in Lake Mead amid a giant bathtub ring of sediment that highlights the low water levels due to drought on the Colorado River. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

With the prospect of reduced Colorado River deliveries as early as 2018, U.S. and Mexican negotiators have been in a race against the clock to forge an agreement that involves sharing any future shortages — and are hoping for a signing before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on January 20th.

Water managers on both sides of the border say the accord will be crucial in spelling out how the United States and Mexico would take cuts when a shortage is declared on the river, a lifeline for some 40 million people in both countries.

The draft also contains provisions for continuing the restoration of wetlands in the Colorado River delta and extending agricultural water conservation programs in the Mexicali Valley, as well as allowing Mexico to continue storing water in Lake Mead.

The proposed agreement, known as a “minute” is an extension of the 1944 U.S.-Mexico water treaty on the Colorado River that allots Mexico 1.5 million acre-feet annually —

enough for up to 3 million households. The agreement would succeed an existing bilateral agreement, Minute 319, that is set to expire at the end of 2017.

“We’re trying to build on the trust that we had in Minute 319,” said Edward Drusina, who as head of the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) is the chief U.S. negotiator. The proposed minute “is good for the United States and good for Mexico, and we will do what we can to move it forward,” Drusina said in remarks delivered in Las Vegas on Friday at a conference organized by the Colorado River Water Users Association.

Because many of the key players at the federal level are expected to leave office next month, there is rising uncertainty over how much support for such an agreement can be expected under future Trump appointees. Beyond that, some are fearful that the collaboration between the United States and Mexico on the issue could be tainted by the politically heated rhetoric that the new administration has brought to other bilateral issues with Mexico such as trade and immigration.

“This great example of binational cooperation should not be derailed by unrelated political issues,” said Anne Castle, a former assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Interior, and now a senior scholar at the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy and the Environment at the University of Colorado.

“The collaboration between the U.S. and Mexico on binational management of this river that we share is extraordinary, and that is something to be celebrated and continued and supported,” Castle said.

Members of Trump’s transition team did not respond to requests for comment.

While a shortage has never been declared on the river, water managers say that this could happen as early as 2018 if the levels in Lake Mead continue to drop. Earlier this year, the reservoir fell to its lowest level since the construction of the Hoover Dam in the 1930s.

“These are two countries that badly need each other at a time of water shortage on the Colorado,” said Stephen Mumme, a political science professor at Colorado State University and an expert on water and environmental issues on the U.S.-Mexico border. With treaty rights to its water, “Mexico has a pretty good hand to play, but it wants to cooperate with the United States, and it needs the storage upstream,” Mumme said.

The talks between the United States and Mexico, which have been taking place since 2015, are being led by the IBWC and its Mexican counterpart, Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (CILA).

“The minute will have the same basic sections as Minute 319 but will be updated appropriately,” said Sally Spener, foreign affairs officer for the IBWC.

Signed in 2012 in Coronado, Minute 319 involved unprecedented binational cooperation on the Colorado River and for the first time in the treaty’s history recognition of the environment as a water user. Its provisions included a “pulse flow” of a large volume of Colorado River water during an eight-week period in 2014 delivered to wetlands in Mexico that have been getting little water due to diversion upstream for urban and agricultural users.

Another component of Minute 319 involved a collaboration among three U.S. water agencies — the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Central Arizona Project and the Southern Nevada Water Authority — and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to pay \$18 million for water conservation projects in Mexico. In exchange, they were to receive 124,000 acre-feet of Mexican water being stored at Lake Mead.

“The value of working with Mexico is key,” said Bill Hasencamp, Colorado River Resources manager for the Metropolitan Water District. “If we’re not done by January, that doesn’t mean we still don’t have an agreement with Mexico. We want to make sure it’s done right rather than done fast.”

Approving the agreement before the end of January “is going to be a challenge, because we’re running up against the clock,” said Tina Shields, the water department manager of the Imperial Irrigation District. “Obviously people are moving very quickly now.”

The outcome of the talks is being followed with equally intense interest by the San Diego County Water Authority, which imports two-thirds of the region’s supply from the Colorado River.

The lower Colorado basin states of California, Arizona and Nevada are working on their own drought contingency plan which must be approved before the water scarcity provisions in the binational agreement can be made effective.

The states’ agreement would parallel the binational water scarcity provision with Mexico under the new accord, so that if the lower basin states take cuts under their contingency plan, so would Mexico, said Tanya Trujillo, who is representing California in the bilateral talks.

Trujillo, who is executive director of the Colorado River Board of California, was doubtful Friday that all the different provisions would be worked out before January. “There’s still a lot of us working on a lot different components.”

The IBWC's Spener said "we think there is a path forward that would not require the drought contingency plan" among the lower basin states to be adopted before the binational agreement can be signed.

Spener could not say whether the work on the agreement will be concluded by the time Trump takes office. "We don't have a specific timeline, but we continue to work," Spener said. "Commissioner Drusina has instructed his staff to continue to work, and that's what we're continuing to do."

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Jerry Brown's controversial tunnel project moves forward



Boaters navigate the Middle River in the Sacramento River Delta in 2010. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

Associated Press
LA Times 12/23/2016

Gov. [Jerry Brown](#)'s plan to build two giant tunnels to send Northern California water southward moved a step closer Thursday to final state and federal decisions, with the state's release of a 90,000-page environmental review supporting the \$15.7 billion project.

Brown's administration is pushing for final federal and state approval of the 35-mile-long, 40-foot-wide tunnels, touted to ensure more reliable water deliveries to city and farm water agencies in Central and Southern California.

The state's environmental report concludes the tunnels, while taking 5 percent more water from the Sacramento River, would be the least disruptive of all possible options for water deliveries from California's largest river.

Brown's earlier proposals to redo water delivery from the Sacramento River near its meeting with the San Joaquin River included a canal plan rejected by voters in

1982 and a broader version of the tunnels that federal regulators objected to in 2014, saying it could threaten endangered species.

Brown said Thursday that the proposed tunnels and the discarded earlier versions of the project had been subjected to "more environmental review than any other project in the history of the world."

The tunnels project "is absolutely essential if California is to maintain a reliable water supply," Brown said in a statement.

Brown's administration and water agencies in Central and Southern California are the main backers of the project.

Opponents include some Northern California water districts and farmers, and environmental groups, which fear losing more water and habitat for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon and dozens of other native fish and other wildlife already suffering under the delta's more than half-century-old waterworks of pumps, pipes and canals.

"We just don't think that the only answer is to take more water out of a river in crisis," said Osha Meserve, a lawyer working with Northern California farmers and conservationists opposed to the project. "Ninety-thousand pages, or a million pages, don't explain why that's a good idea."

The tunnels project still needs an agreement on financing by the water districts that would benefit from it, plus federal and state decisions on whether the project would comply with endangered species laws.

Supporters of the tunnels argue the project would be better for wildlife than the current waterworks, which include pumps strong enough to make the San Joaquin River flow backward, pulling migrating fish off course.

How am I going to stay within my water budget this month?

With students home for the holidays, parties, and visitors, staying within your water budget may become challenging. We are here to help. Here's a short list of ideas that will help you save water and money.

- ✓ **Limit showers to 5 minutes or less.**
- ✓ **Reduce irrigation time.**
- ✓ **Remember to turn irrigation off before rain and for up to 48 hours after it rains.**
- ✓ **Do only full loads in the dishwasher and clothes washer.**



More ways to save at www.LVMWD.com/conservation.

Thank You

After another year of drought,
LVMWD customers continue
to use water wisely.

The Board of Directors,
District management, staff
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Thank You
for your ongoing efforts.



Wishing you and yours the best for 2017.