

## State, federal water allocations cut

By Howard Yune/Appeal-Democrat  
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A California drought entering its third year has led to reduced water shares for many farmers locally and statewide, federal and state officials announced this morning.

Water users receiving Lake Oroville water will get just 15 percent of their normal annual cut, the Department of Water Resources said. Federal contracts for Shasta Dam water will be shaved to 75 percent the normal amount, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced.

State officials warned of the likelihood of reduced supplies earlier this year, citing three straight drier-than-normal years, a shrinking Sierra Nevada snowpack, and the resulting record-low levels in the North State reservoirs supplying both Central Valley farmers and much of Southern California.

Communities in the southern half of the valley may be the biggest losers in the drought. Several water districts in the San Joaquin Valley and farther south received no federal water allocation for 2009, which could force farms to idle some fields or drill more wells to keep them in use — both of which are expected to raise produce costs.

The effect of the water supply cuts on Mid-Valley farmers is not yet clear. Numerous water districts crisscross Yuba, Sutter and Colusa counties, many of them with state or federal contracts for reservoir water.

Federal water allocations may change March 1, when the reclamation bureau revises its forecast. A storm brought more than 3 inches of rain over the Mid-Valley last weekend and dropped snow over the Sierra Nevada, and another storm is predicted for this weekend.