

# Grim forecast for state water

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## No local drought alarm — yet

Telegram-Tribune news services

Cities and farms will only get a tenth of their normal water supplies from the State Water Project next year if California continues into a seventh year of drought, state water officials predict.

City officials responded to Tuesday's announcement by California's second largest water supplier saying they will have to continue strict conservation.

Farmers said the dismal forecast would mean again following hundreds of thousands of acres. "We're hoping deliveries go up. We're praying for rain," said California Farm Bureau Federation spokesman Clark Biggs.

State Water Project officials said they will deliver 385,000 acre-feet, which is 10 percent of the amount requested by local water agencies. An acre-foot is enough to supply a family of five for a year.

The delivery forecast may increase if there are heavy rains or decrease if more water is needed to protect fish and wildlife, officials said. Last year, State Water Project delivery forecasts began at 20 percent and rose to 45 percent.

"As it did a year ago, the Department of Water Resources is making its first approvals very conservative," said department director David Kennedy.

California reservoirs are so low they will be able to provide little water to farm and city customers in 1993 if drought persists.

That means that for the first time in

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Telegram-Tribune

Thanks to the slightly above-average rainfall last year, local water officials aren't too worried — yet — about the prospect of another year of drought.

"Our local supplies are fairly comfortable," said Gary Henderson, San Luis Obispo's water division manager.

Drastic measures won't be required this year, he and other officials said, even if the dry pattern continues.

So far this season, 1.73 inches of rain have fallen in San Luis Obispo, compared to the normal 3.63 inches.

January and February are the wettest months, so there's still hope. In fact, the National Weather Service reported a

60 percent chance of rain tonight and Thursday morning with scattered showers predicted Friday and Saturday.

"It's a little early to say the sky is falling," County Engineer Clint Milne said, "but it always is a good practice to conserve water — whether it's a wet or a dry year. I hope it becomes a habit."

It has become a habit in San Luis Obispo, where residents' water usage is still 35 percent less than it was in 1987, before conservation was mandated.

If the drought continues, Henderson said, the city would probably consider in April reinstating mandatory conservation measures. But they would call for only a 15 percent reduction, he said, "so resi-

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decades, much of California must depend almost entirely on the rain and snow that will fall this winter, the state's top water managers said.

"There's a possibility this could be the driest period on record," Maurice Roos, chief hydrologist for the state Department of Water Resources, said.

Douglas Wheeler laid out an arid prognos-

is at a Sacramento press conference Tuesday. The National Weather Service did nothing to dissipate the bad news, forecasting drier-than-normal weather through February.

This year's requests of the State Water Project total 3.85 million acre-feet — far more than the 2.3 million that the project

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