The March through May 2004 time period was the 2nd driest on record for the South-Central portion of California as determined by rainfall for the Kern County Mountains and Tulare County Mountains of the Southern Sierra Nevada. Below normal for all of the Southern Sierra Nevada rivers, the Kern River April through July snow melt was only 48% of normal determined by the inflow to Lake Isabella Reservoir. The previous six California Water Years (July through June) have averaged only 81% of normal precipitation. The dry conditions for the 6-year period were actually much worse as 5 of the years averaged approximately 70% of normal rainfall.

The Bear Fire 5 miles south of Mariposa burned 416 acres and 5 structures (damage figure estimated). The cost to suppress this human origin fire was $1.4M. No fatalities or injuries occurred.

One of the warmest spells of the dry season occurred late between the 5th and 11th of the month. The already dry conditions of the area were intensified by such a late hot spell as Central and Southern San Joaquin Valley temperatures climbed widespread to over 100 degrees F. The 8th and 9th of the month were the warmest as Fresno reached 105F on the 8th and both Fresno and Bakersfield reported 103F on the 9th.

The Trimmer Fire burned 125 acres 25 miles northeast of Fresno. The fire was human in origin. No fatalities, injuries, or structures-lost occurred. The cost to suppress was unknown.

The China Fire 15 miles southwest of Lake Isabella in Kern County was of suspicious origin. It burned 314 acres but no fatalities, injuries, or structures-lost occurred. The cost to suppress was unknown.

The Nehouse Fire burned 204 acres 25 miles east of North Fork in Madera County. Its cause was human in origin but no fatalities, injuries, or structures-lost occurred. The cost to suppress was unknown.

The Old Highway Fire was a man-caused fire that burned 1347 acres in the S. Sierra Nevada Foothills at Mariposa. There were no fatalities, injuries, or structures lost. The cost to suppress the fire was $3M.
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lead to some local field flooding and other inconveniences for agricultural operations in the Merced County area.