

California's Long Challenge With Drought

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See just how warmer temperatures and less precipitation have drastically altered the water situation in the Golden State since 2011.

WSJ

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Drought

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California has been locked in drought for four years. Latest electronic measurements from the state's Department of Water Resources show the mountain snow water equivalent at a record low of 5%. As the snow is needed to help replenish reservoirs, state and federal officials have sharply curtailed supplies to farmers and other users.

Meanwhile, cities and water agencies have instituted strict conservation measures while today Gov. Jerry Brown ordered statewide mandatory cuts for the first time ever.

Week of:

Dec. 27, 2011

Drought Intensity

None

Abnormally Dry

Moderate Drought

Severe Drought

Extreme Drought

Exceptional Drought



Affected Population

Precipitation

The wettest months in California have historically been November through March, with December, January and February being the three wettest. California had its driest December-January on record in the winter of 2013-14, with 0.94 of an inch of precipitation, 7.35 inches below average. The traditional band of dryness that is June, July and August has also been widening in recent years, with May, September and October all seeing lower-than-average precipitation levels

Precipitation Level

Less More

190019201940196019802000

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

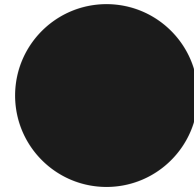
October

November

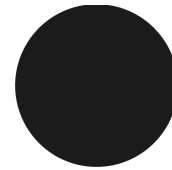
December

1900 1920 1940 1960 1980 2000

None
20,850,980



Abnormally Dry
16,345,331



Moderate Drought
57,648



Severe Drought
0

Extreme Drought
0

Exceptional Drought
0

Temperature

2014 was California's warmest year on record. The average state temperature was 61.5 degrees Fahrenheit, 4.1 degrees warmer than the 20th century average. The 2014 average state temperature broke the state's previous record, set in 1934, by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit. As with precipitation, the state's warmest temperatures, historically occurring during June, July and August, have been extended in recent years, with May, September and October all seeing warmer temperatures.

Temperature Level

Cooler Hotter

1900 1920 1940 1960 1980 2000

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

190019201940196019802000

Note: Precipitation and temperature calculations are computed using [this method](#).

Sources: National Drought Mitigation Center; U.S. Department of Agriculture; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (drought); California Department of Water Resources (reservoir); NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (precipitation, temperature)