

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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TO: State Water Project Contractors

SUBJECT: State Water Project Actions during Winter Storms

On January 4 Governor Newsom declared a state of emergency due to the series of winter storms currently sweeping the State. While these storms help alleviate some of the effects of the current multi-year drought, they also highlight the need for actions by the State Water Project (SWP) and SWP contracting agencies to maximize the capture of runoff. Recent history has shown us how our changing climate is bringing rapid shifts from periods of intense storms to prolonged dry periods.

California is currently in the midst of its third atmospheric river in just the last week. We have seen over 20 inches of precipitation in the Feather River watershed since the beginning of December. There are potentially four more storms expected over the next ten days that are expected to bring additional significant levels of precipitation to the State and Feather River watershed.

In response to these conditions, the State Water Project is taking a series of immediate actions:

- **Activating Emergency Operation Centers** at the SWP joint operations center to better coordinate real-time operations with the DWR Flood Operations center, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies.
- **Minimizing releases from Lake Oroville to maximize storage** for the summer. The storms to date have increased Lake Oroville storage by approximately 500 thousand acre-feet to 1.44 million acre-feet. The storms anticipated over the next 10 days are currently forecasted to add an additional 600 thousand acre-feet to storage. While the increased storage is a positive development, over 2 million acre-feet of water is currently needed to fill the lake due to the extreme drought conditions the last few years.
- **Maximizing exports from the Delta** while ensuring protection of threatened and endangered species. Since mid-December SWP exports from the Delta have increased from 300 cfs to an average of about 3,000 cfs. Consistent with its operating permits, Banks pumping plant is operating at levels to position endangered and listed species away from SWP pumps so that the SWP will be able maintain higher levels of exports throughout the Spring.

State Water Contractors

Page 2

- **Storing exported water in San Luis Reservoir** so that it is available for delivery to SWP contracting agencies later in the year. Since the beginning of the water year, the SWP share of storage in San Luis has increased from 340 thousand acre-feet to 450 thousand acre-feet. Over the next 10 days we estimate storage to increase by an additional 50 to 100 thousand acre-feet.

The rapid shift from prolonged dry conditions to intense storms is the reality of our changing climate. As water managers it is imperative that we continue to make investments in our conveyance and storage facilities and take immediate actions that position our agencies to maximize the capture of runoff during these wet periods for use during dry periods.

Thank you for your continued efforts to help ensure reliable water supplies for the people of California.

Sincerely,

Karla A. Nemeth

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Director

cc: see attached list

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