



## Snowpack fuller, wetter this year

By Howard Yune/Appeal-Democrat

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The Sierra Nevada snowpack is fuller and wetter than a year ago, but state water authorities remained cautious about how quickly winter precipitation can undo a stubborn drought or increase farmers' water shares.

Average water content in the Sierra snowpack has reached 107 percent of normal seasonal levels, the state Department of Water Resources announced Wednesday in its third snow survey of the winter. That water level is up from 80 percent in March 2009, when a drought gripping the North State was completing its third year.

The Yuba County Water Agency also reported a boost in the snowpack. Water content as of Monday was 97.9 percent of the 25-year average, a one-year jump from 72.9 percent, said General Manager Curt Aikens.

Despite wetter conditions, area reservoirs remain well below normal levels.

Lake Oroville, the main reservoir for the State Water Project, is at 55 percent of its average March level. In Yuba County, Bullards Bar Reservoir is filled to 64 percent capacity, compared to 60 percent a year ago.

Continued rainfall this month could allow customers of the water project — farmers and local water districts — to receive as much as 35-45 percent of their requested amounts, compared to 40 percent last year, the DWR said.

But that figure also depends on the future of pumping restrictions south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Delta, imposed in an attempt to protect dwindling stocks of Delta smelt and salmon.

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