

# Storms will boost reservoirs and bring snow to mountains but won't be 'drought-busting'

By Marissa Lang and Peter Hecht  
[mlang@sacbee.com](mailto:mlang@sacbee.com)

Technically, California's rainy season has come and gone – but don't tell that to the two storms rolling into Northern California early this week.

These late-season showers could drop more than a foot of snow in the mountains and several inches of rain over three of California's biggest reservoirs, all of which can use all the help they can get, officials said Sunday.

In Sacramento, the rains began late Sunday morning, with a tenth of an inch expected to fall before 4 p.m. Up to 7 inches of snow was expected in the mountains above 3,500 feet, according to the National Weather Service.

But that was just the start. The main storm driving wet weather from the Gulf of Alaska into the Pacific Northwest should hit late Monday and last through Wednesday, forecasters said. That storm, meteorologist Brooke Bingaman said, could bring up to an inch of rain to the Sacramento area and up to 3 inches to Northern California reservoirs, including California's three biggest: Trinity, Shasta and Oroville.

## Related

It's also expected to dump a foot or more of snow in the Sierra Nevada at pass levels and higher, the [most precipitation the area has seen since February](#).

"That snow won't stick around forever" and likely won't do much to help California's abysmal snowpack, Bingaman said, "but the good news is that when it melts, some of that water will make its way into our reservoirs."

California's depleted reservoirs could use an unexpected boost. Levels have been sinking due to a lack of water flow brought on by dry conditions and the nearly nonexistent snowpack, said California Department of Water Resources spokesman Doug Carlson.

"Any rain of substance will add to the storage levels of the reservoirs, but (they) will still be below average for this time of year," Carlson said. "I can't say (the rain) would have a minimal effect, because it certainly helps, but it won't have a drought-busting effect, either."

As of Saturday, according to [data from the Department of Water Resources](#), Trinity Lake, which holds nearly 2.5 million acre-feet of water, is at 49 percent capacity and 61 percent of the historical average water level. To the east, Shasta Lake is at 59 percent of capacity and 72 percent of its historical average. It holds more than 4.5 million acre-feet of water. And Lake Oroville, which can house more than 3.5 million acre-feet of water, was at 51 percent of capacity and 66 percent of its historical average.

The storms, which will extend south to the Bay Area, are not expected to head to Southern California, where reservoirs are seeing the lowest levels statewide. Exchequer Reservoir, which forms Lake McClure in the Central Valley, clocked in Saturday [at just 9 percent of capacity](#).

The precipitation likely will do little for the more than 20 California and West Coast [ski resorts that closed early](#) due to drought conditions.

But Cindy Ochoa of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority in South Lake Tahoe said Sunday, "Anyone who is still open is

thrilled there is more snow. And, of course, we're all thrilled to have more water. That's the most important thing."

Among the ski resorts that remain open, Heavenly Mountain Resort near South Lake Tahoe expressed enthusiasm in its online snow report, citing "an inch of daytime accumulation" and "heavier snow expected." Ten ski lifts and 21 trails at Heavenly were open Sunday, though brisk winds forced temporary closure of some lifts.

The terrain report at the still-open Kirkwood Mountain resort Sunday exulted over the prospects of "Mother Nature's return."

"Snow in the forecast keeping the [#Stokelevel@8.0](#) for the day," the Kirkwood report announced. "We will have to watch to see what Mother Nature brings in the form of new snow totals. We need it, my friend, to keep'r going."

As rain and snow fall, so will temperatures, according to the weather service. Below-freezing temperatures at the still-open resorts were expected to continue through Wednesday, with overnight lows in the 20s.

Highs in Sacramento will struggle to reach the mid-60s through Wednesday; lows should dip into the 40s.

Call The Bee's Marissa Lang at (916) 321-1038. Follow her on Twitter at [@Marissa\\_Jae](#).