

# Storms offer hope for water year

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Models are still split on what the El Niño season will bring to Northern Nevada and the Sierras, but the first week of November was a good start.

Two storms this week have the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service SNOTEL measuring sites in the Walker River Basin at more than twice the normal amount of snow water equivalent.

While being above average after one week of November is a promising start, it is also a small sample size.

Federal watermaster Rob Martinez said it was nice to have two storms in the first week of November, especially since he just started the job Nov. 2, replacing the retired Jim Shaw. However, he said it's too early to know whether the early patters are a harbinger.

"Long range, the El Niño effects may have about an equal chance," Martinez said.

The El Niño is expected to bring plenty of moisture to the south, but the models are mixed on how far north the effect will be.

"And we still have a large mountain range west of us and that changes some of the flows," Martinez said. "It depends on the highs and lows and also on the jet stream."

The Walker River basin stood at 234 percent of median snow water equivalent as of Tuesday. The best numbers were at the Leavitt Lake measuring site, which, at 9,617 feet, is the highest in elevation of the six measuring sites in the Walker River basin. Leavitt Lake received 11 inches of new snow as of Tuesday morning and had 27 inches on the ground, with a snow water equivalent of 3 inches.

However, at Leavitt Meadows, at 7,198 feet of elevation, only 5 new inches of snow fell for a total on the ground of 6 inches with .6 inches of snow water equivalent. Virginia Lakes Ridge, the only site that feeds into the East Walker River, had 12 inches of snow as of Tuesday morning, with 1 inch of snow water equivalent.

Sonora Pass had 13 inches of snow with 1.5 inches of SWE, while Summit Meadow had an incomplete reading, but showed 1.7 inches of snow water equivalent and Lobdell Lake recorded 9 inches of snow, but only 1 inch of new snow Tuesday morning, with a total of 1.8 inches of snow water equivalent.