

# **APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR CDFA STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

California Department of Food and Agriculture, 12/05/23

CDFA is now accepting applications from farmers and ranchers for the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP), a competitive grant program that incentivizes farmers to invest in irrigation water and energy efficiency. Agricultural operations can apply for up to \$200,000 for projects that save water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Projects funded through SWEEP commonly include technologies such as soil, plant, or weather sensors; micro-irrigation systems; pump retrofits or replacements; renewable energy; and variable frequency drives.

“Amid unpredictable and extreme swings in weather, water conservation remains a top priority here in California,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “These investments also facilitate greenhouse gas reductions as well as adaptation strategies for farmers and ranchers contending with climate change impacts.”

The application window will end on Friday, January 26, 2024, at 5 p.m. PST. CDFA will award at least 25 percent of funding to projects submitted by socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR).

“Applying for SWEEP can be transformative for first-time applicants as it opens the doors to technical service (TA) providers, documentation of the farm’s current irrigation infrastructure, exposure to irrigation efficiency technologies, and most importantly detailing the bottom-line water and energy savings,” said Dr. Jeff Dlott, Chair of the CDFA Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel. “Applicants and awardees gain valuable experience and know-how applying for and managing incentive programs with CDFA and other local, regional, State, and Federal entities that offer incentives to farmers, typically with the help of no-cost TA providers.”

A list of CDFA-contracted technical assistance providers across California is available on the SWEEP webpage. These organizations are available to provide no-cost application assistance to farmers who would like to apply for a SWEEP award. CDFA will host two application webinars to review program requirements and the application process. Potential applicants should review the application materials and register to attend a webinar by visiting the SWEEP webpage at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/sweep>.

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# DWR Announces Initial State Water Project Allocation of 10 Percent for 2024

California Department of Water Resources, 12/01/23

Today, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an initial State Water Project (SWP) allocation forecast of 10 percent of requested supplies for 2024. The SWP provides water to 29 public water agencies that serve 27 million Californians.

The December 1 initial water supply forecast is the first allocation of the new water year and is based on current reservoir storage and an assumption of very dry conditions. So far in October and November, storms have not brought as much rain and snow.

“California’s water year is off to a relatively dry start. While we are hopeful that this El Niño pattern will generate wet weather, this early in the season we have to plan with drier conditions in mind,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “California’s water supply continues to benefit from our aggressive efforts last season to capture record rain and snow melt in our reservoirs and groundwater basins.”

The initial SWP allocation forecast is looking ahead to 2024 and only applies to water deliveries in the year ahead. The allocation is calculated based on October and November precipitation, dry soils, runoff, and storage in Lake Oroville. It has no bearing on current water supplies or water captured in 2023. Most reservoirs in the state remain above average for this time of year.

## Highlights of California’s Water Supply Storage

- Last winter, a total of 3.5 million acre-feet of water was captured in SWP reservoirs. The SWP delivered 2.7 million acre-feet in allocated water plus an additional 400,000 acre-feet of supplemental water to SWP contractors in 2023.
- To date, Lake Oroville, the SWP’s largest reservoir, is at 133 percent of average.
- San Luis Reservoir, jointly operated by the SWP and Central Valley Project, remains at 109 percent of average. Water stored in San Luis also includes water from 2023 being stored by water contractors for use in future dry years.
- In coordination with the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), DWR provided water to fill up Diamond Valley Reservoir for the first time in three years. The facility is a critical part of the Southern California water delivery system.
- California was also able to redirect excess storm water for groundwater recharge. DWR has estimated more than 3.8 million acre-feet of recharge capacity in 2023, including more than 1.2 million acre-feet of groundwater recharge permitted by State agencies, 390,817 acre-feet of flood water recharged using the Governor’s Executive Orders, and millions more acre-feet of managed and naturally occurring recharge.

It is not uncommon for the initial allocation forecast to be low following very wet years. For Water Year 2018, the initial allocation was 15 percent following an 85 percent final

allocation in 2017. Water Year 2020 started with a 10 percent initial allocation following a 75 percent final allocation in 2019. Both 2017 and 2019 were very wet winters. More historical data on SWP allocations is available at <https://water.ca.gov/programs/state-water-project/management/swp-water-contractors>.

As the winter progresses, if California sees an increase in rain and snowfall, the allocation forecast may increase.

Each year, DWR provides the initial SWP allocation by December 1 based on available water storage, projected water supply, and water demands. Allocations are updated monthly as snowpack, rainfall, and runoff information is assessed, with a final allocation typically determined in May or June.

## Redistricting Procedural Mandates for Special Districts Added to FAIR MAPS Act

California Special Districts Association, 12/05/23

This past legislative year saw the passage of five redistricting bills by the State Legislature, with three signed into law and two vetoed by the Governor. A key driver of these legislative initiatives was a report by California Common Cause, which evaluated the successes and failures of local municipal redistricting in 2021-2022. This was particularly focused on cities and counties undergoing redistricting for the first time under the state's new FAIR MAPS (Fair And Inclusive Redistricting for Municipal and Political Subdivisions) Act.

The FAIR MAPS Act (FMA) emphasizes transparency and public engagement, and aims to end local gerrymandering for political, incumbent, or other purposes. However, the report found mixed results: some cities and counties excelled in separating their redistricting from political considerations, while others only technically complied with the law, failing to align their process with the reform's intent.

The report also highlighted issues in special districts, noting, "[w]hile some cities and counties disregarded their legal obligations under the FMA, many of the worst abuses this cycle occurred with school district and special district redistricting, which was not subject to the FMA's transparency, outreach, or line-drawing requirements."

The most important legislation for special districts was AB 764 (Bryan), which strengthened the FAIR MAPS Act of 2019 by extending transparency and reforms to county boards of education, school districts, community college districts, and special districts.

This new law explicitly prohibits counties, county boards of education, cities, school districts, community college districts, and special districts from considering incumbents and their home addresses during redistricting. Additionally, cities, counties, and education districts with populations over 250,000 must share a redistricting public education and outreach plan at least a month before the first meeting.

The bill also mandates that all local jurisdictions follow a ranked list of criteria when drawing boundaries, ensuring that special districts, school districts, and community college districts have election districts that are relatively equal in population, contiguous, maintain communities of interest, have clear and understandable lines, and are compact.

County boards of education, school districts, and community college districts with populations over 250,000 will be required to adopt additional transparent redistricting policies that mirror those of cities and counties in the 2021 redistricting cycle. Key provisions include:

- Posting draft maps seven days before adoption.
- Providing video, audio, or written documentation of public hearings related to redistricting.
- Keeping redistricting materials and information on the agency's website for at least 10 years.
- Holding at least one public workshop on redistricting and five public hearings (two meetings before and three after the release of draft maps).
  - Special districts and small education districts must hold at least one workshop before draft maps and two public hearings after their release.
  - Assuming the special district has a website, they must keep redistricting materials and information on their website for at least 10 years.

Other municipal redistricting bills signed by the Governor, SB 314 (Ashby) and AB 34 (Valencia), do not affect special districts but illustrate the state's intention for greater reforms in agencies identified in the California Common Cause report as not fully complying with the FAIR MAPS Act. These bills require Sacramento and Orange Counties, respectively, to use Citizens Redistricting Commissions for all future redistrictings, with 14 local residents and two alternates as members. These positions are not political appointments, further reducing political interference in the redistricting process. Similar laws have been enacted for Fresno, Kern, and Riverside Counties.

However, not all introduced legislation was enacted. Governor Newsom vetoed AB 1248 (Bryan), which would have mandated independent redistricting commissions in cities and counties with over 300,000 residents and education districts with over 500,000 people, and SB 52 (Durazo), which would have required the same for all charter cities with a population of over 2.5 million people, targeting the City of Los Angeles.

With this being the first legislative session after the 2020-2021 redistricting, further bills impacting future redistricting in 2030 are likely to be considered in the coming years.

Despite the new laws being perceived as burdensome by some, it's noteworthy that in the 2020-2021 cycle, each of the special districts we worked with voluntarily mirrored the FAIR MAPS Act in their redistrictings. These processes were successful, leading to better community understanding, fair districts, and public engagement such that special districts were commonly adopting maps based on public submissions.

The legislature has shown an interest in fairer redistricting and, while some may fairly bristle at more directives from Sacramento, special districts have demonstrated their capability for fair redistricting even when not legally obligated.

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