

Between January and April of this year, California experienced 31 atmospheric river events that caused significant flooding upstream of the Isabella Dam and blanketed the Eastern Sierra with 235% of its average snowpack for this time of year – the most in 70 years.

Concurrently, on April 4, the Army Corps of Engineers completed their decade-long process of updating the Isabella Dam infrastructure to bring it in line with state and federal safety standards.

Inflows into Lake Isabella have increased significantly in the past few months and are expected to continue to increase as the snowpack melts into spring. As a result, the Army Corps has been steadily increasing reservoir releases that have resulted in high flows through the Kern River Channel.

Local water managers up and down the river are coordinating with the Army Corps to manage those high flow waters, and to capture and store as much as possible to keep that water in Kern County where it can continue to support groundwater recharge, businesses, agriculture, disadvantaged communities and Bakersfield's growing population.

Kern County Water Monitor

There is no shortage of media coverage when it comes to California water. Finding the most relevant articles to better understand how current weather conditions, groundwater management, irrigation efficiency and so many other issues stand to impact water availability in Kern County can be a daunting task. SKRC continues to monitor the wide range of voices weighing in on these subjects and more through our “Kern County Water Monitor.” We pulled out just a couple of the articles that we found particularly noteworthy to share with you.

[Kern River water heads north through flood channel but won't hit Tulare Lake – yet](#)

By: Lois Henry, SJV Water

April 28, 2023

“The heavily overgrown Kern River flood channel that heads north past Highway 46 and eventually meanders into the southern end of the Tulare Lake bed is filling with water.

But it's not ‘flood water’ and it won't make it into Tulare Lake, said Tim Ashlock, General Manager of Buena Vista Water Storage District.”





“Vibration” in Isabella Dam power plant causes temporary halt of Kern River outflows

By: Lois Henry, SJV Water

April 25, 2023

“The Army Corps of Engineers will temporarily drop outflows from Isabella Dam to zero starting at midnight Wednesday so the power plant at the dam can shut down, according to Kern River Watermaster Mark Mulkay. Once the power plant, run by Isabella Partners, is down, water will be routed through the dam’s gates and outflows into the Kern River will ramp back up through Thursday to 6,100-6,200 cubic feet per second.

‘This is not an emergency situation,’ Mulkay stressed. ‘This is not a failure or a catastrophic anything. This is an operational hiccup that will be taken care of in a day.’”

DWR Working With 4 Counties in the Tulare Lake Basin To Support Snowmelt Flood Planning

Department of Water Resources
Newsroom

April 25, 2023

“This year’s series of winter storms has provided California with much needed rain and snow, even setting an all-time record this year for the Southern Sierra snowpack. While this precipitation has helped ease impacts from the state’s record-breaking drought, it has also resulted in flooding in certain regions throughout the state including the Tulare Lake Basin. DWR and multiple state, federal, and local agencies are working together to prepare for the snowmelt and protect communities from flooding.”



Giant tubes helping manage massive Kern River flows

By: Lois Henry, SJV Water

April 17, 2023

"Those highly noticeable big black tubes being placed in the Kern River at Coffee Road are the fulcrum in a full-court press by Buena Vista Water Storage District to keep as much water as possible in the county.

The western Kern County agricultural water district anticipates putting as many as 25 siphon tubes over what's known as the 'sand plug' next to the Coffee Road weir in the next few days in anticipation of the coming snow melt."



Stay out, stay alive: Officials warn not to enter Kern River as water flows increase

By: Celine Stevens, Bakersfield Now

April 12, 2023

"Every year people lose their lives due to drowning in the Kern River, but this year, many are extra worried about the dangers the river poses following the excess water flow due to all the storms California has seen.

As it starts to heat back up in Kern County again, people might be tempted to get in the water. However, officials are stressing now more than ever to simply stay out of the water.

'I really wish that the message could be something that was truly understood. I think that a lot of people take that river as, it's not as bad as it looks, or maybe here it's not so bad, or that wouldn't happen to me, I grew up here,' she continued."



Speaker McCarthy on how completed Lake Isabella Dam Project will protect residents

By: David Kaplan, Bakersfield Now
April 4, 2023

”This is an exciting day. When I first got elected in 2006, one of the very first projects was we found seepage at the Lake Isabella Dam and the challenge that meant to fix that dam to protect everybody down below, Bakersfield and the communities in the valley,’ Speaker McCarthy said.”



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<https://twitter.com/SustainTheKern>.

While the SKRC will continue to release regular newsletters, following the SKRC Twitter account is a great way to receive even more of our commentary and engage with us on the most recent Kern River water stories as they happen in real time.

About the Sustainable Kern River Coalition

The Sustainable Kern River Coalition is a regional group of water users, community members and business interests who are committed to protecting and maintaining the rights and access to Kern River water that support the families, farmers, small businesses and disadvantaged communities who are the backbone of Kern County’s economy. If you or your organization is interested in joining the Sustainable Kern River Coalition, or in receiving additional information, contact us at info@sustainablekernriver.org.