

# **A California Water Chronology**

By the Water Education Foundation

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In 2000, California celebrated its sesquicentennial (150 years of statehood). Within this relatively short time, the State's major water infrastructure and complex institutional framework for managing water were developed. The following chronology highlights some key points in California's water history.

- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transfers California from Mexico to the U.S.
- 1848 Gold is discovered at Sutter's Mill on the American River.
- 1850 California is admitted to the Union.
- 1871 First reported construction of a dam on Lake Tahoe.
- 1884 Hydraulic mining is banned because of its impacts on navigation and contribution to flooding.
- 1886 *Lux v. Haggin* addresses competing water rights doctrines of riparianism and prior appropriation.
- 1887 Legislature enacts Wright Irrigation District Act, allowing creation of special districts.
- 1887 Turlock Irrigation District becomes first irrigation district formed under the Wright Act.
- 1895 World's first long-distance transmission of electric power (22 miles), from a 3,000 kW hydropower plant at Folsom to Sacramento.
- 1902 Congress enacts the Reclamation Act of 1902, creating the Reclamation Service, and authorizing federal construction of water projects.
- 1905 Salton Sea is created when the Colorado River breaches an irrigation canal and flows into the Salton Trough.
- 1913 First barrel of Los Angeles Aqueduct completed.
- 1914 California's present system of administering appropriative water rights is established by the Water Commission Act.
- 1922 Colorado River Compact signed.
- 1928 California Constitution amended to prohibit waste of water and to require reasonable beneficial use.
- 1928 Saint Francis Dam fails.
- 1929 State dam safety program goes into effect.
- 1929 East Bay MUD's Mokelumne River Aqueduct is completed.
- 1934 San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct is completed.
- 1940 All American Canal is completed.
- 1941 Colorado River Aqueduct is completed.
- 1945 Shasta Dam is completed.
- 1957 The Department publishes Bulletin 3, the California Water Plan.
- 1960 California voters approve the Burns-Porter Act, authorizing the sale of bonds to finance State Water Project construction.
- 1968 Oroville Dam is completed.
- 1968 Congress enacts National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- 1969 Legislature enacts Porter-Cologne Act, the foundation of California water quality regulatory programs.
- 1969 Congress enacts National Environmental Policy Act.
- 1970 Legislature enacts California Environmental Quality Act.
- 1972 Legislature enacts California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- 1973 California Aqueduct is completed.
- 1978 *California v. U.S.* held that the U.S. must obtain water rights under State law for reclamation projects, absent clear congressional direction to the contrary.

- 1978 SWRCB issues Decision 1485, requiring the CVP and SWP to meet specified Bay-Delta operating criteria.
- 1983 National Audubon Society v. Superior Court sets forth the application of public trust concepts to water rights administered by SWRCB.
- 1990 Congress enacts the Truckee-Carson-Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act (PL 101-618).
- 1992 Congress enacts the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (PL 102-575).
- 1994 SWRCB issues Decision 1631, requiring specified protections for Mono Lake levels.
- 1994 Bay-Delta Accord signed; its original three-year term extended to a total of four years.
- 1995 CALFED Bay-Delta Program to develop a comprehensive, long-term program for environmental protection of the Bay-Delta System and Water Supply and reliability for all water users. CALFED was charged with planning, selecting, and implementing this long-term solution.
- 1996 Monterey Amendments litigation filed against DWR. (Planning and Conservation League vs. Department of Water Resources and Central Coast Water Authority)
- 1997 Silverwood Lake celebrates Grand Reopening after the completion of new intake structure.
- 2000 CALFED publishes Programmatic Record of Decision  
DWR begins collaborative, strategic planning process for *California Water Plan Update 2003*
- 2002 Statement of principles for settlement of the Monterey Amendments litigation.  
DWR seeks new license from Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to operate Oroville Facilities (FERC Project No. 2100) in Butte County.
- 2003 Inaugural meeting of the California Bay-Delta Authority, formerly known as CALFED. CBDA specifically is charged with ensuring balanced implementation of the CALFED Record of Decision.  
Colorado River Quantification Settlement Agreement and Salton Sea ecosystem restoration legislation create new responsibilities for the Resources Agency and for the Departments of Fish and Game and Water Resources.

