



The Diablo Nuclear Power Plant was expected to be retired within a couple of years, but its lease will likely be extended. (Photo: Tracey Adams/Wikipedia)

California Water and Infrastructure Report

For August 24, 2023

(With expanded coverage of all the Western States)
by Patrick Ruckert

Published weekly since July, 2014

An archive of all these weekly reports can be found at both links below:

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www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230803-California-Water-and-Infrastructure-Report.pdf

A Note to Readers

We begin this week's report with the weather. Hurricane Hilary supposedly drowned out the last vestiges of drought in California, though as this week's U.S. Drought Monitor map shows at least 1% of the state remains in Moderate Drought.

Hurricane Hilary, while dumping large amounts of water on southern California, also brought up the level of Lake Mead a few feet. That hurricane is the first to make landfall in the state since 1858.

A Hawaii Fire Update includes three reports: First, a link to my report from last week. Secondly, a political evaluation of the fire and the policies that made this an environmentalist crime, by my

associate Barbara Boyd. And, thirdly, a link to my second report on the fire, “*The Fire This Time: It had to happen.*”

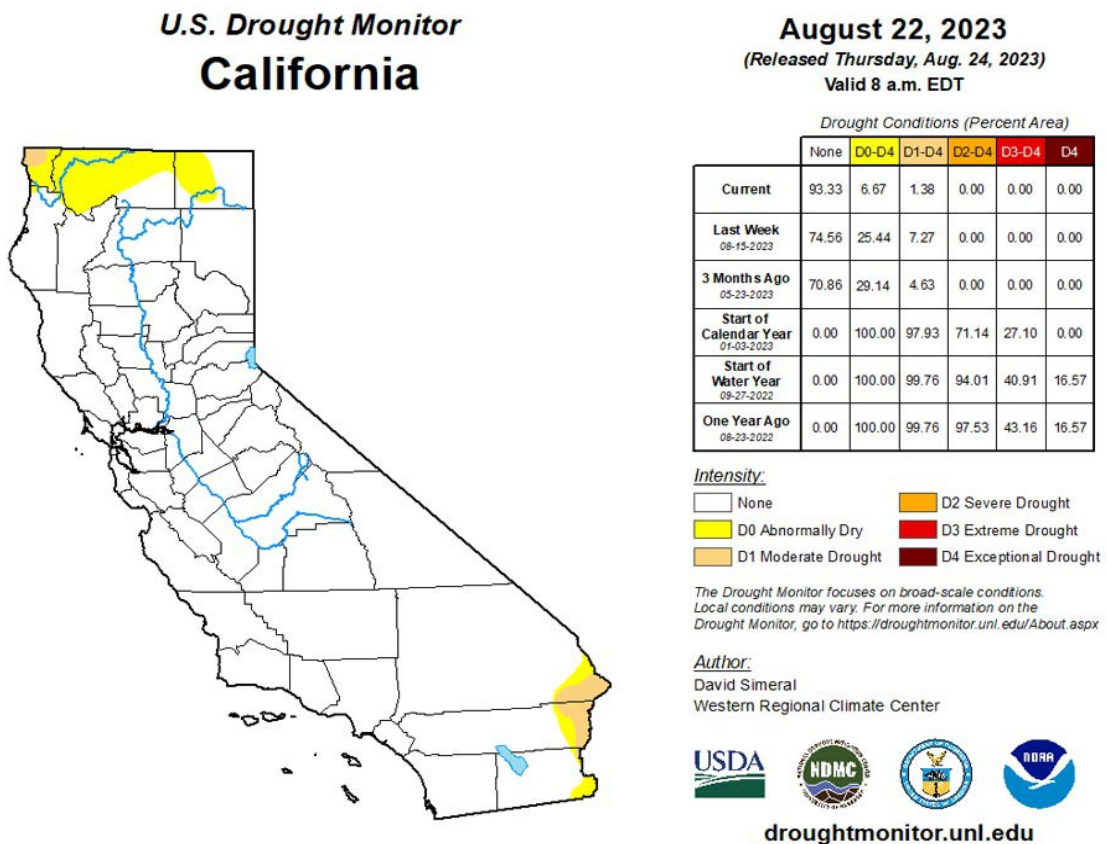
Under my title: “They Will Not Stop Until They Destroy the Most Productive Agricultural Region in the World,” is this article, “*California repurposes farmland to save its water supply.*”

Serious fires have been started by lightning in northern California and southern Oregon. One article summarizes the situation.

Developments and policy discussions are ongoing on how to cut the usage of the Colorado River which is covered in this article, which, while I only include here a few paragraphs from it, I urge you to go to the link included: “*Colorado River Basin states stake out positions on the future of Mead, Powell reservoirs.*”

The report concludes with a report on how the *Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant* is making even some environmentalists realize that nuclear is really the only choice for those who wish “carbon free” electricity production.

The U.S. Drought Monitor for August 22, 2023 California



The West

On the map, widespread improvements were made in drought-affected areas of southern California and Nevada in response to heavy rainfall accumulations associated with Tropical Storm Hilary and its

remnant moisture that pushed northward across the Mojave Desert, Great Basin, and into the Pacific Northwest. The severe weather event helped to eliminate areas of lingering drought on the map across the Mojave Desert and in areas of southern Nevada. Likewise, conditions improved on the map in west-central Idaho and northeastern Oregon in response to this week's rainfall.

Conversely, continued dryness and below-normal streamflow activity led to an introduction of Extreme Drought (D3) in the Northern Rockies around Glacier National Park where streamflows on the North Fork of the Flathead River at Columbia Falls,

Montana were in the 4th percentile. In north-central Montana, areas of Severe Drought (D2) expanded on the map due to a combination of factors including dry soils and below-normal precipitation during the past 60-day period.

In the Four Corners states, the poor monsoon season and related precipitation shortfalls led to introduction of areas of Moderate Drought (D1) in southern and central Arizona as well as in south-central Colorado in the San Luis Valley. In New Mexico, the combination of short- and long-term precipitation deficits, poor soil moisture, and rangeland conditions led to widespread deterioration on the map across much of the state.

What put Hurricane Hilary on a collision course with California?

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2023-08-20/what-climate-factors-made-hurricane-hilary-possible>

By [Tony Briscoe](#), [Hayley Smith](#), [Alex Wigglesworth](#)

August 20, 2023

For as long as meteorologists can recall, California has been protected from the wrath of hurricanes by three robust natural defenders:

The first is a frigid ocean current that flows down the Pacific Coast, robbing storms of their strength-building tropical heat.

The second is a prevailing east-to-west wind pattern that serves to shoo angry storms out to sea before they can collide with the mainland.

And the third is atmospheric subsidence — a downward flow of air over California that squishes storms before they can form, and also contributes to the state's moody marine layer.

For at least the last 165 years, these conditions have kept California hurricane-free, experts say.

This year, however, an unusual set of weather patterns and warm Pacific Ocean waters have short-circuited these normally reliable safeguards and allowed Hurricane Hilary to make its hell-for-leather dash for Southern California.

The last tropical storm to make landfall in the region occurred in [September 1939 in Long Beach](#), when an unnamed storm brought 65-mph wind gusts and drenched the region in more than 5 inches of rain over three days. Ninety-three people died in flooding and at sea, while the storm caused around \$2 million in damage to shoreline structures, power lines and crops.

[The only tropical cyclone packing hurricane-force winds to make landfall in California is believed to have hit San Diego in October 1858](#) — an event meteorologists learned about through newspaper archives and historical anecdotes.

How Hilary Changed California's Drought

By [Anna Skinner](#) On 8/24/23 at 10:37 AM EDT

<https://www.newsweek.com/how-hilary-changed-californias-drought-1822227>

[Tropical Storm Hilary brought flash floods](#), heavy rains and even changed the landscape of some desert communities in California, but there's also good news after the storm.

The storm landed in California on Sunday after hitting the Mexican peninsula of Baja California over the weekend. The storm caused [substantial flooding in Los Angeles](#) before moving further inland, where overwhelming flooding hit the desert city of Palm Springs. Death Valley National Park—which usually receives about one inch of rain per year—[closed Sunday due to flooding](#).

Not only did the storm supplement drought-parched reservoirs like Lake Mead in Nevada, it also almost eliminated California's drought.

The U.S. Drought Monitor Map showed that more than 93 percent of California is now free from drought, a nearly 20 percent increase over last week. The map is released each Thursday, meaning this is the first time Hilary's impact can be seen. The most recent drought map includes data through August 22.

Hawaii Fire Update

More than two weeks after the devastating fire in Maui, as many as 1000 people are still unaccounted for.

Three items follow: First, a link to my report from last week.

Secondly, a political evaluation of the fire and the policies that made this an environmentalist crime, by my associate Barbara Boyd.

And, thirdly, a link to my second report on the fire, “**The Fire This Time: It had to happen.**”

California Water and Infrastructure Report For August 17, 2023

• *Posted On August 18, 2023*

by Patrick Ruckert

www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230817-California-Water-and-Infrastructure-Report.pdf

Maui Fires, the Perfect Firestorm of Environmentalists Destroying Humans, and the Environment

By [LaRouchePAC Posts](#)

August 22, 2023

https://www.larouchepac.com/maui_fires_the_perfect_firestorm_of_environmentalists_destroying_humans_and_the_environment



Maui, Hawaii (Aug. 13, 2023) - FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams, Washington Task Force 1 and Nevada Task Force 1, continue their efforts amid the Hawaii wildfires.

The internet is awash with all sorts of theories as to what happened in Maui, typical of a public which has been lied to, insulted, and caged so often now that they are taut with reaction, anticipating the next fake “emergency” which will further curb their freedoms.

The Obama/Biden hologram currently occupying the American White House appeared in Maui Monday, purporting to mourn and reassure the working- and middle-class victims of this fire. Biden interrupted yet another vacation among the rich and famous to do this, this time at the Lake Tahoe estate of Democratic megadonor Tom Steyer. He had preceded his trip to Maui with an offer of \$700 per Maui victim as he continues to dedicate billions of taxpayer funds to the deliberate slaughter of humans in Ukraine.

Being the consummate narcissist, incapable of empathy for anyone other than himself, Biden assumed the role of victim of fire. In a Moon scape in which more than 1000, including many children, and an entire city were incinerated -- reduced to ashes --he lied that he almost lost his wife, his cat, and, most importantly, his beloved 1967 Corvette in his own house fire. [This is a lie he has repeated many times. It is not even remotely true.](#) The fire at his house was a kitchen fire brought under control, according to first responders, within minutes. He coupled that piece of narcissistic victim bs by later recounting the death of his first wife and infant daughter in a car crash 51 years ago to his Maui audience. He joked about the fact that cadaver dogs wore booties to respect the crime scene and find the human remains underneath their feet, dumbly laughing about the ground being “hot.”

The Maui fire was caused by arsonists—not the ones who go around crazy with accelerants, but by human beings driven by and worshipping false gods and ideologies. Here are the highlights at present. We will update this story, as necessary.

From a physical standpoint, the Maui fire was caused by local conditions. It was not climate change nor was it the result of Hurricane Dora passing hundreds of miles away as pronounced by media idiots. Meteorologist Cliff Mass of the University of Washington notes that over a decade ago the Hawaii Wildlife Management Organization warned that the area around Lahaina, the city which burned to the ground, was extremely prone to fire due to frequent downslope winds, steep terrain, and dry grasses. [Nothing was done to mitigate this risk or model its probabilities.](#) What Mass calls a completely

“predictable” high amplitude atmospheric wave, caused by the interaction of intense winds and the mountains of northwest Maui produced 60-90 wind gusts which hit a very localized area, driving the fire downslope toward and in Lahaina. In Lahaina, the blaze was racing ahead in the form of a firestorm at some 60 miles per hour.

From an ignition standpoint, the likely source is Hawaii Electric’s high voltage transmission lines and the highly flammable invasive grasses which surround them. Hawaii Electric, whose largest shareholders include the vulture investment funds Blackrock and Vanguard, is completely dedicated to the state’s Green Agenda and Biden’s Green New Deal. They have mandated a switch to total renewables by 2045. ESG is their religion. Both maintenance of the grid and the surrounding environment have been left behind as capital pours into the renewables boondoggle. In 2019, Hawaii Electric had concluded that its transmission lines emitting sparks constituted a profoundly serious fire threat and even produced a mitigation plan. But it was shelved with all priority given to cashing in on Biden’s Green New Deal. To top it off, once the fires started, the power was not turned off, sparking further fires. The same power company green agendas have produced a plethora of wildfires in the Western states and Canada, particularly in California.

Once the fire started, the response was a chaotic disaster. The island’s emergency sirens, set up to warn residents in precisely an emergency such as this, never sounded. Herman Andaya, the emergency management chief, trained as a politico and a lawyer without previous emergency management experience, inexplicably defended his decision not to use the sirens and then resigned “for health reasons” after the fire.

Escape roads were blocked by police and electric trucks. The police chief, John Pelletier, was previously the incident commander for the Las Vegas Police Department at the deadly Mandalay Bay mass shooting, the largest mass shooting in U.S. history. That delayed response has been highly criticized. Now, he was on the ground for the largest wildfire mass casualty event in U.S. history. Cell phone service was non-existent as cell phone towers were incinerated based on the same failure to prune flammable materials. The water supply to fight the fire was controlled by a fanatical environmentalist, M. Kaleo Manual, who believes that water is a god to be worshipped rather than being utilized for human needs and that questions of water use should be subject to lengthy deliberation with equity being the primary focus. He refused to release water to fight the fire for five hours. He, too, has now resigned.

Given the lack of preparedness and response drills, the chaotic response, which included shelter in place orders when the command, if given early enough, should have been “run for your life” with clear escape routes in place, was, like the event itself, entirely predictable.

Not allowing this to happen again means ending the Green New Deal disease and delusion and its attendant lack of scientific cultivation and control of our environment. It means putting scientists, engineers, and experienced first responders in charge of disaster preparedness and response and encouraging solutions based on evidence and science, not hedge fund balance sheets. It means long term planning and building of modern infrastructure sufficient to sustain growing populations for generations to come, not continuous emergency crisis management. Most of all it means putting people and labor power first in economic precedence and requiring agape and empathy and a thirst for truth, justice, and competence as the most significant character traits in those who would be leaders.

Pat Ruckert provided invaluable research and insights for this report.

The Fire This Time: It had to happen

Further reporting on the fire in Hawaii

by Patrick Ruckert

August 20, 2023

[www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230820 The Fire This Time.pdf](http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230820%20The%20Fire%20This%20Time.pdf)

They Will Not Stop Until They Destroy the Most Productive Agricultural Region in the World

California repurposes farmland to save its water supply

By Lisa Owens Viani

<https://landscapearchitecturemagazine.org/2023/08/24/farm-to-water-table/>

The drought took a huge toll on California farms, as surface water deliveries were cut and limits were placed on pumping groundwater. Many of the state's farmlands are located in groundwater basins that are severely overdrafted—more water is going out than in—and will take time to recharge even with very wet years like this one, says Paul Gosselin, the deputy director of the Sustainable Groundwater Management program at the California Department of Water Resources. “We’re having a linear increase in temperature, and what that’s doing is driving moisture in the air that is resulting in these more severe drought conditions, and on the flip side, more severe atmospheric rivers coming through.”

In response to this whiplash weather and its effects on the state's groundwater resources and farmlands, California Governor Gavin Newsom allocated \$50 million from the state's 2021–2022 budget and \$40 million from the 2022–2023 budget for a new program under the state Department of Conservation, the [Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program](#). In 2022, the program awarded \$40 million to four agricultural regions to fallow and find new uses for farmland. In 2023, demand has already exceeded funding: The state received proposals totaling \$83 million, according to David Shabazian, the director of the Department of Conservation and a former farmer. In June, the state awarded \$35 million to four regional organizations across seven counties to repurpose agricultural lands. He says the funding is designed to respond to the years when surface water supply is lacking, as well as to recharge shriveling groundwater aquifers by taking land out of production (and thereby conserving water), primarily in the state's agricultural heartland, the Central Valley.



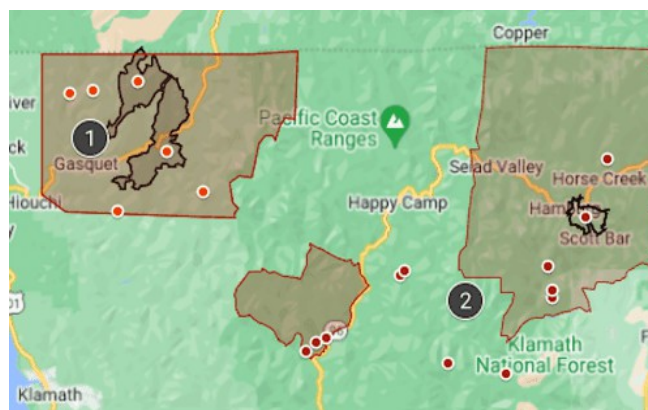
The Emergency Pump Program helps farmers recharge a groundwater basin in Fresno County, California. *Photo by Jonathan Wong/California Department of Water Resources.*

Other 2022 grantees include the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District and [Greater Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency](#) in Tulare County, which were also awarded \$10 million to develop a comprehensive land repurposing program. The [Pixley Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency](#), also in Tulare County, was awarded \$10 million to retire land and develop wildlife habitat—the Tule subbasin must reduce overdraft by more than 115,000 acre-feet (roughly 37.5 billion gallons) annually. And the county of Madera received \$10 million to pay farmers to repurpose marginal agricultural lands in three critically overdrafted subbasins with historical groundwater level declines, land subsidence, and degraded groundwater quality.

Shabazian emphasizes that the program is designed to ensure as much as possible that land isn't simply going fallow but is put to other beneficial uses. "Crop production tends to be more valuable than other uses, but we recognize there are other valuable uses for the land," he says. Potential uses that can be considered with the grant funding include habitat restoration, park development, dryland farming, and solar power production, among others, according to Shabazian. The program guidelines require projects to benefit groundwater sustainability for a minimum of 10 years.

Alvar Escriva-Bou, an assistant professor at UCLA and an adjunct fellow with the Public Policy Institute of California, estimates as much as 500,000 acres of farmland could be taken out of production over the next 20 years, either voluntarily or with government subsidies and incentives. Most of the critically overdrafted basins are found in the southern Central Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, where popular crops such as nuts, grapes, and corn are grown, as well as feed crops for cattle such as alfalfa, according to Escriva-Bou, who explains that the valley is overdrawn by two million acre-feet annually.

Map of Northern California wildfires: What to know about the evacuations, outages, smoke



The Smith River Complex is the state's second largest wildfire of the season.

By [Bay Area News Group](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 22, 2023

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2023/08/22/map-of-northern-california-wildfires-what-to-know-about-the-evacuations-outages-smoke/>

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https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2023/08/22/map-of-northern-california-wildfires-what-to-know-about-the-evacuations-outages-smoke%2f&utm_campaign=bang-ebt-nl-breaking-news-alerts-nl&utm_content=alert

A week after lightning storms sparked dozens of wildfires, evacuation orders and warnings remain in place in four counties in California's northwestern corner.

The Smith River Complex in Del Norte County is the state's second largest wildfire of the season, having burned 35,053 acres (55 square miles) as of Monday, Aug. 21. (California's [largest wildfire of 2023 is York](#), at more than 90,000 acres.)

The map above shows the mandatory evacuation orders in red and the approximate perimeters of the largest fires in black. Colored dots show the locations of some of the smaller fires.

The Colorado River Update

'This buys a year': Hurricane Hilary edges up Lake Mead water level

[James Powel Trevor Hughes](#)

USA TODAY

August 22, 2023

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2023/08/22/hurricane-hilary-rises-water-level-lake-mead/70654623007/>

Lake Mead water levels are at the highest point this year after Hurricane Hilary swept through the Southwest.

The lake stands 1,063.95 feet above mean sea level according to information collected by [LakeLevels](#). This is over 20 feet higher than where the lake was [on this day last year](#), almost four feet below where it was last year, and almost 20 feet under where the lake was in 2020.

A wet winter helped fill the reservoir on the Arizona and Nevada border on the Colorado River. At the beginning of the year, the lake was around 1044 feet above mean sea level, reaching 1050 feet in May. Prior to Hurricane Hilary making landfall, the lake measured 1063.49 feet above mean sea level.

Key reservoir filling doesn't solve water issues

The Southwest has been experiencing a drought for [23 years](#), leading officials to [cut a deal to promote water conservation](#) in the region.

Colorado River Basin states stake out positions on the future of Mead, Powell reservoirs

Basin states continue to disagree on how to change the reservoirs' operations, but they do agree that the current rules don't work

[Shannon Mullane](#) 3:34 AM MDT on Aug 23, 2023

<https://coloradosun.com/2023/08/23/colorado-river-basin-states-future-ofmead-powell-reservoirs/>

"This buys a year," longtime Colorado River expert Brad Udall [told USA Today](#) about the winter snowpack and precipitation. "It doesn't remotely come close to solving the long-term problems."

There was [an attempt to improve parts of the Colorado River ecosystem](#) earlier this year.

What's the long-term outlook for the Colorado River?

Udall, who studies the river at Colorado State University's Colorado Water Center, said this winter's snow is likely an aberration, and that long-term trends show the West is getting drier due to climate change. He said the only real solution is to use less water.



The Colorado River is paralleled by railroad tracks and Interstate 70 as it runs through Glenwood Canyon near Glenwood Springs on June 27. This summer, state and federal officials began a new round of negotiations focused on long-term operations at the river's largest reservoirs, lakes Mead and Powell. (Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun)

Colorado River Basin states don't agree on very much when it comes to the future operations of the basin's largest water savings banks. One thing they do agree on: The current rules aren't working.

The seven states with land in the Colorado River Basin and other stakeholders submitted comment letters Aug. 15 to the federal government for consideration as part of ongoing discussions over future operations at Lake Mead and Lake Powell, [which together comprise 92% of the basin's entire storage capacity](#).

The federal long-term planning process launched in June, a year after a storage crisis left water users reeling. From 2000 to 2022, Mead and Powell dropped from nearly full to less than 32% capacity, as of March 20. Water experts attribute the crisis to prolonged drought, an [increasingly warm climate](#) and overuse.

States, tribes, stakeholders and federal officials are in the midst of negotiations for both near- and long-term planning — each jockeying to strengthen their access to the vital resource.

Even Some Environmentalists, or Their Sponsors, Concede It Is Only Nuclear Power Which is the Real No Carbon Technology

Once feared, Diablo Canyon now key to California clean energy goals

Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant sparked controversy when it first opened decades ago. But in an era shaped by climate change, it may be just what California needs while the state awaits construction of an offshore wind farm.

Pat Pemberton / August 18, 2023

<https://www.courthousenews.com/once-feared-diablo-canyon-now-key-to-california-clean-energy-goals/>



The Diablo Nuclear Power Plant was expected to be retired within a couple of years, but its lease will likely be extended. (Photo: Tracey Adams/Wikipedia)

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. (CN) — During a 1981 protest described by Rolling Stone as “the boldest demonstration yet against a nuclear future,” singer-songwriter Jackson Browne peacefully crossed a blue line, held out his wrists, and waited for Sheriff Deputy Gary Hoving to take him into custody.

Fast-forward to the present day, and concerns about Diablo Canyon are back in the forefront.

Now, though, some worry about closing the facility, the last working nuclear power plant in California.

Energy company PG&E, which runs the plant, had planned to retire Diablo Canyon by 2025. While that decision pleased ardent anti-nuke activists, state politicians are now asking PG&E to extend the plant's life a little longer so it can buy time for more palatable clean energy.

As the effects of climate change have become more apparent, the drawbacks of carbon-heavy forms of power like gas have also become more obvious, and nuclear energy has gained new support. For some, that's cast fresh doubts on the wisdom of shuttering Diablo Canyon for good.

Diablo Canyon's unlikely comeback comes as California looks for ways to keep the lights on while still meeting climate-change targets. Just a few miles up the coast, in Morro Bay, three companies recently won bids to create an ambitious wind energy project in San Luis Obispo County that could produce more power than Diablo — all without the threat of nuclear catastrophe.