

California officials expect 10 percent deliveries from State Water Project

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California officials said Tuesday they expect to deliver just 10 percent of normal supplies from the State Water Project next year, or half as much as this year.

Despite the prospects of heavy precipitation from [El Niño](#), the Department of Water Resources said major reservoirs remain well below capacity and water must be used sparingly.

“Our historic drought has lasted for years and isn’t going to quickly be washed away,” said Mark Cowin, the department director, in a prepared statement.

However, department officials said the 2016 allocation could change depending on how much it rains this winter. Key State Water Project customers said they weren’t particularly alarmed at such a low preliminary forecast.

“Typically, the initial allocation, particularly coming after four drought years, is going to be conservative,” said Bob Muir, spokesman for the mammoth Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. “You can’t bank on an El Niño that has yet to arrive.”

Holly Melton, water resources manager for the Kern County Water District, which serves a plethora of farms and a few urban centers, said she was not surprised by the allocation forecast and noted it is early in the water year. However, she said a 10 percent allocation “would be a very severe situation in Kern County.”

“We have been relying on our groundwater basin to meet the deficit,” she said. “We are seeing our levels decline. There’s just no way we could make up the shortage.”

The State Water Project is one of two major manmade systems that deliver Northern California water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to millions of Californians in the southern half of the state. The other is the federal government’s Central Valley Project.

This year the state project is shipping just 20 percent of historic supplies, while the federal project has left most customers with zero allocations. The state project hasn’t delivered 100 percent allocations since 2006.

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