



**Between 2017 and 2022, Washington lost 3,717 farms and ranches, writes the author. Pictured is farmland in Benton County. (Luke Johnson / The Seattle Times, 2023)**

# **California Water and Infrastructure Report**

## **For April 18, 2024**

**(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>**

**<https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaDroughtUpdate>**

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### **A Note to Readers**

Due to a scheduling problem, this week's report will go forward without my usual introduction. I am sure you, the readers, will survive until next week.

What I do include in the report covers quite a few topics, and those who follow my reports will find in this one much that will be of interest.

# No Drought in California, but Washington and Oregon Already Have “Drought Emergencies” Declared

## 'It's concerning': Firefighters gear up after early drought declared in Washington

by Paul Rivera, KOMO News Reporter

Thu, April 18th 2024 at 6:06 PM

<https://katu.com/news/wildfire-season/western-washington-climate-state-department-of-ecology-everett-seattle-tacoma-metro-areas-bolt-creek-wildfire-2022-snohomish-regional-fire-and-rescue-snowpack-wet-dry-climate-human-behavior->

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — Potentially dangerous drought conditions are expected this summer across most of Washington.

The state’s Department of Ecology has made an [emergency drought declaration](#).

This comes as we have seen drier and warmer conditions this year, which has lead to a [lower snowpack](#).

The entire state is under the [drought emergency](#) with the exception of the Everett, Seattle and Tacoma metro areas, for now. Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue Firefighters say having drought this early is concerning. The department dealt with the devastating [Bolt Creek Wildfire in 2022](#).



FILE - US 2 remains closed near Skykomish, Index due to Bolt Creek fire (Photo: Bolt Creek Fire Information Facebook Page)

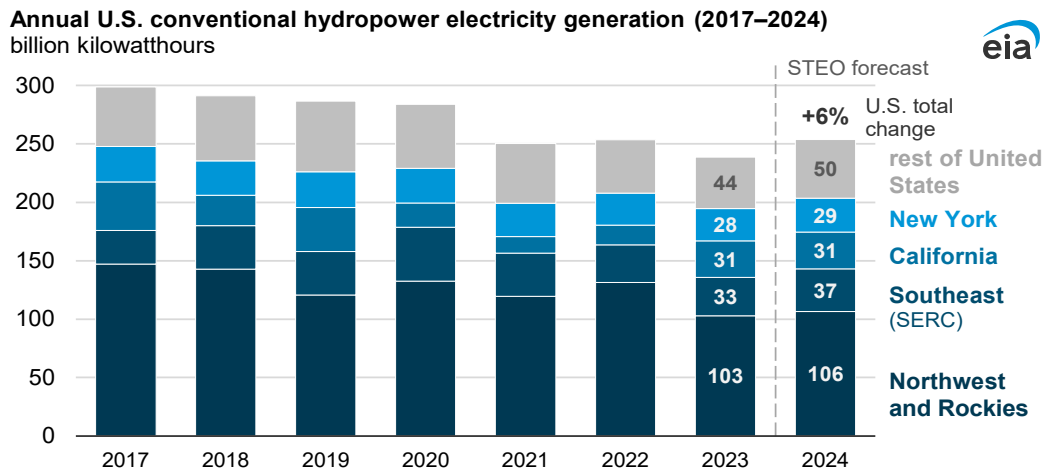
## Hydropower Forecast

[U.S. hydropower generation expected to increase by 6% in 2024 following last year’s lows](#)

April 18, 2024

<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61883>

Last year, U.S. hydropower electricity generation fell to its [lowest since 2001](#). This year, we expect hydropower to increase 6% and account for 250 billion kilowatthours of electricity generation in the power sector, based on forecasts in our [Short-Term Energy Outlook](#) (STEO). We expect hydropower to increase in nearly every part of the country, with notable increases in the Southeast and in the Northwest and Rockies. We expect other regions with significant hydropower generation to either increase slightly, such as in New York, or remain about the same, such as in California.



**Data source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Short-Term Energy Outlook](#) (STEO), April 2024

**Data values:** [U.S. Regional Electricity Generation, Electric Power Sector](#)

## A First: Restrictions Possible for Farmers to Pump Groundwater in the Central Valley

### Crop-rich California region will fall under state monitoring to preserve groundwater flow

By AMY TAXIN, Associated Press Updated April 16, 2024 10:44

p.m. <https://www.beaumontenterprise.com/business/article/crop-rich-california-region-may-fall-under-state-19405872.php>

California officials voted Tuesday to step in to monitor groundwater use in part of the crop-rich San Joaquin Valley in a first-of-its-kind move that comes a decade after local communities were tasked with managing the precious but strained resource.

The State Water Resources Control Board voted unanimously to start overseeing groundwater pumping in the Tulare Lake Subbasin meaning state, not local officials, will temporarily watch how much water can be pumped from the ground.

It's the first area in California to go through this process under the state's landmark groundwater law that aims to keep water flowing sustainably after years of drought and overpumping has led to problems with groundwater quality and the sinking of land. California's law tasked local communities with forming agencies and drafting groundwater management plans to reach a sustainable use of the resource for years to come.

Groundwater accounts for nearly 40% of California’s water supply in an average year and even more in dry years, according to the state board.

The move, which came after an all-day hearing in Sacramento, was met with criticism from Kings County farmers and support from water rights advocates who said they want to protect the future of drinking water for poor, rural communities. Many farmers said the state should do more to channel rivers into water storage facilities to replenish groundwater basins rather than cutting back.

“Farmers understand if these plans move forward it will force them many of them out of business,” Lynne McBride, executive director of the California Dairy Campaign, told the state board. “The ripple effects of these potential fees, fines and regulations will be vast and potentially irreversible.”

## Land Lost to Agricultural in Washington State

With a comment on the number of farms and acreage from California

### WA is losing farms and food-producing land. Does anyone care?

April 15, 2024 at 3:56 pm

By [Pam Lewison](#)

Special to The Seattle Times

[https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/wa-is-losing-farms-and-food-producing-land-does-anyone-care/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=article\\_inset\\_1.1&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2cOtJJLDcZidUzRmeBK9Z68Z3PnD3ON6WhGnBWtlvQgCrHXZzco\\_HGjow\\_aem\\_AQJoBLerZMDRaheWdVDavmUWLql27MAapGjQ9\\_hFNbSaG8532Uf\\_n5xZ25vJMzSxsn\\_T2eJSWtSQZ5u02vnocQp](https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/wa-is-losing-farms-and-food-producing-land-does-anyone-care/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=article_inset_1.1&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2cOtJJLDcZidUzRmeBK9Z68Z3PnD3ON6WhGnBWtlvQgCrHXZzco_HGjow_aem_AQJoBLerZMDRaheWdVDavmUWLql27MAapGjQ9_hFNbSaG8532Uf_n5xZ25vJMzSxsn_T2eJSWtSQZ5u02vnocQp)



Between 2017 and 2022, Washington lost 3,717 farms and ranches, writes the author. Pictured is farmland in Benton County. (Luke Johnson / The Seattle Times, 2023)

Fourteen farms a week vanished from Washington state every week during the last five years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently released data from the [U.S. Census of Agriculture](#) and the numbers are shocking.



Between 2017 and 2022, our state lost 3,717 farms and ranches. It also lost more than 102,000 food-producing acres. To put these numbers in perspective, Washington lost a total of 3,456 farms in the previous decade.

We all know that correlation does not equal causation. Yet increases in operating costs and the enactment of hostile state and federal agricultural policy certainly suggest causation.

## **A comment from a California farmer:**

### **My Job Depends On Ag**

Eric Bream

The number for California is 36 per week.

### **Farming w/ the Stauffers**

"Between 2017 and 2022, our state lost 3,717 farms and ranches. It also lost more than 102,000 food-producing acres. To put these numbers in perspective, Washington lost a total of 3,456 farms in the previous decade."

## **The Colorado River**

The second article in this section is a guest column by Arizona U.S. Senate Candidate Kari Lake (R).

While what Kari Lake proposes had been put forward by former Arizona Governor Doug Ducey. Of course, if elected US Senator, she will have the advantage of being in federal office to push the policies forward. But, dealing with the Bureau of Reclamation and the other states dependent on the Colorado River is not only complex, with competing interests clashing, but, depending on amount of water in the river presently presents one emergency following on another. *The North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA)*-- first proposed 60 years ago, and a continental water management project-- is missing from what she proposes. She says we need to think big, and I urge her to grab onto NAWAPA.

### ***Damages to major US dam could spark water crisis***

*Story by Peter Hess For Dailymail.Com*

*April 12, 2024*

<https://www.msn.com/en-sg/news/other/damages-to-major-us-dam-could-spark-water-crisis/ar-BB1lwMn>

- ***Pipe damage has been found in the Glen Canyon Dam that feeds Lake Mead***
- ***Officials said there will not be a spring release of water downstream***
- ***READ MORE: [Lake Powell and Lake Mead unlikely to refill for another 50 years](#)***

*More than 30 million Americans could be hit with a water shortage after plumbing issues were found with a major US dam that sits on the [Colorado](#) River; officials warn.*

*Inspectors from the US Bureau of Reclamation found serious pipe damage in the Glen Canyon Dam, which means there will be no spring water release - threatening water supplies downstream.*

*The pipes in question are called the 'river outlet works,' and they're used to release water down the Colorado River to Lake Mead from the penned up Lake Powell.*

*A fall release has neither been scheduled nor canceled yet, leaving residents of California, Nevada, and Utah who depend on water from Lake Mead without answers for now.*



The pipes in question are called the 'river outlet works,' and they're used to release water down the Colorado River to Lake Mead from the penned up Lake Powell © Provided by Daily Mail



These four 8-foot pipes are the 'river outlet works,' which release water downstream periodically to help re-nourish beaches with sediment. © Provided by Daily Mail

*There are four eight-foot-wide pipes out of the dam that release water downstream, where it flows about 200 miles into Lake Mead. Lake Mead is the US's largest reservoir - when it's full.*

*But these pipes may be too damaged to release water to Lake Mead consistently, according to an inspection after their most recent tests, according to the US Bureau of Reclamation.*

### **Arizona opinion: Delivering water to the West**

- Kari Lake Special to the Arizona Daily Star
- Apr 13, 2024

[https://tucson.com/opinion/column/arizona-opinion-delivering-water-to-the-west/article\\_803f9912-f7c5-11ee-b701-0716088dcb04.html](https://tucson.com/opinion/column/arizona-opinion-delivering-water-to-the-west/article_803f9912-f7c5-11ee-b701-0716088dcb04.html)

*The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer:*

by Kari Lake

*Republican Kari Lake is running for the U.S. Senate from Arizona.*

The federal government's current approach to this imbalance is the equivalent of trying to cure cancer with a Band-Aid. Instead of pursuing a long-term solution, Washington is using federal funds to pay states and tribal nations to leave water in the river instead of taking their full allocation. Mostly, that means paying farmers to stop farming. That is not a viable long-term solution, and strategically, we need to be encouraging MORE local farming and food production, not less. It does make sense to assist local farmers in switching to crops that require less water, but it does not make sense to put American farmers out of business and make us more reliant on food trucked or shipped thousands of miles before it arrives on our tables.

We need an approach to the Colorado River that combines near-term conservation, water-use efficiency improvements and storage capacity enhancements with a long-term strategy to deliver a reliable, sustainable source of new water to the West.

To do that, we need to secure a new source or, more likely, multiple sources of fresh water. There are several ways we can do this, and we need to explore all of them. First is alluvial reclamation.

Which brings us to seawater desalination. Israel currently gets the vast majority of its potable water — including water for industry and agriculture — from desalination, and it even sells a portion of that water to Egypt. Desalination plants could easily be built along the coastlines of both Mexico and California, and the water would not need to be piped long distances overland; it could simply be exchanged for all or a portion of the current allocations both receive from the Colorado River. In the end, that might not be enough, and we might need to build a large-scale system of water transfer pipelines, but that is not an impossible barrier, either.