



Weekend Storms Bring Needed Rain, But Fall Short of Ending Dry Year

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MERCED, CA – The series of storm that swept through California over the weekend provided much-needed water for Merced County growers. However, the storms fell far short of providing significant precipitation and snowpack needed to pull the region out of a dry year.

“This was a much-needed shot in the arm, but we are definitely not out of the woods,” said Hicham ElTal, Deputy General Manager of Water Resources for Merced Irrigation District. “We had a busy weekend and we were happy to have the work.”

The storms left behind 2 or more feet of snow in the upper reaches of the Merced River Watershed, the source of MID’s water supplies. Although there is now more water content in the snow, it remains to be seen how much will make it to Lake McClure in the coming months.

At the same time, Lake McClure saw an increase of nearly 5,000 acre feet, bringing the elevation of the reservoir from 643,700 acre feet to 648,700 acre feet. The increase was partly due to increased inflow to the reservoir and partly due to curtailments in irrigation deliveries during the storm while runoff was available to the District in the Valley.

The storm brought 1.5 to 2.5 inches of water to the local area.

Based on a currently limited supply of water, the MID Board of Directors has made available up to 4-acre-feet of water per acre this year for in-District growers. MID intends to collect data and information about water use over the next couple weeks. The water supply and availability will again be revisited at the April 17 MID Board meeting.

In the meantime, Directors and staff have been continuing to meet with area growers to discuss the dry year and available water. The series of storms brought the region’s total rainfall to 4.84 inches, still well short of the 9.68-inch average typical for this time of year.

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