

VALLEY VOICE

Local Emergency Due to Severe Drought Conditions Proclaimed by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors

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A Press Release from the Tulare County Board of Supervisors

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has adopted a resolution proclaiming the existence of a Local Emergency due to severe drought conditions as the current water year is the third driest on record in California and is predicted to become the driest, barring significant precipitation during traditionally dry months.

Tulare County was one of several counties that proclaimed Local Emergencies and participated in a press conference to highlight the issue on Friday, April 30, in Fresno. Says Tulare County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman, Amy Shuklian, "It's not often you see such a bi-partisan coalition of statewide officials, but this issue (the drought) is incredibly important to the Central Valley."

Both the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project have acutely reduced allocations of surface water and there is below-average reservoir levels and snowpack, both locally and across the State. Similar conditions presented in the spring of 2014, which led to over 3,000 wells going dry.

Currently, 94.51 percent of the County is experiencing "Extreme" (D3) drought conditions, with the remaining 5.49 percent experiencing "Severe" (D2) conditions.

The long-term successor to the County's 2014-2016 Household Tank program, now run by County partner Self-Help Enterprises, has reported a 66 percent increase in the number of water tanks deployed in the past month. Additional demand may outpace the program, requiring a multi-agency response involving non-profit and social services partners, water purveyors, and industry and advocacy groups.

Tulare County is taking a proactive approach by joining other counties in agricultural areas in advocating for a statewide emergency drought declaration, which would make additional resources available to mitigate effects of drought conditions, and monitoring programs and need.