

State kicks off water year with anticipated 5% allocation

Sjvwater.org, 12/01/22

The state Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced Dec. 1 that it would provide 5% of contracted amounts across the board for agricultural and municipal customers in 2023.

That may sound bad, but the initial allocation announced for 2022 was 0% for ag and only enough water for municipal contractors to protect health and safety.

At this early stage of the water year, it's hard to get too excited one way or another about the initial allocation, said Ted Page, Chair of the Kern County Water Agency Board of Directors.

"We had a really good December last year, then it dried out and the state gave us 5%," he said. "You don't want them to throw out a big allocation number and then have to take it back. Then you have farmers borrowing money thinking they have water and if the state takes it back, that doesn't work for anyone."

He referred to 2021 when DWR initially told farmers and cities it could provide 10% of their contracted amounts, then had to pull that back to 5%.

"They have the 5% in the reservoirs right now," Page said. "But things could be tougher than they were last year. We just have to wait and see."

The agency is the second largest contractor on the State Water Project. Its contract is for nearly 1 million-acre feet, which is divided among 13 different Kern County water districts.

The agency rarely receives that amount, however, even in non-drought years as supplies out of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta have been restricted to protect fish species and keep salt water from infiltrating the delta from the San Francisco Bay.

With a La Niña winter predicted this year, the state is preparing for a fourth dry year, according to the DWR announcement reprinted below.

"This early in California's traditional wet season, water allocations are typically low due to uncertainty in hydrologic forecasting. But the degree to which hotter and drier conditions are reducing runoff into rivers, streams and reservoirs means we have to be prepared for all possible outcomes," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth.

Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir, ended Water Year 2022 about 400,000 acre-feet higher than the previous year, which was the lowest storage level on record. However, Oroville remains just 55 percent of average for this time of year.

DWR is conserving existing storage in Lake Oroville in the event dry conditions continue. The initial 5% allocation would be met by flows from winter storms entering the Delta as well as stored water in San Luis Reservoir. If storage levels in Lake Oroville improve as the wet season progresses, DWR will consider increasing the allocation if warranted. DWR is also working closely with senior water rights holders on the Feather River

downstream of Lake Oroville to monitor conditions and assess water supply availability should dry weather persist.

“We are in the dawn of a new era of State Water Project management as a changing climate disrupts the timing of California’s hydrology, and hotter and drier conditions absorb more water into the atmosphere and ground. We all need to adapt and redouble our efforts to conserve this precious resource,” said Nemeth.

California traditionally receives half its rain and snow by the end of January. Water managers will reassess conditions monthly throughout the winter and spring. Starting in February, the assessments will incorporate snowpack data and runoff forecasts. For the second year in a row, DWR is broadening the deployment of more sophisticated technologies, such as aerial snow surveys, that can collect snow measurements farther upslope of the Sierra Nevada. This will improve forecasts of spring runoff into reservoirs.

Water managers will be monitoring how the wet season develops and whether further actions may be necessary later in the winter. If dry conditions persist, DWR may also pursue submission of a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) and re-installation of the West False River Emergency Drought Salinity Barrier in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Farm delegation advocates for ag in nation's capital

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As the nation learned that the midterm election led to a change in the balance of power in the next U.S. Congress, a delegation of California Farm Bureau leaders met with representatives during an advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., to discuss pressing issues affecting agriculture.

“It is a really interesting time to be in Washington, D.C., following the midterm election and before a lame-duck session with just a few more weeks of work left this Congress,” said California Farm Bureau First Vice President Shannon Douglass, who raises beef cattle, sunflowers, pumpkins, corn and forage crops in Glenn County. “We met with members who represent our farm communities and members who represent our urban communities to continue building relationships critical to our farmers and ranchers.”

Farm Bureau executives, the organization's Leadership Farm Bureau class and county leaders were joined by the organization's federal policy team and met face to face with lawmakers Nov. 14-17 in the nation's capital. Discussions focused on issues including California's ongoing drought, water, labor and trade, as well as the next federal farm bill.

“As we met with lawmakers and their staff, they all seemed excited to hear from us and hear what issues are affecting our operations and the agricultural industry in California,” said Stephen Waldron, a field automation supervisor at Plantel Nurseries, and member of this year's Leadership Farm Bureau class from Santa Barbara County. “The Congress members we met with are hopeful for a productive next few weeks as they get ready for the end of the session.”

In working to secure a stable workforce for agriculture in California, the delegation urged legislators to pressure the Senate to approve the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which was passed in the House. The bipartisan immigration legislation would provide undocumented farmworkers and their family members with a path to legal immigration status and residency, revise the H-2A agricultural guest worker program to improve efficiency and reduce costs, and impose mandatory employment verification in agriculture many years down the road. The group heard from members of Congress who support the legislation.

“There is still time for the Senate to make something happen in the next few weeks regarding the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which would add reliability to the agricultural workforce and streamline the H-2A visa program,” Douglass said. “It would be really impactful for our farmers if the Senate passed that bill.”

With California entering a potential fourth consecutive drought year, the delegation advocated for increased federal investment in projects that bolster the state's aging water

infrastructure and would increase water reliability for cities and the environment in future droughts.

Tulare County citrus farmer Matt Watkins and farm manager for Bee Sweet Citrus in Fowler said he and fellow Farm Bureau leaders emphasized to lawmakers and their staff the critical importance of water supply certainty and continued investment in Western water infrastructure.

“With SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act) as law in California, we (farmers) no longer have a savings account when it comes to water,” said Watkins, an agricultural stakeholder on the East Kaweah and Eastern Tule groundwater sustainability agencies. “In the past, that had been groundwater in times that we didn’t receive rain or snow. Now, if it doesn’t rain or snow, we’re pretty much on the brink of going out of business in a lot of areas.

“This especially affects the small guy or the family farmer who can’t afford to buy extra water or high-priced water,” Watkins added. “The problem with this state groundwater regulation is it hurts the smallest farmers and those who can’t afford it the most.”

In discussions with lawmakers about water shortage, Watkins said, conversations centered on opportunities to dedicate more funding to Western water needs as part of an omnibus spending bill before the end of the year. Watkins said another avenue could involve a new Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act—a public works program last enacted in 2016—emerging during the next Congress. Other actions, he said, may include relaxing regulations, such as adjusting the amount of water required to be stored behind dams for flood control.

“It seems like all of the Western representatives are working on water and making it a priority and hopefully loosening some of the regulations on moving water and adding flexibility,” Watkins said.

During meetings in which the 2023 Farm Bill was discussed, Farm Bureau leaders emphasized that the nation’s next farm policy should include a better safety net for specialty crops.

“For California, the ask is to make sure that specialty crops are represented on the crop insurance side, so making sure all the crops have that similar backbone,” Watkins said. “It is important to build really adequate crop insurance programs that most individuals would be willing to buy into so that they are not relying on disaster aid.”

In their meetings, the attendees were able to meet with lawmakers that serve in the House Committee on Agriculture, which has oversight of the development of the next farm bill.

Matthew Viohl, California Farm Bureau associate director of federal policy, said passing the farm bill will require a bipartisan effort with a slim Republican majority in the House and thin Democratic majority in the Senate. Several House members stressed that most

farm bill priorities cut across party lines, as regional differences tend to cause the most avenues for disagreements.

During a meeting at the Japanese embassy, the Farm Bureau delegation discussed trade with representatives of the country's ministry of agriculture. Talk centered on Japan's interest in importing more agricultural goods from California and impacts of the ongoing drought.

Donald Wirz, a winemaker from San Benito County, said the Japanese embassy visit was a reminder of the global food impacts that the ongoing drought has on California-grown commodities.

"They were very interested in the lack of rice planted in California due to drought," said Wirz, a member of Leadership Farm Bureau. "It drove home the impacts that a lack of maintenance on our water infrastructure and drought have on the ability to feed ourselves and the world."

Douglass said, "Visiting Washington, D.C., is a reminder that it is important that we continue to advocate and talk to members of Congress."

"If you can't make it to D.C., there are a lot of ways that members can engage, such as visiting members in their home districts," she said. "The connections we make and lawmakers hearing feedback from our Farm Bureau leaders really do matter."

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Compliance Assistance Bulletin



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

Rule 4702 Emission Standards for Agricultural Operators

December 6, 2022

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (District) amended District Rule 4702 on August 19, 2021 for the purpose of reducing nitrogen oxide (NOx), carbon monoxide, (CO) and volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions from spark-ignited internal combustion (IC) engines. The amendment included a requirement for agricultural engine operators to submit either an *Application for Authority to Construct and Inspection Maintenance Plan*, *Permit Exempt Equipment Registration Supplemental Application*, or an *Emission Control Plan* to the District, which can be found online through the following links.

Permitted Engines:

<https://www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/ptoforms/R4702-Compliance-Application-Form-for-Ag-SI-Engine.pdf>

Registered Engines:

<https://www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/PEER/ApplicationForms.htm>

Agricultural operators of spark ignited rich burn engines that have not yet completed their submittal must do immediately. Following their submittal, operators have a second deadline to demonstrate compliance with the new emission limits. The table below summarizes these new emission limits, and the deadlines to achieve them.

Existing Agricultural IC Engine Category	Emission Control Plan Due	Emission Limits			Compliance Date
		NOx	CO	VOC	
Spark Ignited – Rich Burn	8/1/22	0.15 g/bhp-hr or 11 ppmv	2000 ppmv	90 ppmv	12/31/23
Spark Ignited – Lean Burn	8/1/28	0.6 g/bhp-hr or 43 ppmv	2000 ppmv	90 ppmv	12/31/29 or 12 years after engine installation, whichever comes later

In addition to serving as a reminder to owners and operators of subject IC engines regarding the upcoming compliance dates, the District also wants to make sure that Valley growers are aware of grant funding opportunities to transition to cleaner and more efficient alternatives. The District is accepting applications for monetary incentives to replace current agricultural engines prior to the compliance dates listed, including the replacement of existing diesel, natural gas, or propane powered agricultural irrigation pump engines with new electric motors. Please note that this incentive funding is a first-come, first-served program and those interested should take advantage of this opportunity now while there is still funding available. Additional information regarding the District’s Ag Pump Engine Replacement Program as well as grant applications and program guidelines can be found online at:

<https://ww2.valleyair.org/grants/ag-pump-program/>.

For questions regarding Rule 4702, compliance assistance, or the Ag Pump Engine Replacement program, please call (559) 230-6000.

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