



Joshua Trees. (Photo : by DAVID SWANSON/AFP via Getty Images)

At least 36 million dead trees were reported in California in 2022 due to prolonged drought and wildfires. The soaring temperatures and strong winds helped to unleash dangerous fires in the region.

California Water and Infrastructure Report For August 31, 2023

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

Published weekly since July, 2014

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A Note to Readers

I have just a brief report this week. There was little in new developments this past week, and my schedule has been a little tight.

We begin with the U.S. Drought Monitor. Hurricane Hilary hit southern California with drenching rain, so that part of the state has virtually no drought conditions at all as of now. The rest of the state has a few scattered areas that have the lowest measure of drought.

As the discussion from the U.S. Drought Monitor indicates, certain areas, like the Pacific Northwest and Montana, have seen an intensification of drought.

One area that usually gets little media coverage is the large number of trees that die during droughts. During the five year drought ending in 2016, more than 150 million trees died. Last year alone during our last drought, 36 million trees died. The article reporting on this later drought, of course, in addition to blaming drought, also blames climate change. I provide another article which is an antidote to such a mindless repeating of everything that happens now is because of climate change.

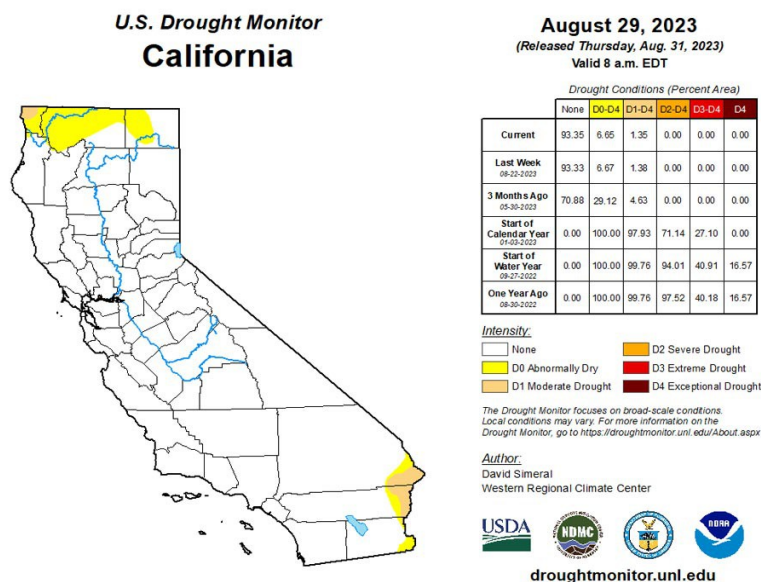
This week's report concludes with a Maui fire update.

Two articles included below.

The first shows that a fire five years ago that occurred under the same conditions as the one on August 8 this year, was the subject of criticism and promises from the county authorities that those problems would be addressed: That included not sounding the alarm, clearing brush and grass, and ensuring that the electricity was shut down at times of high-wind warnings.

The second is the denial by the power company that they did not turn off the power before the fires began.

U.S. Drought Monitor California



The West

On the map, degradations were made across areas of the Southwest and Pacific Northwest including

New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and Montana.

In the Pacific Northwest, an area of Extreme Drought (D3) was added in the North Cascades where precipitation has been below normal both in the short and long term. Moreover, 7-day average streamflows on numerous creeks and rivers were below the 10th percentile and numerous other drought indices were supporting deterioration in the Cascades as well as other areas in the state.

Likewise, poor soil moisture and low streamflow levels led to expansion of Extreme Drought (D3) in northwestern Montana.

In New Mexico, the combination of short- and long-term precipitation deficits, poor soil moisture, and impacts in the agricultural sector (eastern New Mexico) led to continued deterioration on the map across parts of the state.

For the week, some light precipitation accumulations (generally < 1 inch) were observed in isolated areas of the Four Corners states and Intermountain West.

Trees By The Millions Are Dying in California, Again



(Photo : by DAVID SWANSON/AFP via Getty Images)

Joshua Trees. At least 36 million dead trees were reported in California in 2022 due to prolonged drought and wildfires. The soaring temperatures and strong winds helped to unleash dangerous fires in the region.

During the five year drought that ended in 2016, at least 150 million trees died in the forests of California. And that did not include the wildfires that killed millions more.

The drought not only killed the trees directly, but weakened them and made them susceptible to bark beetles, that did kill them.

A new report released a week ago, reports that 36 million trees died due to drought in 2022. Of course, the headline includes the obligatory claim that it was not just the drought, but climate change also killed them. That claim presents no evidence that climate change played any role at all, but, who cares, evidence or not, it does conform to the narrative that is often made.

Here is an article on that topic:

Blaming climate change for everything is lazy

This is wildfire season, yet media and politicians are dangerously conflating regular weather events with an apocalypse

By Lionel Shriver

Friday August 25 2023

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/f2726192-4373-11ee-8b31-3c9c533abb75?shareToken=c4edc2b1b8d65bd18063d45fa2d44cfe>

California Drought: Prolonged Heat, Climate Change Causes 36 Million Trees to Die in 2022

By [Kenneth John](#) Aug 23, 2023 09:40 PM EDT

<https://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/58082/20230823/36-million-dead-trees-prolonged-drought-climate-change.htm>

At least 36 million dead trees were reported in California in 2022 due to prolonged drought and wildfires. The soaring temperatures and strong winds helped to unleash dangerous fires in the region.

Maui Fire Update

Two articles are included below.

The first shows that a fire five years ago that occurred under the same conditions as the one on August 8 this year, was the subject of criticism and promises from the county authorities that those problems would be addressed: That included not sounding the alarm, clearing brush and grass, and ensuring that the electricity was shut down at times of high-wind warnings.

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Maui dodged catastrophe in wildfires five years ago but missed an opportunity to prevent future disaster, residents say

After fires in 2018, residents raised concerns about clogged evacuation routes, power line risks and failures to sound emergency sirens. “Everything we told them was completely, 100 percent ignored,” one man said.

Wildfires in Lahaina during Hurricane Lane in 2018 resulted in no deaths but scorched more than 2,800 acres. Zane Vergara / Shutterstock file

Aug. 24, 2023, 9:00 AM PDT

By Lewis Kamb and [Evan Bush](#)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/maui-officials-warned-lahaina-wildfires-2018-critics->

[rcna101515](#)

Five years ago, after tropical storm-force winds whipped sparks into towering walls of flames on the parched hillsides and fields above Lahaina, Maui's top emergency management official at the time publicly expressed his relief that a far worse disaster had been averted.

At a special Maui County Council meeting held in the wake of the fires in 2018, Herman Andaya cited a combination of luck and heroics as the primary reasons advancing flames, stoked by gusts spun from Hurricane Lane offshore, stalled before they reached the historic town center.

Despite the striking similarities in conditions surrounding the Lahaina fires of five years ago, emergency management and other public safety officials have left several primary concerns identified after the 2018 fires unaddressed, according to a review of records and interviews conducted by NBC News.

Officials also haven't publicly released a county-commissioned after-action report to assess and recommend improvements to the 2018 emergency response, despite pleas by advocates and repeated requests by NBC News and other media organizations.

Herman Andaya, the former administrator of the Maui County Emergency Management Agency, resigned last week after his agency's response to the Lahaina fire drew intense criticism. KHNL

In fact, many of the concerns that are now blamed as contributors to this month's deadly fire — from the failures to activate civil defense sirens to the inability to shut down power to transmission lines at risk during high winds — were raised as significant problems requiring attention after the fires five years ago.

A video of the three-hour meeting shows that a resident inquired about the lack of a shutoff system for power lines. Others reported problems accessing water to help firefighting efforts and complained of failures to reduce overgrown brush and to better irrigate drought-prone fields. Some raised concerns about problems with evacuation routes, planning and communications, among other issues.

"We were given a bunch of lip service, and instead of preventing another fire, the focus of the meeting was 'Look, we're gonna give you guys money and reimburse you,'" Jung said. "And we were: 'No, no, no, no, that is not what we want. You can give us all the money in the world; we just do not want this to happen again.' But everything we told them was completely, 100% ignored."

Hawaiian Electric Denies Responsibility for Maui Fires, Claims Power Lines Were Shut Off Hours Before the Wildfire Started

by [Jim Hoft](#) Aug. 28, 2023 7:48 pm [329 Comments](#)

<https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2023/08/hawaiian-electric-denies-responsibility-maui-fires-claims-power/>

A high-stakes blame game is unfolding in Hawaii as Hawaiian Electric vehemently denies causing the recent fires that engulfed parts of Maui. The company released a comprehensive statement after Maui County officials accused it of failing to properly manage electrical equipment during a National Weather Service Red Flag Warning, leading to catastrophic fires.

On Monday, The Gateway Pundit [reported](#) that Maui officials had earlier put the blame squarely on Hawaiian Electric, citing downed power lines as the source of the fire that has now engulfed thousands of acres and led to evacuations across the island.

Maui County has officially filed a lawsuit against Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) and its subsidiaries, claiming negligence on the part of the utility.

In a detailed rebuttal, [Shelee Kimura](#), President and CEO of Hawaiian Electric, said, “We were surprised and disappointed that the County of Maui rushed to court even before completing its own investigation. We believe the complaint is factually and legally irresponsible.”

“It is inconsistent with the path that we believe we should pursue as a resilient community committed and accountable to each other as well as to Hawaii’s future. We continue to stand ready to work to that end with our communities and others. Unfortunately, the county’s lawsuit may leave us no choice in the legal system but to show its responsibility for what happened that day,” Kimura added.

The company outlined key events, stating:

- A fire at 6:30 a.m. (the “Morning Fire”) appears to have been caused by power lines that fell in high winds.
- The Maui County Fire Department responded to this fire, reported it was “100% contained,” left the scene and later declared it had been “extinguished.”
- At about 3 p.m., a time when all of Hawaiian Electric’s power lines in West Maui had been de-energized for more than six hours, a second fire (the “Afternoon Fire”) began in the same area.
- The cause of the devastating Afternoon Fire has not been determined.

Additional details are outlined below, according to the news release: