

REPORT FOR:  
MONTHLY REPORT OF RIVER AND  
FLOOD CONDITIONS

MONTH: **APRIL** YEAR: **2021**

**TO:** Hydrometeorological Information Center, W/OH12x1  
National Weather Service/Office of Hydrology  
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**SIGNATURE:** Kevin Durfee  
(In Charge of Hydrologic Service Area)

**DATE:** May 4, 2021

When no flooding occurs, include miscellaneous river conditions, such as significant rises, record low stages, ice conditions, snow cover, droughts and hydrologic products issued (WSOM E-41).

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| **x** | An **X** inside this box indicates no flooding occurred for the month within this hydrologic service area.  
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April, 2021 was an abysmal month, hydrologically. Hardly a drop of precipitation fell until the last weekend of the month. Sure, isolated showers popped up over the higher elevations of the Sierra on the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> and dampened a few spots with up to a tenth of an inch of rain. Other than that, the weather was dry during the first 24 days of the month. Had it not been for a storm system that trekked through the central California interior from the 25<sup>th</sup> into the 27<sup>th</sup>, the month would've been bone dry in the San Joaquin Valley, foothills and the Kern County desert. Although the storm brought badly needed water into the HSA, it was hardly enough to put a dent in the extremely large seasonal precipitation deficit or reduce the drought status over central California. Nonetheless, up to eight tenths of an inch fell in the southern Sierra north of Kings Canyon National Park. Local amounts of up to six tenths of an inch fell in the Kern County mountains from this storm system. Rain totals in the San Joaquin Valley were generally less than two tenths of an inch. Snow generally fell above 6,000 feet, but amounts were rather unimpressive and ranged from a few inches in the Sierra to as much as 7 inches in a few locations above 8,000 feet. Isolated showers and snow flurries occurred in the Sierra in the wake of this storm on the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup>. A few of these showers rolled out of the Sierra and into the east side of the San Joaquin Valley from Fresno county northward shortly after sunset on the 27<sup>th</sup> but few brought more than a trace of rain before dissipating.

To sum it up hydrologically, precipitation for the month was well below normal. In fact, every single month so far in 2021 has been much drier than normal and so has every month since the beginning of the water year which traditionally begins October 1<sup>st</sup>. What's worse, of the past twelve months ending April, 2021, April, 2020 was the only month that was wetter than normal over the HSA. The persistence of drier than normal weather has worsened the drought over the central California interior. As of April 29<sup>th</sup>, much of Tulare County, the foothills and higher elevations of Fresno County and the eastern third of Kern County were in the midst of an extreme drought. Meanwhile, moderate to severe drought conditions existed over the remainder of the central California interior. This is depicted in the California Drought Monitor below this summary. A map of precipitation departure from normal so far this season is also provided below this summary. A precipitation deficit of more than 25 inches is evident in the Tulare County mountains. As central California moves into its traditionally dry part of the year, extreme drought conditions will likely spread over the remainder of the HSA by early Summer. Based on historical records, the year so far is shaping up to be one of the driest on record, rivaling the 1976-77 drought year. The snowpack over the southern Sierra, which started the month at only 39 percent of normal, dwindled down to 9 percent of normal by the end of the month. In fact, there was so little snow over the Sierra this year that the May 1<sup>st</sup> snow survey was canceled. Rapid depletion of the paltry snowpack produced minimal water rises in the reservoirs during the month. There was generally a 3 percent increase in water storage in the dams with water capacity averaging about 30 percent of normal by the beginning of May. Unusually low flows continued on all of the mainstem rivers during the month.

Temperature-wise, April, 2021 averaged much warmer than normal. An upper level ridge that extended from the Eastern Pacific into Baja California for much of April deflected storm systems well north of the Golden State and produced many days of unseasonably warm weather. Temperatures averaged below normal on only a handful of days at airport locations in the San Joaquin Valley.

NO HYDROLOGIC PRODUCTS WERE ISSUED THIS MONTH.

