

Winter storm brings snow to mountains, needed rain to Valley

By Carmen George

Storms that brought snow to the Sierra Nevada and much-needed rain to the central San Joaquin Valley fizzled by Saturday night — the last expected rainfall in the foreseeable future.

The precipitation brought snow to around 5,000 feet, the lowest snowfall thus far this season.

By Sunday morning in the Fresno area, conditions are expected to be dry and mostly clear — if not totally clear, said meteorologist Jim Andersen with the National Weather Service in Hanford. The storm system was moving east, and temperatures will continue to warm over the next few days, with no more storms expected in the coming week, Andersen said.

The storm that started Friday brought about a foot of snow to Lodgepole in Sequoia National Park, and at least 6 inches of powdery white to Shaver Lake. It was a welcome addition to the scenery for Tyler Powell with Shaver Lake Sports.

“The snow is extravagant,” Powell said Saturday. “I woke up and it just put a big smile on my face.”

One of Powell’s neighbors was so overjoyed that he did a front flip into a bank of snow outside the sports shop.

“It’s pretty awesome,” Powell said of the snow. “It’s bringing a lot of people up here.”

As of early Saturday afternoon, Powell had sold close to 40 snow sleds, along with a number of snow boots, gloves and snow chains for vehicles.

Up the road in Lakeshore near Huntington Lake, China Peak Mountain Resort reported 13 to 15 inches of snow Saturday morning at its base.

Lyndsie Couto, a manager at the resort, said the new snow is heavy with lots of moisture, which will freeze nicely and provide a good base for the more fluffy, powdery snow that skiers and snowboarders hope will fall later. China Peak typically opens around Thanksgiving.

“This is definitely positive,” Couto said of the storm. “We’re optimistic about a good winter.”

In Yosemite National Park, snow also fell at Badger Pass Ski Area — set to open Dec. 12 — and closed Tioga and Glacier Point roads Friday night. The road to the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias is also closed.

By Saturday evening, about 0.82 of an inch of rain had fallen in the Fresno area in the past 24 hours, said National Weather Service meteorologist Gary Sanger.

That precipitation brought the rainy season’s totals up: Since July 1, the Fresno area has now had just over an inch of rain, more than the 0.85 seasonal average for this time of the year, Sanger said.

The Valley’s rainfall winner from the recent storm: Lemon Cove in Tulare County. On Saturday night, the town received 1.62 inches of rain in the past 24 hours, Sanger said.

Still, Andersen reminded residents that the storm was only a “drop in the bucket” for combating the state’s historic drought.

Over the past three years, the Valley was short of the average rainfall total by nearly 15 inches, he said.

Some lingering showers could be present in the South Valley — Kings, Tulare and Kern counties — on Sunday morning, Sanger said.

On Saturday afternoon, a small funnel cloud was reported around 4 p.m. in the area of Tipton and Earlimart, Sanger said, but it stayed “well above the ground” and didn’t cause damage.

Increased moisture in the air from the past storm is expected to cause morning fog in the Valley on Monday and Tuesday — the least visibility around sunrise, Sanger said. Motorists should remember to “slow down,” turn headlights to low beam, and leave ample space between their vehicle and the one ahead, Sanger warned.

How wet did it get?

Valley rainfall totals, in inches, from the weekend storm as of 5 p.m. Saturday.

Fresno: .82

Madera: .63

Hanford: .80

Los Banos: 1.39

Lemoore: .83

North Fork: 1.69

Three Rivers: 2.02

Visalia: 1.10

Seasonal average: .85

Rainfall total since July 1: 1.01

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