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**JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Cooler Temps Won't Reduce Waterway Dangers**

### **LADWP CLOSURES AROUND OWENS RIVER**

Although Memorial Day Weekend will bring with it slightly cooler temperatures, flooding is still likely throughout the region as local waterways continue running over or at full capacity with runoff from the High Sierra.

The National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts highs in the low 80s with cloudy skies and possible rain showers – a welcome reprieve from temperatures that were hovering around the low 90s earlier in the week. And while this cooldown suggests stream flows won't increase and may even subside a bit, the risk to public safety remains, as does the threat of minor flooding.

“Even though snowmelt flow rates peaked early in the week, automated stream gauges indicate creeks continue to run high and fast with cold water,” Friday's hydrologic outlook from the NWS states. “Due to their swift currents and very cold water temperatures, creeks and streams pose life-threatening dangers. Extra caution should be exercised as exhaustion or unconsciousness from hypothermia could set in quickly.”

The runoff has already created hazardous conditions around waterways, especially near the bloated Owens River which has expanded to at least twice its normal width in some areas as water levels rise. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power announced Friday that multiple areas of the river are experiencing out-of-bank flooding, including water flowing onto Owens River Road, and have caused severe road damage. As such, the agency has closed sections of Owens River Road between Warm Springs and Collins roads, and between Warm Springs Road and Line Street. According to LADWP, flooding is most evident near bridge crossings and north of Collins Road. LADWP anticipates additional closures in the coming days and weeks.

LADWP had already closed access to the river earlier this year between East Line Street and Warm Springs Road, isolating the popular swimming hole known as “The Ropes and High Banks,” due to severely undercut and eroding banks.

The public is strongly encouraged to avoid waterways this summer with the exception of Diaz Lake, Millpond, Buckley Ponds, and Klondike Lake – where LADWP has delayed allowing motorized boating this weekend.

Residents and visitors are also strongly encouraged to obey all road and other closures, which have been implemented for public safety. Emergency response resources are limited and will need to be focused on the potential hazards anticipated this spring and summer.

One million acre-feet (one acre of land covered in one foot of water), or 326 billion gallons of water, is expected to come down from the High Sierra through at least July, courtesy of the record 296-percent-of-normal southern Sierra Snowpack. The peak is expected in June.

### **Resources**

The Ready Inyo site, <https://ready.inyocounty.us>, is the main hub for County of Inyo emergency readiness, response, and recovery information including preparedness tips, sandbag information, and road closures, as well as surveys asking for community feedback and engagement.

The Inyo County Sheriff's Office posts frequent runoff and flood updates at <https://www.facebook.com/InyoCountySheriffsOffice>.

Visit <https://ladwpeasternsierra.com/runoff2023> for LADWP updates for run-off management.

Forest Service road and campground status can be found at: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/inyo/news-events/...](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/inyo/news-events/)

For further information on cold water go to <https://news.caloes.ca.gov/cold-water-dangers/>.

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