

March 26, 2013 Bulletin 120 Update

We've finished the March 26, 2013 Bulletin 120 (B120) forecast update. The forecast includes observed conditions through the morning of March 26, 2013 and is posted at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iodir?s=b120up>.

Forecast Summary:

Considering the rivers forecasted in the B120 update, the projected median April-July runoff in the major Sierra river basins ranges from 22 percent on the Tule River to 70 percent for the Total Inflow to Shasta Lake. All forecasts have dropped since last week's forecast except for the Yuba River forecast which increased by 1 percent; it was the only basin to show a net increase in snowpack over the past week. On average, the forecasts have dropped 2 percent since last week and 7 percent since the March 1 B120 forecasts. The largest decreases (5 percent) were forecasted in the San Joaquin and Kings basins during the past week. Snow melt is occurring.

Runoff:

As of March 26, all rivers forecasted in the update have picked up the rate of their flows during the past week. The Feather, American, Mokelumne, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, San Joaquin, and Kings rivers are flowing greater than 53 percent of their respective March averages. As of March 12, no river was flowing over 45 percent of its monthly March average. Although some precipitation was observed on the 19th and 20th, most of this runoff is due to snowmelt.

Precipitation:

March continues to be quite dry. Through the morning of March 28, 2013, the Northern Sierra 8-Station index had recorded 3.2 inches (46 percent of the March average) since March 1. The seasonal total-to-date is 38.5 inches, representing 94 percent of average to date and 77 percent of the expected Water Year total of 50 inches. Note that the seasonal total is slightly less than average despite the fact that the January-February total was a record low.

As of the morning of March 28, 2013, the San Joaquin 5-Station Index showed a gain of 1.7 inches (28 percent of the March average) since March 1. The seasonal total-to-date is 22.7 inches, representing 69 percent of average-to-date and 56 percent of the expected Water Year total of 40.8 inches.

Although some precipitation is expected this weekend, the 8-Station and 5-Station indices are each on a trajectory to total the driest January through March on record.

Snowpack:

Regionally, the March 28 automated snow sensor data is indicating that average snow water equivalent for the Northern Sierra, Central Sierra, and Southern Sierra are 15 inches, 18 inches, and 10 inches respectively. These values represent 55, 57, and 40 percent of their respective regional April 1 averages. On March 1, the snow water equivalent was 18 inches, 18 inches, and 13 inches, respectively for the three regions. The Northern Sierra and Southern Sierra have experienced significant decline over the month, while gains and losses have remained about equal for the Central Sierra. Statewide, the average snow water equivalent is 15 inches which is 52 percent of the April 1 average, down 5 percent from March 1.

Weather and Climate Outlook:

The CNRFC 6 Day QPF and Snow Level Forecast predicts precipitation this coming weekend for the northern two-thirds of the state. The greatest amounts (around 1 inch) are expected around Mount Shasta and along the Northern and Central Sierra. Freezing elevations currently range from 7,500 feet (Northern Sierra) to 10,000 feet (San Joaquin Region) and are expected to rise slightly before falling to between 7,000 and 7,500 feet in the Sierra during the weekend storms.

The 6-10 day forecast (April 3-7) calls for above normal temperatures for all of California and above average precipitation for the northern four-fifths of the state. Another series of storms are currently forecast to come onshore starting next Thursday and may be slightly stronger than the storms forecast this coming weekend.

The NWS Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) 30-day outlook for April and three-month outlook for April through June have not been updated since last week (the forecast was updated on March 21).

Next Update:

The next Bulletin 120 forecast and Water Supply Index (WSI) forecast for conditions on April 1, 2013 will be available on Tuesday, April 9, 2013.

If you have any questions regarding this forecast or need assistance prior to that update, please contact a member of the Snow Surveys staff. We are happy to help.

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