

## **March 13, 2012 Bulletin 120 Update**

The March 13, 2012 Bulletin 120 Update has been completed and it is posted at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iodir?s=b120up>. The forecast includes observed conditions through the morning of March 13, 2012.

### **Forecast Summary:**

Considering the rivers forecasted in the B120 update, the projected median April-July runoff in the major Sierra river basins ranges from 31 percent on the Stanislaus, Merced, and Tule rivers to 64 percent on the Inflow to Lake Shasta. Compared to the March 1 forecast, all forecasts decreased except the Sacramento River at Bend Bridge (no change) and the Feather River at Oroville (increased one percent). Statewide, the median forecast decreased about 2 percent since the March 1 forecast. The forecast does not account for the precipitation that occurred after Tuesday morning.

### **Runoff:**

Unimpaired flows for March continue to be well below average for all major Central Valley Rivers. March unimpaired flows range from 11 percent on the Cosumnes River to 42 percent on the Kern River at Isabella. The other rivers forecasted in this update have been flowing between 20 percent (Merced River) and 32 percent (Kaweah River) of average for the first 12 days of March.

### **Precipitation:**

During the first 13 days of March, the Northern Sierra 8-Station Index gained 1.6 inches of precipitation which is 23 percent of the March average. The seasonal total through March 13 is 19.1 inches which is 51 percent of average-to-date and 38 percent of an average water year.

Through the first 13 days of March, the San Joaquin 5-Station Index gained only 0.4 inches which is 7 percent of the March average. The seasonal total is 12.9 inches, which is 43 percent of average-to-date and 32 percent of an average water year.

### **Snowpack:**

According to snow sensor data for the morning of March 13, statewide snowpack is 9 inches which is 32 percent of the March 13 average (on March 1, the percent for the date was 34 percent). Regionally, the Northern Sierra, Central Sierra, and Southern Sierra snowpack are 38, 31, and 30 percent of their respective averages for the date.

### **Weather and Climate Outlook:**

The CNRFC 6-day QPF and Freezing Level Forecast, issued this morning, indicates up to five inches of precipitation from the Feather basin northward during 48 hours ending Saturday morning. During the same period, nearly four inches are expected over the lower Sacramento basin rivers and nearly 2.5 inches over the San Joaquin region. Beginning Saturday through Tuesday, less than 1.5 inches of precipitation is expected over the northern Sierra while as much as two inches are expected over the southern Sierra.

Currently, the freezing levels over the northern Sierra Nevada range from 6,500 to 8,500 feet while the freezing levels over the southern Sierra vary from 8,500 to 10,000 feet. But, these levels are expected to drop significantly to between 3,500 and 4,500 feet on Saturday and Sunday before significant warming on Monday and Tuesday.

The NWS Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) outlook for April, updated March 15, suggests below normal temperatures for the northwestern quarter of the state and warmer than normal temperatures over the southern desert and Colorado River region. The same outlook calls for increased chances of below normal precipitation for the southern fifth of the state and equal chances of above and below normal precipitation for all other areas.

The CPC's three month outlook (April through June), updated March 15, suggests increased chances of above normal temperatures for the southern desert and Colorado River regions and equal chances of above and below normal temperatures elsewhere. For precipitation, this same outlook calls for below normal precipitation for all of the Sierra range.

**Next Update:**

The next Bulletin 120 forecast update for conditions on March 20, 2012 will be available March 22, 2012. As always, you may contact us if you need assistance before the posting of the next update.