

Brown Warns State Of Drought 'Disaster'

Los Angeles

A grim assessment of the California drought was delivered yesterday by Governor Brown and Ronald Robie, director of the state Department of Water Resources.

Brown told 800 city, county, state and water district officials that "we are facing a disaster of immeasurable magnitude."

"The drought," the governor said, "is a very critical issue for the state, the country and the world. There are very hard choices to make."

Robie, who controls the complex of reservoirs and canals known as the California Water Project, added to the gloom by saying "it appears this year will be the worst (driest) in the history of California."

Robie told the participants in a two-day Dry Year Conference called by the governor that last year was the third driest year of this century.

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"But if 'friends' attempt to bring in enemies for an invasion of Uganda again, I will not be tolerant this time," Amin said.

Many delegates suppressed laughter during Amin's rambling.

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While the impact was "serious" last year, Robie said, it was still possible "for many people in many regions to just look the other way."

"This year," he said, "everyone in California will be affected. For many people the effect will be direct and painful with either limited or severe water rationing."

Governor Brown said his office was helping to prepare an Assembly bill calling for statewide water rationing.

"The Department of Water Resources is assessing the benefits and difficulties of such a program," Brown said. "We are exploring the potential for such a program. But we are still encouraging local conservation which must include some cases of mandatory conservation."

Brown told the audience that in the short term there may be fire disasters in the state's forests and bankruptcies among those hit hardest by the drought.

He called on the officials to "conserve, to ration where necessary, to allocate, to make do."

"This is the year to develop a unified state position to conserve water," the governor said.

The conference was opened by General Frank Schober Jr., commanding general of the California National Guard and director of the newly created California Drought Emergency Task Force.

"We are responding to an emergency in some areas of the

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state," Schober said. "Reservoirs have never been lower. Ground water tables have never been lower. Our fire danger will be increased to unprecedented levels."

Schober said a continuing drought will bring power shortages and health problems, adding that health problems have already occurred along the American river.

He did not elaborate on those problems but a Department of Water Resources official in Sacramento said a recent cutback in the American river's rate of flow could endanger the water quality for recreational use because of sewage content.

The matter is now being studied, he said.

Our Correspondent

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