

## Water cutbacks on horizon if snow stays stingy

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On the eve of the January snowpack survey of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, water management officials said Southern California's largest water wholesaler may need to institute stricter water limits if winter precipitation does not improve.

The board of the Metropolitan Water District will consider next month the necessity of increasing alert levels to a water supply allocation, which limits the amount of water that agencies can purchase without incurring penalties.

"We are at the stage where those kind of actions would be considered in the next couple months, if things don't change weather-wise," said Deven Upadhyay, manager of the water resource management group at the Metropolitan Water District.

So far, little snow has accumulated this winter. Automated sensors in the Sierra Nevada Mountains were reporting on Wednesday that snow levels across the range were at 27 percent of the average amount for the time of year.

A series of storms did bring rain to the state in December, but a state water official said the storms were too warm to bring snow.

"A warm storm means that you may get a lot of rain, which we did, but with the warm temperatures, then it only snows at the higher elevations of the mountains," said Ted Thomas, a spokesman for the California Department of Water Resources.

Little precipitation of any kind has fallen during January, which is typically the wettest month of the year.

Snow that accumulates in the Sierra Nevada Mountains acts as an extra reservoir that adds melt water to the supply system. Average snowpacks provide about 30 percent of the state's water supply.

Thomas said that the December rainstorms did allow the Department of Water Resources to increase promised allocations of water to 15 percent of requested amounts. That figure had been at 10 percent in December. It can change further depending on the remainder of winter.

"We're hoping for more storms so we can increase those water deliveries," Thomas said.

Thomas said that with the continuing drought, conservation remains an important strategy.

"Conservation remains extremely important for everyone in California," Thomas said. "The more water we save, the more we will have."