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Water and Power

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Your guide to the California drought from the Los Angeles Times.

NEWS AND POLICY

Conservation goals: Californians [cut their water usage 17.1% in January](#). There's one month left under Gov. Jerry Brown's emergency order to save water, and it's unclear whether the state will meet his goal of an overall 25% drop in use. "The disappointment is just, God, we're so close — we want to get there," said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board.

DWP's finances: As the Los Angeles City Council prepares to take up requests for **water and power rate increases**, critics are bringing back concerns about a [\\$600-million "transfer" that the Department of Water and Power makes every year to the city](#). Some believe the money represents a hidden tax. "At the same time they're making the transfer, the DWP claims it doesn't have enough money to make repairs," said Richard Close, president of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Assn.

Reimbursement sought: The **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection** wants the L.A. Department of Water and Power to [reimburse the](#)

agency more than **\$4 million**, which is what it cost to fight a wildfire sparked by the utility's power lines. The 2013 fire burned about 24 homes near Santa Clarita.

ON THE GROUND

Temporary closure: The **Mountain High ski resort** in Wrightwood will **shut down operations until there's new snowfall**, which could be at least 10 days away. El Niño had brought a boost to Mountain High over the holidays. "A stormy March is somewhat typical of El Niños, and the long-range weather forecast shows a change towards a more active pattern," according to a statement from the resort, which typically remains open until April.

Competing regulations: The **Santa Ana sucker fish** is in danger. At least once a month, a San Bernardino water treatment plant shuts off its flow to a stream, which causes employees with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to swoop in and save the fish. **But, not all the fish can be saved.** The reason for the temporary water shutoffs: a federal requirement for maintenance at the water treatment plant. "We are caught between the federal Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act," said Stacey Aldstadt, general manager of the San Bernardino Municipal Water District.

OFFBEAT

Unusual visitor: El Niño brought the rare **Pacific seahorse** to Long Beach. The sea creature typically doesn't make it north of San Diego, but this one was **likely drawn in by the unusually warm waters.** "It was stunning, because it's one of your bucket list things," said diver Roger Hanson.

BIG IDEAS

"It took us 15 years to get into this drought. No matter how successful the rainfall might [be] in February and March, we were still going to be in a

drought when it was all over. ... Lake Mead has never been this low before. Lake Oroville and Lake Shasta are not going to fill up no matter what.”
– [Bill Patzert](#), climate expert at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory

DROUGHT SNAPSHOT



A snowboarder cuts across a slope at Mountain High ski resort in November. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

LOOKING AHEAD

Tuesday: The State Water Resources Control Board will meet in Sacramento; the Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners will meet.

Wednesday: The L.A. City Council will consider water and power rate increases.

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