

It's official: California storm didn't cure the drought

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Drought woes remain despite rainwater captured from storm.

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'Respectable' amount of rain does little for long-term California drought, officials say
California enters its wettest season with lots of ground to make up on drought, agency says

Despite a “respectable” amount of rain this week across all of California, it wasn’t enough for federal agencies to improve the state’s drought picture, new data released Thursday show.

In a report that likely surprises very few, the U.S. Drought Monitor said of the storm that hovered over California since Monday: “More than this is needed to offset the accumulated deficits.”

Caption Sheri Shaffer

Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

Sheri Shaffer, a manager with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, drives a boat past dry, rocky banks that reveal how far the water in Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet has receded. A group of scientists ran the state through a virtual mega-drought to see how it would fare.

Caption Diamond Valley Lake

Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

At sunrise, the effects of California's ongoing drought are evident at Diamond Valley Lake, a Riverside County reservoir. In a mega-drought scenario, most of the state's reservoirs would never fill up.

Caption Hemet reservoir



Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

Though the state's system of capturing and moving water around is one of the most expansive and sophisticated in the world, it's based on a falsehood. The last 150 years may actually have been abnormally wet.

Caption Diamond Valley Lake



Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

The banks of Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet are dry and cracked. Though agriculture would shrink under chronically dry conditions, California on the whole wouldn't collapse.

Caption Sheri Shaffer, Armando Acuna



Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

Metropolitan Water District managers Sheri Shaffer, left, and Armando Acuna walk down the boat ramp to Diamond Valley Lake's receding edge.

Southern California has seen as little as 5% and, at most, 75% of its average rainfall depending on the location. Snowpacks in the northern half of the state are less than half of what they typically are.

Meanwhile, the entire state is considered to be in some state of drought. Nearly 80% of California is in "extreme" drought, and more than 55% falls into the agency's harshest condition, "exceptional" drought, according to the report.

Only a few scattered areas of the state are showing surplus water, thanks to recent rain.

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A low-pressure system from the Pacific Northwest brought steady showers throughout the first half of the week but despite warnings ultimately caused little damage. The forecast had called for several hours of torrential rains, raising the specter of mudslides, flooding and other hazardous conditions in areas burned by wildfire.

But rain totals ultimately were right on target with forecasts, officials said. Downtown Los Angeles received 1.52 inches of cumulative rainfall and the 2.79 in the San Gabriel Mountains, according to [figures](#) compiled by the National Weather Service.

Sudden storms on Thursday resulted in new complications. A [downpour in Riverside County](#) triggered a flash flood that washed out a road and stranded 14 people in five cars. And heavy rain in San Diego County sent an 18-inch deep, 80-foot-wide river of mud flowing down a highway, according to the California Highway Patrol.

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