

## **Water managers bracing for the worst**

Escalon Times, 10/19/22

New Melones Reservoir — critical to Escalon farmland, as well as Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy water supplies — was at 616,704 acre feet on Oct. 6.

That's less than half the average 1,326,146 acre feet of water storage for the date of Oct. 5.

To put that in perspective, it is 47 percent of the average in storage for the start of a new California water year that officially started on Oct. 1.

That's the worst water storage among the state's six largest reservoirs.

The South San Joaquin Irrigation District, which ended its irrigation season a week ahead of normal in a bid to maximize carryover as California starts its fourth year of drought, is not in the worst possible shape as measured by the past three decades.

That was in 1977 before the district was supplying surface water to Manteca, Lathrop and Tracy. Water supplies were so low that year they had to curb irrigation deliveries to farms.

And while the district is positioned a tad better than they were at the start of the final year of the 2012-2016 drought cycle, that situation could deteriorate significantly if Mother Nature doesn't deliver for a fourth year in a row.

"The inflow (for the water year that just ended) into New Melones was 360,000 acre feet," noted SSJID General Manager Peter Reitkerk.

SSJID and Oakdale irrigation District in an average year split 600,000 acre feet of water they have the historic rights to on the Stanislaus River watershed.

"Drought patterns are difficult to predict," Reitkerk noted.

That said, he noted all indications from various weather modeling for the water year that got underway Oct. 1 is for it to be a "triple dip La Nina year."

Typically, a La Nina year delivers less than average when it comes to precipitation whether it is rain on the Valley floor or critical snow in the Sierra.

What will unfold before the end of the wet season on March 31 is essentially a roll of the dice.

And given water managers up and down the state aren't gamblers by nature, districts such as SSJID are trying to hedge their bets, so to speak, by conserving as much as they can to carry over water.

It was carryover water for the water year ending on Sept. 30, 2021 that allowed area farmers to escape more draconian conservation measures.

But, as some water experts have noted, if cities don't find ways to scale back water use in the coming months and drought conditions persist, they could be more local jurisdictions literally rationing water use by so many gallons per day for households than the handful that have been forced to do so currently.

# DWR Releases California Water Plan 2023 Assumptions and Estimates Report

California Department of Water Resources, 10/18/22

In preparation for the California Water Plan Update 2023 (Update 2023), the Department of Water Resources (DWR) will release the Draft Assumptions and Estimates Report (A&E Report) on Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2022. The A&E Report describes data and data sources; improvements to analytical tools, methods, and approaches; and the supporting documents and companion State plans being used to prepare Update 2023.

The California Water Plan (Water Plan) is the State government's strategic plan for managing and developing water resources for sustainability and resilience. To meet the many challenges posed by climate change and extreme events, Update 2023 harnesses state-of-the-art science, a commitment to equity, and collaboration between multiple sectors such as water quality, flood, groundwater, and more. Data and tools, such as water data portfolios, water balances, and water budgets and accounting systems, are critical for establishing a shared understanding of each watershed's current conditions across multiple sectors.

The Water Plan recommends engagement with regional partners to inform actions and policies, and it prioritizes investments to guide future water management planning. The Draft A&E Report and associated webpage contain information about the following categories:

## Basin hydrology

- Current and projected water use
- Groundwater supplies
- Evapotranspiration rates for major crops
- Current and projected water supplies provided by water recycling and reuse
- Current and projected adoption of urban and agricultural water conservation practices
- Environmental water needs
- Current and projected land use pattern
- Current and projected population

The Draft A&E Report's release on Oct. 18 will be followed by a 30-day comment period. DWR is interested in receiving comments about the information presented in the Update 2023 Draft A&E Report. DWR also welcomes suggestions about improving the usefulness of the report.

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# Voluntary Conservation Works to Improve Water Quality

USDA, 10/19/22

Working in partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), farmers are using proven conservation practices to help improve water quality downstream. Our customers are stewards of our nation's farmland, voluntarily stepping up to the plate to make an impact. They are improving the natural resources in their communities while at the same time boosting the health of their operations for the future.

The practices and systems that NRCS promotes can help farmers improve the health of their soils, keeping expensive nutrients on their lands and feeding crops, and out of nearby streams and waterways. For example, cover crops keep soil covered and protected throughout the year, and no-till helps keep the soil structure intact. These practices increase the organic matter in the soil, improving water infiltration and reducing run-off. Through grassed waterways, farmers reshape eroding areas on the farm and plant grasses that can help prevent further eroding.

Healthy soils can also help producers manage extreme weather events, with better water retention for crops during drought and more water and nutrients staying in the soil during floods.

Conservation applied on any acre delivers a benefit, but when conservation efforts target the most vulnerable watersheds and lands, the results are greater. Over a 10-year period, conservation practices implemented by farmers across the nation reduced the amount of sediment lost from cropland fields by 74 million tons and reduced average annual wind and water erosion across the nation's croplands by 94 million tons and 76 million tons, respectively.

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## **Mistake causes double ballot for Stockton-East voters**

The Linden Herald, 10/20/22

The San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters Office has identified an error which affects two contests for Stockton East Water District Directors on the November 8 election.

“The San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters Office is committed to ensuring that every step of our elections process is conducted securely, confidently, and correctly,” said Olivia Hale, San Joaquin County Registrar of Voters.

“In accordance with official procedures for addressing situations like this, the register of voter’s office will issue a supplemental ballot to registered voters residing within the Stockton-East. We thank the community for their patience and understanding as we connect once again to help shape the future of our democracy.”

Stockton-East is divided into seven divisions, each with a discretely elected director. Though each candidate for a division’s Director must reside within that division, every voter in Stockton-East is eligible to vote on any and all contests in all seven divisions of the district. The directors must reside in the division but are voted on at-large.

Divisions 5 and 7 each have a contest which should appear on the November ballot. Due to the identified error, voters who reside within Division 5 and 7 received ballots presenting only one contest specific to the respective division in which they reside rather than all candidates within the SEWD. Voters who reside within the boundaries of Divisions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 received ballots with neither the contest for Division 5 nor the contest for Division 7.

In response, all eligible voters who reside within the Stockton-East will receive a separate supplemental ballot, which will correctly present both contests. The separate supplemental ballot outer envelope will be distinct from the election ballot outer envelope.

The supplemental ballot will be delivered in an envelope stamped with “SUPPLEMENTAL BALLOT.” The return envelope for the separate supplemental ballot will be yellow in color. Only the separate supplemental ballot shall be placed in the yellow return envelope. These instructions will also be included in the voter’s ballot materials.

To ensure accuracy, Stockton-East votes cast on the original ballots will be voided. The votes cast on the separate supplemental ballots will be counted for these contests instead. Please note that all other votes cast on all ballots will be counted as normal. (Sounds confusing—no?)

Voters in the Stockton-East are asked not to discard or otherwise disregard the original ballots in any way. These voters should complete and submit the general election ballots as normal in the blue return envelope.

Early in-person voting started October 10 through at the Registrar of Voters office, located at 44 North San Joaquin Street, Suite 350, Stockton between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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