

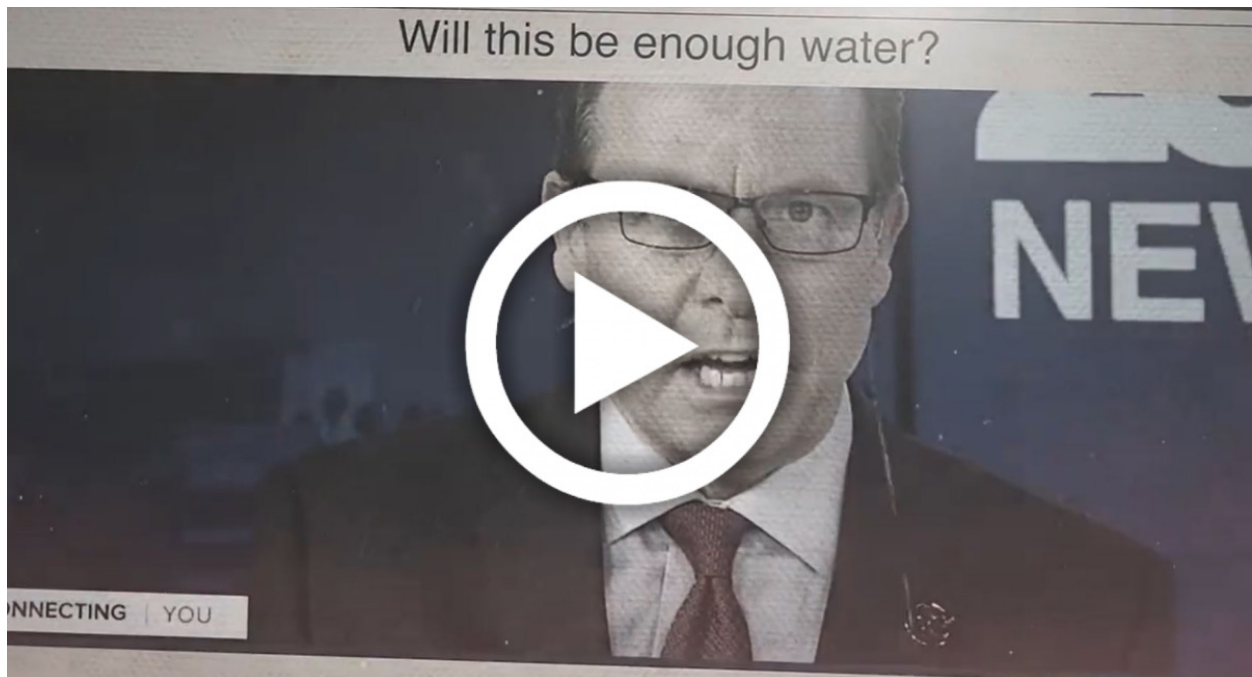


Sustainable Kern River

Newsletter | February 2024



WAKC Video Describes 2023's Extraordinary Water Year, State Forecasts Return to Dry Conditions in 2024



[Click Here to Watch WAKC's Video](#)

For those who have been paying attention, it is clear that 2023 was an [extraordinary water year](#) for the Valley. This new video from the [Water Association of Kern County](#) (WAKC) details the ways local water managers collaborated to keep nearly all of that water going to beneficial uses right here in Kern County.

“With the Kern watershed running off at about 417%-420% of normal, that’s about four times the normal water we got in a single year. So, what’s different about this year (2023) is really trying to capture all of that water and keep it in Kern County. Happy to say that all water that was destined for Kern County was kept in Kern County except for a small overflow for public safety into the California Aqueduct.”

— Tom McCarthy, General Manager, Kern County Water Agency

That collaboration and our ability to keep that water going to local beneficial uses will become even more important as the [state's second snow survey of the year](#) found that overall conditions are still below average for California.

The Valley’s water doesn’t just come from the Kern River, we also rely on rainfall, the Friant-Kern Canal and the State Water Project – commonly referred to as the California Aqueduct – to provide the water that runs our homes, farms and businesses. Much of that water starts its journey as snowpack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, so when the state finds below average snowpack conditions, that could mean less water for the Valley.

The water from these sources helps to recharge the groundwater basin, storing water underground so that it can continue to be used in drier periods when the Valley receives less water. Kern County is home to one of the greatest concentrations of groundwater banks in the world, and those facilities were instrumental in our ability to capture and store water underground with all the water we received in 2023:

“We started in March recharging to the fullest extent that we could. We have recharged 425,000 acre-feet of water. This year we will probably recharge about 600,000 acre-feet of water on the Kern Water Bank. To give you an idea of how much water that is, Lake Isabella holds less than that. So, we are going to put Lake Isabella in the ground in one year.”

— Jon Parker, General Manager, Kern Water Bank Authority

In February of 2023, DWR’s second snow survey of the year found that statewide snowpack was 205% of average for that time of year. Whereas on January 30 of 2024, DWR’s second snow survey found that statewide snowpack was only 52% of average. While local, state and federal water managers continue to monitor hydrologic conditions and plan for the future, the potential return to dry conditions makes it all the more important that all parties work together to keep the taps flowing for Kern’s homes, farms and businesses.

The video is an excellent reminder that managing the major sources of water that make life possible here in the Valley requires an immense amount of collaboration between the County, the City of Bakersfield, the California Department of Water Resources, the California Office of Emergency Services, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and all of the public water agencies that deliver the water to you.

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.



Second Snow Survey of the Year Shows Modest Improvement for Snowpack, Conditions Remain Below Average

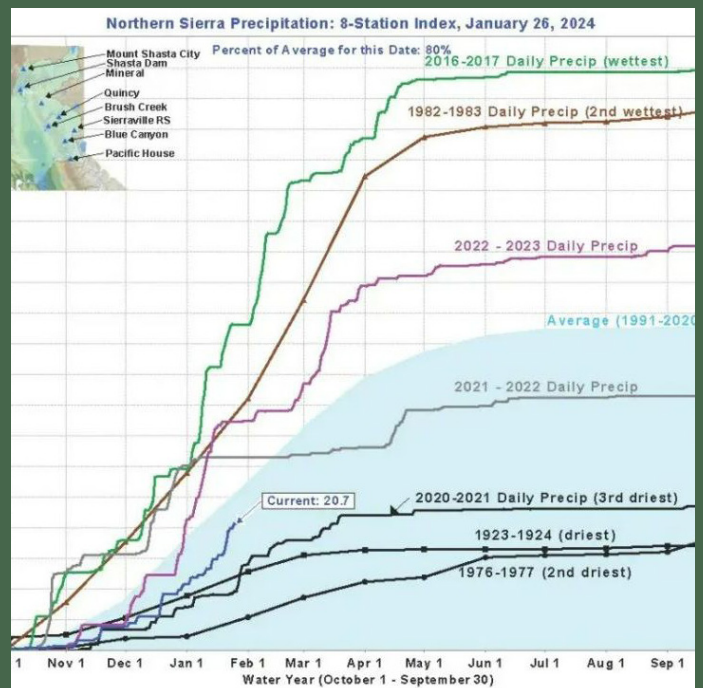
By: DWR News
January 30, 2024

“The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today conducted the second snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 29 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 10 inches, which is 58 percent of average for this location. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of DWR’s water supply forecast.”

Even when most of California is dry doesn't mean we can't have floods

By: Jay Lund, California WaterBlog
January 28, 2024

“Every water year is different in California, and in any water year, local and regional experiences often differ. California is a large state, far larger than most storm systems and atmospheric rivers with large topographic differences, so some parts of California are usually wetter or drier than others. Part of the rationale for California’s inter-regional water projects was to help average out geographic variability in water availability using canals, in addition to water storage which helps average water availability over time.”





Kern River Valley residents still waiting for repairs

By: Willaim Silverstein, Eyewitness News
January 3, 2024

“Kernville is still in need of a facelift. Particularly, Riverside Park which saw its walkways washed away in the March 2023 floods.

Now nearly a year on, Kern River Conservancy President Gary Ananian is still looking for answers from Kern County.”

Judge limits Bakersfield’s take of Kern River water and orders all sides of the drawing board over fish flows

By: Lois Henry, SJV Water
December 28, 2023

“Kern County Superior Court Judge Gregory Pulskamp issued a [modified injunction](#) on Kern River flows Wednesday that curbs the City of Bakersfield’s take and orders all rights holders to consult on how much water is needed for fish.

On Nov. 14, Pulskamp [had ordered 40%](#) of the river’s flows be kept in the stream bed for fish as part of an earlier injunction that requires Bakersfield to keep fish in “good condition” from about Hart Park to Enos Lane. The new modification does not retain that 40% flow requirement, nor list a new one.”



Kern County Groundwater Subbasin Water Sources Comparison	
Recent 10-year Average (AF)	2023 Estimates (AF)
<u>Kern River</u>	
541,000	2,160,000
<u>Rainfall</u>	
931,000	1,680,000
<u>State Water Project</u>	
566,000	1,240,000
<u>Friant-Kern Canal</u>	
215,000	390,000

Comparison of Kern River Operations — 1983 v 2023

By: Sustainable Kern River Coalition

See here to view our table comparing 2023’s extraordinary water year with the recent 10-year average volume of water passing through the Kern County Groundwater Subbasin in light of DWR’s projected 2024 snowpack.

Follow SKRC on Twitter



Stay part of the conversation on Twitter: <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.

