APRIL 2006 WEATHER SUMMARY

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After a near-record shattering cold March in the central California interior, storms continued to arrive every few days through the first half of April. By the time the month ended, Fresno had tied for its 5th wettest April on record, and Bakersfield had its 8th wettest April in 117 years of rainfall records.

A cold Pacific storm reached the central California interior on April 2nd, and lingered through the 5th, bringing 3 to 4 feet of new snow to the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada, from Yosemite to Kings Canyon, and 1 to 2 feet of new snow to the Tulare County Mountains. Heavy rains triggered flooding and mud/rock slides in the Mariposa county and Fresno county foothills on the 3rd. A mix of rain and snow closed Highway 58 through the Tehachapi Pass during the afternoon of April 5th.

The heavy rains added to the water stored in Millerton Lake, prompting the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to increase releases from Friant Dam. To the north, creeks in Merced county overflowed their banks on the 4th, flooding a subdivision near Merced and a trailer park. To the south, road flooding was reported in Tulare county on the 4th, and the Alta East Branch Canal breached near Orosi.

The cold front associated with the storm pushed through the central California interior during the late afternoon of April 4th, triggering severe thunderstorms over Fresno and Tulare counties. Hail up to 1.5 inch in diameter was reported near Sanger, with ¾-inch hail falling near Reedley and Goshen.

Thunderstorms redeveloped over the south end of the San Joaquin Valley during the afternoon of the 5th, with one storm passing 4 miles southwest of Meadows Field; these storms also caused some street flooding in Bakersfield.

There was a brief respite from the precipitation, then a weak storm pushed through the region on April 7th. A stronger storm moved through on April 10th-12th, followed by a major storm on April 14th.

The storm that hit central California on the 14th brought flash flooding to Fresno and Tulare counties where the east side of the San Joaquin Valley merges into the Sierra foothills. A severe thunderstorm developed near Porterville, with moderate to strong storms forming near Fresno through the afternoon.

Yet another storm arrived two days later, bringing gusts to 52 mph to the Kern county mountains and deserts, and more heavy rain to the region. Rock slides occurred on State Route 140 in the Mariposa county foothills as rains saturated parts of the cliffs above the road. Continued high water levels raised concerns for levees downstream of the foothills,

especially with additional inflow expected from snowmelt later in the month, and continuing into May.

There was a brief respite between storms, then an upper-level low dropped to off the central California coast on April 21st, and brought severe weather to the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. One thunderstorm in particular developed near the Fresno/Kings county line around 4:30 PM, and reached severe levels, with ¾-inch hail reported at 4:55 PM. This storm slowly drifted northward, then split, with the new cell quickly reaching severe criteria as the old cell weakened and collapsed. A second split occurred around 6 PM, with the net result that severe weather persisted over western Fresno county for over 2 hours. In addition to hail, which had a maximum diameter of 1 inch, heavy rain from these thunderstorms also caused flash flooding. The low stayed off the coast through the 22nd, then moved inland, bringing over ½ inch of rain to parts of the San Joaquin Valley from late night on the 22nd through the morning of the 23rd.

Another low reached the coast on the 26th, bringing thunderstorms to the southern San Joaquin Valley, and the southern Sierra Nevada from Kings Canyon south into Kern county. This low moved into Baja California during the morning of April 27th, with wrap-around moisture bringing low clouds and a few showers to the Kern county mountains and deserts, and the higher elevation of the Tulare county mountains.

High pressure moved over California at the end of the month, pushing temperatures well above normal. Bakersfield's high temperature on April 27th was 76 degrees. The high for the next day was 86 degrees, which tied (with the 29th) for the warmest day of the month. Fresno saw a jump of 12 degrees from its high of 72 on the 27th to 84 on the 28th, again tying (with the 30th) for its warmest day.

For the month, Fresno had 3.27 inches of rain. The normal for the month is only 0.76 inch, and the record for the month is 4.41 inches for April 1967. Bakersfield recorded 1.99 inch of rain in April. The normal for the month is 0.45 inch, and the wettest April on record was in 1915, with 2.99 inches. (The wettest April at Meadows Field is April 1967, with 2.65 inches of rain.) The season to date totals for Fresno was 14.20 inches of rain, and for Bakersfield, 6.55 inches. Both amounts are greater than the normals for the entire rain season (11.23 inches for Fresno, and 6.49 inches for Bakersfield), ensuring that both cities would have above-normal rain seasons.