



Water Storage and Transport

California has two challenges in terms of the distribution of water as a resource: timing and location. Rain and snow mainly arrive in the cool winter months, raising the level of water in **rivers** and **streams**. The melting of the mountain **snowpack** continues into the early summer and helps keep streams full. But demand for water is greatest in the summer, when the flow is decreasing. In our Mediterranean **climate**, most crops require **irrigation** during the warm and dry period of June through September. The second problem of location is caused by the population being concentrated in the southern part of the state while water is more available in the northern part. While 75% of the **precipitation** falls north of the city of Sacramento, 75% of the population lives south of this city.

To help solve these problems, dams and **reservoirs** trap and hold much of the fresh water flowing down mountain streams. Of the 20,000 miles of streams and rivers that drain the state, only the Smith River in the north remains completely free of dams. A large network of **aqueducts** and **canals** transport water over great distances to **agricultural** and **urban** areas. The federal and state governments control the two largest projects to transfer water around the state, while local governments and business associations sponsor additional projects.

Image below: This photo of Shasta Dam was taken in 1941, during the dam's construction. The dam forms the state's largest storage reservoir, Shasta Lake. Mount Shasta towers in the background.

