



**A snapshot of some distant wind turbines on a wind farm, surrounded by the yellow and green hues of grass on an agricultural lot in California.(Paul on Adobe Stock). *See story on page 6.***

# **California Water and Infrastructure Report For September 7, 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:**

**<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org>**

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**[www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230803-California-Water-and-Infrastructure-Report.pdf](http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230803-California-Water-and-Infrastructure-Report.pdf)**

## A Note to Readers

The **Feature** this week: *“Billionaires' Landgrab Seeks to Destroy Farm land, Create an AI city, and Sparks Opposition,”* provides the reader with some of the media coverage of a group of Silicon Valley billionaires plan to build a new city south of Sacramento, to be techie's dream city run by solar power and, of course, to make everything so expensive, only people like them will be able to live there.

There website does list the investors, which is a group of billionaire tech investors, most of them being based in Silicon Valley. Some of them are big promoters of Artificial Intelligence. Some are directly involved in funding the “progressive” agenda.

In addition, they have secretly purchased, over the past five years, more than 50,000 acres of land secretly already in Sonoma County where the “new city” is planned. They have paid about \$800 million for the land already purchased. The area is mostly ranches and farms and they plan to take most of the land out of food production.

And these oligarchs have not only paid ten times what the land is worth to those willing to sell, but have sued and threatened those who refuse to sell. As one article put it: *“Seeking more parcels, it is suing resistant farmers for a total of \$510 million in damages, describing them as 'a group of wealthy landowners' and accusing them in the lawsuit of conspiring to 'overcharge' out of 'endless greed.'”*

The State Legislature and the members of Congress, plus local elected officials are now getting involved and they appeared determined to stop the entire project.

You can find their website in the full story below, beginning on page 6.

I provide extensive coverage of the whole story in this **Feature**.

### The rest of the report

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows, and it very different for a September in recent years, that the state is 99% drought free.

More water storage for California?

The article begins with:

*“Three reservoir projects in the Diablo Range on the westside of both the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Delta are part of a strategy to store receive runoff during wet years to cushion California water supplies against prolonged drought.*

*“The projects — raising San Luis Reservoir, building a Del Puerto Canyon dam and raising Los Vaqueros Reservoir — would add 245,000 acre feet of water storage capacity.*

*“When coupled with the proposed Sites Reservoir in the Antelope Valley portion of the Coastal Range — of which the Diablo Range is a subrange — an additional 1,827,000 acre feet of off-stream storage could be created.”*

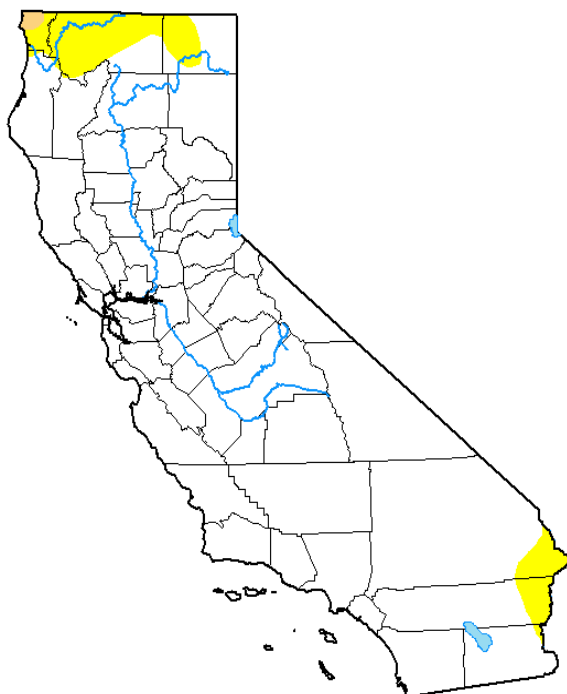
In the section on the Colorado River, the article included discusses the recent storms and the impact on the water level of Lake Mead. Some will be surprised.

The concluding section is the **Feature** for this week.

# U.S. Drought Monitor for California

## U.S. Drought Monitor California

**September 5, 2023**  
(Released Thursday, Sep. 7, 2023)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



**Intensity:**

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

*The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>*

**Author:**

Richard Tinker  
CPC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP



[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

### Statistics

Week	Date	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4	DSCI
Current	<a href="#">2023-09-05</a>	93.53	6.47	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	7
Last Week to Current	<a href="#">2023-08-29</a>	93.35	6.65	1.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	8
3 Months Ago to Current	<a href="#">2023-06-06</a>	70.88	29.12	4.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	34
Start of Calendar Year to Current	<a href="#">2022-12-27</a>	0.00	100.00	97.94	80.56	35.50	7.16	321
Start of Water Year to Current	<a href="#">2022-09-27</a>	0.00	100.00	99.76	94.01	40.91	16.57	351
One Year Ago to Current	<a href="#">2022-09-06</a>	0.00	100.00	99.76	97.52	40.18	16.57	

### The West

Monsoon rains remained subpar across eastern Arizona, New Mexico, and southwestern Colorado, prompting a continued slow deterioration in dryness and drought there. With the monsoonal wet season winding down during September, the odds for heavy precipitation episodes declines, and thus the prospects for significant relief from the intensifying dryness and drought become progressively worse.

Dryness and drought also cover large parts of Washington and Oregon as well as the northern tiers of Idaho and Montana. Some deterioration was noted in north-central Montana, but farther west,

conditions were essentially unchanged in northern Idaho and the Pacific Northwest..

## **New Reservoirs for California: We Will See**

### ***4 DAM PROJECTS = 1.8M ACRE FEET OF STORAGE***

*Three of proposed water projects are in Diablo Range on westside of Northern San Joaquin Valley & the Delta*

*DENNIS WYATT*

*The Bulletin*

*Published: Sep 7, 2023, 1:44 AM*

<https://www.mantecabulletin.com/news/local-news/4-dam-projects-18m-acre-feet-storage/>



*There is a proposal to raise the current 305-foot earthen dam at San Luis Reservoir by 20 feet. That would add 130,000 acre feet of storage to the 2 million acre foot reservoir. The additional water would be enough to meet the needs of 650,000 people for a year.*

*Three reservoir projects in the Diablo Range on the westside of both the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Delta are part of a strategy to store receive runoff during wet years to cushion California water supplies against prolonged drought.*

*The projects — raising San Luis Reservoir, building a Del Puerto Canyon dam and raising Los Vaqueros Reservoir — would add 245,000 acre feet of water storage capacity.*

*When coupled with the proposed Sites Reservoir in the Antelope Valley portion of the Coastal Range — of which the Diablo Range is a subrange — an additional 1,827,000 acre feet of off-stream storage could be created.*

### ***What the four damprojects would add***

*The B.F. Sisk Dam's proposed expansion in Merced County would add 130,000 acre of feet of storage to the 2 million acre foot capacity of the San Luis Reservoir along Highway 152 west of Los Banos and Interstate 5.*

*The Del Puerto Canyon reservoir project west of Patterson in Stanislaus County would add 82,000 acre feet.*



*The Los Vaqueros project in Contra Cista County would add 115,000 acre feet of capacity to bring it to 275,000 acre feet of overall storage.*

*The 1.3 million acre foot Sites reservoir is in the Antelope Valley portion of Glenn and Colusa counties.*

*Together, the four projects would create almost a third of the capacity now in the State Water Project that can store 5.8 million acre feet with the most being behind Oroville Dam with 3.5 million acre feet.*

*The four projects are equal to almost a sixth the storage capacity of the 12 million acre foot Central Valley Water Project. Shasta Dam with 4.5 million acre feet is its biggest component.*

## **The Colorado River**

### **Rainfall and Lake Mead water levels, explained**



Lake Mead and the “bathtub ring” are shown at Hoover Dam outside Boulder City on April 11, 2023. (K.M. Cannon/Las Vegas Review-Journal)



A view of Lake Powell and the Glen Canyon Dam in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area on July 27, 2021. (Chase Stevens/Las Vegas Review-Journal) @csstevensphoto

By [Colton Lochhead](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal

September 7, 2023 - 6:30 am

[https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/rainfall-and-lake-mead-water-levels-explained-2900492/?utm\\_campaign=widget&utm\\_medium=topnews&utm\\_source=local\\_local-nevada&utm\\_term=Rainfall%20and%20Lake%20Mead%20water%20levels%2C%20explained](https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/rainfall-and-lake-mead-water-levels-explained-2900492/?utm_campaign=widget&utm_medium=topnews&utm_source=local_local-nevada&utm_term=Rainfall%20and%20Lake%20Mead%20water%20levels%2C%20explained)

When it comes to Lake Mead’s water levels, even the biggest storms that hit Las Vegas aren’t much of a factor.

The Las Vegas Valley saw a deluge of water from a series of monsoonal storms that moved in Friday and that dumped more than an inch of rain in a matter of days. While it seems like such a torrent of water would provide a substantial boost to Lake Mead, [that just isn’t the case](#).

Even massive storms like those that hit over Labor Day weekend only contribute what amounts to a fraction of an inch of increased water levels at Lake Mead, said Paul Miller, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service’s Colorado Basin River Forecast Center in Salt Lake City.

“It has some impact, but it’s not very much. I don’t think you would notice Lake Mead appreciably rising just from the results of big rainstorms,” Miller said.

After years of mostly seeing its water levels fall, [Lake Mead](#) has steadily risen since April. The surface of the 247-square-mile reservoir, which provides about 90 percent of Southern Nevada’s water, currently sits at 1,066.2 feet above sea level, about 20 feet higher than where the lake’s surface sat at the end of March.

But that’s in large part due to federal regulators releasing substantially more water from Lake Powell’s Glen Canyon Dam downstream to Lake Mead, a move made possible by an extremely wet winter that sent far-above-average snowmelt into the river and its tributaries.

## **Feature: Billionaires' Landgrab Seeks to Destroy Farm land, Create an AI city, and Sparks Opposition**

*From the website of the parasites*

*A chance for a new community, good paying local jobs, solar farms, and open space*

<https://californiaforever.com/>

### **Introduction**

It does list the investors, which is a group of billionaire tech investors, most of them from Silicon Valley. Some of them are big promoters of Artificial Intelligence. Some are directly involved in funding the “progressive” agenda.

“Investors in California Forever include Marc Andreessen, Patrick and John Collison, Chris Dixon, John Doerr, Nat Friedman, Daniel Gross, Reid Hoffman, Michael Moritz, Laurene Powell Jobs, and the California investment firm Andreessen Horowitz.”

## ***Silicon Valley billionaires' land grab for utopian development draws fury, fears***

### ***California Forever investors promise environmental stewardship, walkable neighborhoods in Solano County acreage***

By [Ethan Baron](#) | [ebaron@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:ebaron@bayareanewsgroup.com) | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: September 3, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. | UPDATED: September 5, 2023 at 6:29 a.m.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2023/09/03/silicon-valley-billionaires-land-grab-for-utopian-development-draws-fury-fears/?share=boewb2v2rwteafrootls>

*The California Forever plan, hatched by former Wall Street trader Jan Sramek, has sparked outrage and worry from local residents up to the U.S. Congress.*

*The investors' group, its members' identities concealed until a recent New York Times [report](#), has spent more than \$800 million acquiring tens of thousands of acres of land, according to Solano County and a lawsuit filing. Seeking more parcels, it is suing resistant farmers for a total of \$510 million in damages, describing them as "a group of wealthy landowners" and accusing them in the lawsuit of conspiring to "overcharge" out of "endless greed."*

*Perceived bullying of farmers whose agricultural roots reach back generations in the county, and the surreptitious nature of the project, have "angered the community very broadly and very deeply," said former Solano County Supervisor Duane Kromm.*

*"The animosity towards Flannery is so overwhelming," said Kromm, now a leader of the Solano County Orderly Growth Committee citizens group. "Their arrogance, that 'We can buy our way in and get whatever we want just because we have more money than God,' it's so troubling. I think they thought about it as a Monopoly board — not that there are people involved, and interconnected agriculture, and history."*

*In a [newly launched website](#), the investors group said it had begun buying Solano County land secretly to "avoid creating a rush of reckless short-term land speculation." It is "now excited to move on to the real work of building a thoughtful and consensus-minded plan."*

*Project investors include a roster of billionaires: venture capitalists Marc Andreessen and Michael Moritz, LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman and businesswoman Laurene Powell Jobs, according to California Forever, which was founded in 2017.*

*This week, the company's website presented its plans: idyllic scenes of rolling hills and towns, with waterside villas and a lively village square. Renderings show utopian scenes of kids on bikes, kayakers in a bucolic wetland, and a solar panel being installed against a rising sun. "We have the opportunity to build a new community that attracts new employers, creates good paying local jobs, builds homes in walkable neighborhoods, leads in environment stewardship, and fuels a growing tax base," the group said on the site.*

*Since 2018, Flannery has bought 325 parcels of land, 90 of them this year, making it the county's largest landowner, said Solano County Supervisor Wanda Williams. California Forever said it owns more than 50,000 acres between Fairfield and Rio Vista — "about half of the properties in this area."*

*Forever California's website said grazing land would be developed, but it plans "a compact community away from prime agricultural lands, surrounded by open space." Thompson said California Forever described the land to him as "on the low end" for agriculture. "That may be on the low end compared to high-end cabernet grapes or something, but if you're a cattle rancher or sheep rancher you probably wouldn't have that same idea," Thompson said.*

## **AG ALERT: Rural land grab in Solano County prompts hearing**

### Ag Alert

By Ching Lee, California Farm Bureau Federation

September 5, 2023

<https://mavensnotebook.com/2023/09/05/ag-alert-rural-land-grab-in-solano-county-prompts-hearing/>

Alarmed by a company that they say has been operating in the shadows buying large swaths of farmland in Solano County, farmers and their advocates say the state should bolster its toolbox to protect agricultural resources and open space.

The call came during a hearing last week at the state Capitol, where the state Senate Agriculture Committee held a panel discussion on “navigating threats to California agriculture.” The meeting was prompted by concerns that a group known as Flannery Associates LLC since 2018 has amassed 400 parcels spanning nearly 55,000 acres of agricultural-zoned land near Travis Air Force Base.

The group—now the largest landowner in Solano County—formed the limited liability company so as not to expose the source of more than \$800 million used to purchase the land. That 75% of the land surrounds the air force base raises national security concerns, local officials and state lawmakers have said.

The land acquisitions occurred despite state conservation programs such as the Williamson Act and other mechanisms designed to restrict urban sprawl and protect farmland.

U.S. Rep. John Garamendi, a Democrat and whose district includes much of Solano County, said the firm is “using secrecy, bullying and mobster tactics” to force farmers to sell their land. Those tactics include hiring “big city lawyers” to file a federal lawsuit against seven farm families, claiming they colluded to inflate the price of the land. Garamendi called the legal action “a heavy-handed, despicable intimidation tactic” and said the “bigwig billionaires” behind it “should be shamed” and held to account.

## ***Tech leaders have spent \$800 million trying to build a new city beside San Francisco***

By Jacob Kastrenakes

Aug 28, 2023, 7:43 AM PDT

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/8/28/23848833/flannery-associates-tech-investor-city-san-francisco>

*Over the past five years, a company named Flannery Associates has spent \$800 million scooping up land outside San Francisco — without explaining who’s behind the effort or what they plan to do with the land. Now, local officials who’d been looking into the matter finally have their answer: a group of wealthy and recognizable tech leaders are behind the venture, and they’re hoping to use the land to build a brand new city, according to [reports from The New York Times](#) and [Bloomberg](#).*

## **Billionaires’ Secretive Plan to Build a New City Is Backfiring**

Nadia Lopez, Lizette Chapman and Karen Breslau

Fri, September 1, 2023 at 12:12 PM PDT

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/california-community-fighting-back-against-094500035.html>

(Bloomberg) -- A secret plan backed by tech billionaires to create a new city northeast of San Francisco



is running into resistance — an indication of the long road ahead in a state where it’s hard to build almost anything.

Catherine Moy, the mayor of Fairfield, has been lining up opposition to the group of Silicon Valley moguls after learning last week that they were behind the purchase of at least 52,000 acres of farmland in Solano County, a buying spree done extremely discreetly over several years.

### ***Billionaire land buys threaten state ag, water resources***

By [Darren Fraser](#)

Published [August 31, 2023](#)

<https://thesungazette.com/article/news/2023/08/31/billionaire-land-buys-threaten-state-ag-water-resources/>



*A snapshot of some distant wind turbines on a wind farm, surrounded by the yellow and green hues of grass on an agricultural lot in California. (Paul on Adobe Stock)*

***Senator Hurtado hosts informational hearing to preserve ag land in California; Congressman Garamendi, State Senator Cortese are among those asked to discuss Flannery Associates’ monster land purchases***

### **California Forever: Tech Investors Now Have a Website, but ‘They Don’t Have a Plan’ For New City**

A new site has appeared online attempting to explain plans for massive Solano County land development.

BY [JONATHAN VANKIN](#)

SEP 6, 2023 9:42 A.M.

<https://californialocal.com/localnews/statewide/ca/article/show/56042-california-forever-solano-county-new-city-website/>