



**Colorado's winter is off to an uninspiring start, climate experts say (Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun) See article on page 5.**

# **California Water and Infrastructure Report**

## **For November 30, 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](http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/20230803-California-Water-and-Infrastructure-Report.pdf)**

## **A Note to Readers**

There are some interesting developments this week in the area of water policy, debate, and, of course, political conflict over the same.

But, we begin with the *U.S. Drought Monitor* map, and, as expected, California is for now drought free.

The first article is well summarized by the first two sentences:

*"A proposed northern California anti-ag measure could have an effect nationwide. The measure in Sonoma County would eliminate animal agriculture in that county.*

*“It would outlaw all animal agriculture in the county. That would affect dairies that would affect poultry operations,” said Director of Political Affairs with the California Farm Bureau, Steven Fenaroli, who explained those are two of the biggest animal ag industries in the county.”*

As Governor Newsom would say in response to his critics, “What do you mean I am anti-growth?” We must concede he did put the Sites Reservoir on the fast track for approval and the beginning of construction-- next year. Amazing.

On the Colorado River, new forecasts and real evidence show that Lake Mead's level is falling once again, and may reach its lowest level even in 2025.

The Rocky Mountains, which provides the snow and run-off to feed the river, so far has a well-below average snowpack for this time of the year.

The final article in this section, “*Colorado River deal opens cash spigot for big farms,*” appears, to be another case like that when Mark Twain, after having read his own obituary, remarked, “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” The article, after three pages of exposing how some farmers will get more money from the Biden administration for conserving water, then concludes, that the price of water in the west is rising anyway.

There are new developments, mostly negative for the Silicon Valley billionaires attempting to take over Solano County. The reports I include have some humorous moments, and the poor Silicon Valley representatives are definitely not smiling.

*“Do 70,000 People Really Need to Be at a Climate Confab?”* is the title of several articles under the final section of the report this week: *“Having Fun Mocking the Global Climate Change Hysterics.”*

## **U.S. Drought Monitor California**

### **The West**

On the map, improvements were made across areas of the Southwest and Pacific Northwest including New Mexico, Oregon, and Montana. In northern New Mexico, areas of Extreme Drought (D3) were reduced in response to recent precipitation (past 14-day period) including high-elevation snowfall in the Nacimiento and Sangre de Cristo ranges.

In Montana, a mix of improvements and degradations were made on this week’s map, including the removal of an area of Moderate Drought (D1) in north-central Montana where conditions have improved across various metrics during the past 60-day period.

In northeastern Oregon, areas of Moderate Drought (D1) were trimmed back around the Blue Mountains where Water-Year-to-Date precipitation (10/1) has been above normal.

In south-central Colorado, areas of Severe (D2) and Extreme (D3) drought expanded slightly in areas where month-to-date precipitation has been well below normal.

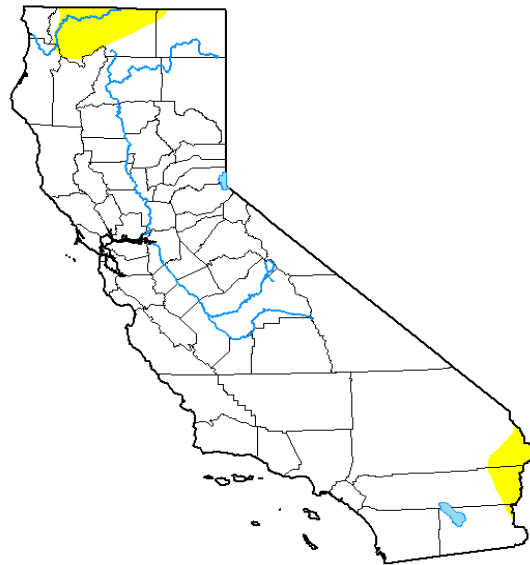
Overall, the West has gotten off to a slow start in terms of snowpack conditions across the region except for some basins in the southern tier of the region.

In California, the California Cooperative Snow Surveys reports statewide snowpack conditions at 30% of normal for the date (11/29). For the week, average temperatures were below normal across most of

the region with areas of the Intermountain West experiencing departures ranging from 4 to 10 degrees F below normal.

## U.S. Drought Monitor California

November 28, 2023  
(Released Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023)  
Valid 7 a.m. EST



### 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:

David Simeral  
Western Regional Climate Center



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

## The Environmentalists War Against Agriculture

### *New Proposed California Anti-Ag Measure Could Have National Implications*

November 27, 2023 [Agri-Business](#), [Legislative](#)

<https://agnetwest.com/new-proposed-california-anti-ag-measure-national-implications/>

*A proposed northern California anti-ag measure could have an effect nationwide. The measure in Sonoma County would eliminate animal agriculture in that county.*

*“It would outlaw all animal agriculture in the county. That would affect dairies that would affect poultry operations,” said Director of Political Affairs with the California Farm Bureau, Steven Fenaroli, who explained those are two of the biggest animal ag industries in the county.*

*The measure titled “Prohibition on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” is backed by an animal rights extremist group, which has already collected more than 18,000 signatures toward putting the measure on the ballot. It has until March to collect the remaining two thousand verified signatures needed. The trajectory shows it will go to the voters, and Fenaroli says that’s something that the agriculture industry around the nation should keep a watchful eye on.*

*“A lot of the country, I think, begrudgingly looks to California and they kind of say, ‘Oh gosh, California, what are they doing now?’ But I think this thing has national implications. If a group can qualify a measure and they can outlaw animal agriculture in a county, that sets up a recipe, a*

*playbook, for them to repeat that not only throughout the state but throughout the country,” Fenaroli said.*

*He said when political attacks like this come up, it’s important for the ag industry to gather the troops and fight back.*

*“And I do think that we’re kind of seeing that right now. The Sonoma County issue about animal ag has a lot of implications,” Fenaroli said. “I think that we saw from the results of Prop. 12 and some of the pork stuff that there were some times where we weren’t as active as I think we could be. And when I say “we” I mean all of ag. So, how are we going to mobilize and how are we going to have a voice?” Fenaroli encourages farmers around the country to speak up because California is often a starting point for anti-ag movements that spread around the nation.*

## **The Sites Reservoir Project is Moving Forward**

### **Sites Reservoir project finally gets green light, construction expected to begin in 2024**

- [Vicki Gonzalez](#)

Friday, November 24, 2023 | Sacramento, CA

<https://www.capradio.org/articles/2023/11/24/sites-reservoir-project-finally-gets-green-light-construction-expected-to-begin-in-2024/>

Located just over an hour north of Sacramento in Glenn and Colusa counties lies 14,000 acres of grassland, streams and the main canal of the two counties’ shared irrigation district.

It’s the site of the planned Sites Reservoir, which has long been eyed as a possible place to store excess surface water from across California. The project was first proposed in the 1950s, but failed — and was re-proposed several times since then. Now, after roughly 70 years and several iterations, the off-river storage basin west of the Sacramento Valley is being streamlined and moving forward.

In early November, Governor Gavin Newsom announced he’d be [pushing the project forward](#) under his [streamlined infrastructure plan](#). Then last week, the Bureau of Reclamation and Sites Project Authority certified its final environmental impact report and was approved to move forward. Project coordinators say construction will begin in 2024, with completion expected in 2030.

CapRadio’s Vicki Gonzalez spoke with Jeffrey Mount, a senior fellow in the Water Policy Center at the Public Policy Institute of California, about what dent the reservoir will make in the state’s water supply.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

## **The Colorado River**

### **Lake Mead May Reach Record Lowest Levels in 2025, Scientists Warn**

Nov 23, 2023 at 8:58 AM EST

*Lake Mead Water Levels Are Trending Down Again*

By [Robyn White](#)

Nature Reporter

<https://www.newsweek.com/lake-mead-may-reach-record-low-levels-1846376>

*Lake Mead could drop to its lowest point ever in 2025, new projections have estimated.*

*The latest "most probable" projections from the Bureau of Reclamation estimate that Lake Mead could reach water levels as low as 1,040.77 feet in September 2025.*

*This is the lowest the lake has ever been. It has reached this point before, in July 2022. It is the lowest the reservoir has been since it was first constructed in the 1930s.*

## **Colorado's winter is off to an uninspiring start, climate experts say**

The statewide snowpack stands at just 60% of normal. Some areas of the state might have a hard time recovering from this early dry spell.

[Shannon Mullane](#) 3:22 AM MST on Nov 29, 2023

<https://coloradosun.com/2023/11/29/colorado-winter-snowpack-uninspiring-start-climate-experts-say/>

Coloradans are getting their first glimpse of this year's snow season, and according to climate experts, it's off to a lackluster start, measuring just 60% of normal.



Vehicles commute on Interstate 70 in Summit County, Monday morning, Nov. 27, 2023, outside Dillon. Nearby ski area, Loveland, reported a below average of 18 inch base depth on Monday. (Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun)

Snow in the mountains is a sign it's time to bundle up or break out the winter sports gear. But Colorado's mountain snowpack also provides water to millions of people across the country. This season is starting at a deficit: Snowpack is below normal, soils are too dry and drought conditions are creeping into more areas of the state.

"Overall, we don't like starting off slow. It makes it harder to make up these early deficits that we see," said Becky Bolinger, assistant state climatologist, during a state Water Conditions Monitoring meeting Tuesday. "But it's also a reminder that it is still early in the cold season, and we have a lot of season left."

As of this week, Colorado's statewide snowpack was about 60% of the median from 1991 to 2020, based on data collected by SNOTEL stations managed by the federal Natural Resources Conservation

Service. Although data is sparse this early in the season, this network of 114 stations across Colorado offers reliable annual estimates of snowpack between about 9,000 feet and 11,600 feet in elevation from October to August. Last year at this time, snowpack stood at about 89% of the median.

### ***Colorado River deal opens cash spigot for big farms***

*Billions of dollars of Inflation Reduction Act money meant to tackle drought looks likely to make it more expensive to clinch a broader deal critical to economies in several states.*

By [Annie Snider](#)

11/27/2023 05:00 AM EST

<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/11/25/biden-climate-cash-water-costs-00128595>

*A widely hailed deal to conserve water from the shrinking Colorado River is turning into a windfall for some of the most powerful farmers and tribes in the West.*

*A POLITICO investigation has found that many of the deals to save water under the three-year \$1.2 billion pact struck by Arizona, California and Nevada in May are driving up the value of existing agreements to save or transfer water by nearly 50 percent.*

*The Colorado River supplies water to 40 million people and vast swaths of the country's most productive farmland — a task that's becoming increasingly difficult as climate change shrivels its flow. But the investigation, based on more than a dozen interviews and analyses of federal, state and local documents, reveals that the gusher of federal money is likely to make a broader, long-term deal to save the West's most important river more expensive.*

*"It's all a grand experiment," said Kathryn Sorensen, a former head of Phoenix's water department, who noted that Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act funding is effectively creating a new market for water, with a new, higher price. "This market, especially one with a premium [price], might create some perverse incentives."*

## **A Tale of Fantasy and Reality: The Continuing Saga of the Silicon Valley Billionaires Attempting to Take Over a Rural County in California**

### **Dreaming up a new Bay Area city from scratch is an escapist fantasy**

- By Frank Holland | Special to The Examiner |
- Nov 26, 2023 Updated Nov 26, 2023
- [https://www.sfexaminer.com/forum/creating-a-bay-area-city-from-scratch-is-an-escapist-fantasy/article\\_b312faf0-88b2-11ee-a317-6fdc2cb3f9f0.html](https://www.sfexaminer.com/forum/creating-a-bay-area-city-from-scratch-is-an-escapist-fantasy/article_b312faf0-88b2-11ee-a317-6fdc2cb3f9f0.html)

Given 10 zeroes on your bank statement, who wouldn't want to roll the dice on such a tangible legacy project? And the location: close enough to the capital, human resources and cultural ecosystem that make the region enticing, but worlds away from the messy problems of a contemporary metropolis battling to reinvent itself after an epoch-defining upheaval.

The effort to remake a vast swath of Solano County farmland into a next-generation urban oasis has been hailed as both a refreshing blast of forward-thinking creativity and a gross affront to the interests and traditions of the people who will shoulder its effects.

It certainly got us thinking, thus the crux of this issue.

Like many thought exercises, dreaming up a new city from scratch — whether on the hypothetically empty topography of San Francisco or the windswept Solano plains and Montezuma Hills — is an escapist fantasy. It's a fantasy that has consumed our politics because it has intoxicated our society: a world without tradeoffs.

## ***Locals Are Fighting Billionaires' Utopian City at Every Turn***

### ***NOT BUYING IN***

*Residents of Solano County are showing up in force in an attempt to derail California Forever.*

***Emily Shugerman***

***Senior Reporter***

*Published Nov. 23, 2023 8:26PM EST*

**<https://www.thedailybeast.com/locals-are-fighting-billionaires-solano-county-utopian-city-at-every-turn>**

*Duane Kromm, an outspoken opponent of a proposed billionaire-backed city in northern [California](#), arrived at the Solano County Water Authority meeting this month 15 minutes early to make sure he got a seat near the front. He was too late: The meeting room—which holds up to 100 people and rarely reaches capacity—was already full.*

*“The room was packed, the halls were packed ... I was out in the hall saying, ‘Who are all you people?’” he told *The Daily Beast*. “It was overwhelming opposition to working with [the developers] in any way shape or form.”*

*California Forever, a group of [Silicon Valley](#) titans hoping to create a new city in a rural area 60 miles northeast of San Francisco, has faced local resistance from the day it launched this summer with a splashy website and promises to “bring back the California Dream.”*

*But the group, backed by Laurene Powell Jobs, venture capitalist Michael Moritz, Stripe co-founders John and Patrick Collison and others, has forged ahead, taking community meetings and putting forward proposals as it heads toward a vote on whether it will be allowed to start building in November 2024.*

*It isn't going so well. The deep-pocketed dreamers failed to retain a local law firm they were courting and were forced to stop discussions with the water board after public outcry. A national security investigation into the backers is ongoing, and a land swap they wanted approved by the end of the year will now take much longer.*

*Amid all of this, local opponents have continued to show up to meetings, with one local landowner vowing to “die trying” to stop the development.*

## **Solano County farmers refuse to sell land for proposed California Forever city**

*"It's like asking the Pope if he would give up being a priest for \$2 billion," said a farmer who turned*

down multiple offers from the minds behind the idea.

Author: Devin Trubey, Krys Shahin

Published: 6:05 PM PST November 16, 2023

<https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/vacaville/farmers-refuse-sell-to-flannery-associates/103-e02f38f9-8093-43a5-8dc2-79a9b0a98ed6>

SOLANO COUNTY, Calif. — Flannery Associates, investors in the [proposed city of California Forever in Solano County](#), have gathered nearly 60,000 acres of land in the area and have become the largest land owners in the county.

Some farmers are still holding out and say they refuse to sell their historical land. One of the biggest hold outs in Rio Vista is McCormack Sheep and Grain with 3,700 acres near Rio Vista. They've farmed the land since the 1880s.

## Residents Sound Off About Billionaire-Backed 'Utopia' in Solano County

Written by [Garrett Leahy](#) Published Nov. 29, 2023 • 11:26pm

<https://sfstandard.com/2023/11/29/residents-sound-off-about-billionaire-backed-tech-utopia/>

# Having Fun Mocking the Global Climate Change Hysterics

## *Do 70,000 People Really Need to Be at a Climate Confab?*

*The expanding crowd risks overshadowing the purpose and turning the meeting into another celebrity-studded gathering of rich people.*

*November 30, 2023 at 2:00 AM PST*

*By [Mark Gongloff](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-11-30/cop28-do-70-000-people-really-need-to-be-at-a-climate-confab)<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-11-30/cop28-do-70-000-people-really-need-to-be-at-a-climate-confab>*

*Is COP Man devolving into Davos Man?*

*How many people do you think it takes to hammer out a global climate agreement? 500? 5,000? 50,000?*

*Apparently, the correct answer is 70,000. That's about how many people are expected to turn up in Dubai over the next few weeks for COP28, the latest United Nations climate confab, which starts on Thursday. This is up from 49,704 at COP27 last year in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and 38,457 at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland. Attendance has more than [tripled](#) since 2019. In COP's early years, attendance averaged just 5,000.*

*If one wanted to be nitpicky about it, one could argue that 70,000 people riding airplanes to an oil country on the Arabian Peninsula to talk about climate change feels a bit like staging an AA meeting in a Fort Lauderdale nightclub during Spring Break. You risk losing sight of the purpose.*

*And untold scores of those COP attendees won't be flying commercial. They'll be taking private jets, which generate [100 times](#) more carbon pollution per passenger than commercial ones. At least [100](#) private aircraft flew to Sharm el-Sheikh last year, and [118](#) flew to Glasgow in 2021. This year, King Charles III, Rishi Sunak and David Cameron will each take [their own PJ](#) from the UK to Dubai. Jetpooling is a thing, you guys. Just ask [Taylor](#).*



## **The climate-change religion: How long before human sacrifices?**

19 Nov, 2023 19:25

<https://www.rt.com/news/587544-climate-change-cult-human-sacrifice/>

Forgoing procreation, disrupting fellow humans' lives, and wishing for death on a massive scale, environmentalism shows cult-like tendencies

By **Augusto Zimmermann**, *Professor and Head of Law at Sheridan Institute of Higher Education in Australia, President of WALTA – Legal Theory Association, and former Law Reform Commissioner in Western Australia*

History teaches us that some ancient civilisations killed their children to change the weather. They used to practice child sacrifice to appease their gods in an attempt to court their good graces. Those primitive peoples believed that through human sacrifice, the forces of nature could be coerced in their favour. For example, one of the ways the Aztecs honoured their gods was by killing people in a field with arrows so that their blood might fertilise the land.

The modern environmentalist movement is often compared to a religion. It certainly thinks that humans can change the weather, and it includes a vision of sin and repentance – damnation and salvation. Above and beyond the presence of actual neo-pagans and Gaia worshippers in its ranks, the environmentalist movement itself is displaying characteristics of a nature-worshipping cult – and a remarkably anti-human one at that. Many of its supporters effectively believe that the world has a cancer, and that cancer is called the human race.

### ***Ringside View: Offshore Wind is a Financial and Environmental Catastrophe***

*Hasn't anyone calculated what 25 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity is going to look like?*

By [Edward Ring](#), November 19, 2023 2:30 am

<https://californiaglobe.com/fr/ringside-view-offshore-wind-is-a-financial-and-environmental-catastrophe/>

*It's about time Californians of all ideological persuasions wake up and stop what is possibly the most economically wasteful and environmentally destructive project in American history: the utility scale adoption of offshore wind energy.*

*The California Legislature intends to despoil our coastline and coastal waters with floating wind turbines, 20+ miles offshore, tethered to the sea floor 4,000 feet beneath the waves. Along with tethering cables, high voltage wires will descend from each of these noisy, 1,000 foot tall leviathans, but we're to assume none of this will disrupt the migrations of our treasured Cetaceans and other marine and avian life, not the electric fields emanating from hundreds (thousands?) of 20+ mile long live power lines laid onto the ocean floor, nor from the construction, the maintenance, or the new ports, ships, and submersibles.*

*Last month Cal Matters published a [reasonably balanced report](#) describing local reaction to planned offshore wind developments in San Luis Obispo and Humboldt counties. Hundreds of billions in California taxpayer funded subsidies are at stake.*

*The Cal Matters article reported the California Energy Commission's goal to achieve 25 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity. Hasn't anyone calculated what that's going to look like? Here is a best case scenario.*

*Even if these machines had a 40 percent yield, which is a realistic estimate of how frequently there will*

*be enough wind to turn the rotors, and even if each machine had a capacity of 10 megawatts, 2,500 of them would be required to generate 10 gigawatts of baseload power.*

*Floating wind turbines with a capacity of 10 megawatts have barely been prototyped and have no long-term record of durability. As designed, each one is 1,000 feet from the waterline to the tip of the blade, and also require a commensurate flotation vessel and counterweight below the waterline. From tip to tip, they are longer than a U.S. Navy supercarrier.*

## **Go green, go broke: ‘Clean energy’ fails a basic economics test**

Clean-energy stocks plummet as renewable energy projects prove to be too expensive, threatening America’s environmental aspirations

<https://www.rt.com/business/587474-green-energy-stocks-economics/>

The once-glorified clean-energy stocks are now facing their darkest days, plunging the industry into a financial abyss that threatens America’s ambitious environmental aspirations. The much-touted green revolution is looking more like a red alert as the sector hemorrhages tens of billions in market value.

Sure, we’re told that hundreds of billions is still pouring into renewable energy projects, despite the fact that the stock market seems to have declared a resounding “no thanks” to these ventures. The iShares Global Clean Energy ETF (Exchange-Traded Fund), the poster child for the industry, has nosedived by over 30% this year and a whopping 50% since the dawn of 2021.

Not to be outdone, specific sectors are getting their fair share of punishment. The Invesco Solar ETF is down over 40% in 2023, while the First Trust Global Wind Energy ETF is witnessing losses of about 20% this year and a grim 40% since January 2021. It seems the wind has been knocked out of their sails.