

The Hollywood sign in front of snow-covered mountains after another storm in Southern California on March 1. Three back-to-back storms will hit California and potentially boost the state's snowpack. (Photo credit:Getty)

California Water and Infrastructure Report For March 28, 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>

For a free subscription to the weekly report: Send me an email-- patruckert@gmail.com

A Note to Readers

The wet season officially ends next week, and it has been a winter of abundant rain and snow. The snowpack is above average, the reservoirs are full, and, for this year at least, there is no threat of drought forced water rationing.

This is the second consecutive wet winter, though not quite as good as last year's. Temperatures have been slightly warmer, so the snowpack will likely melt more quickly.

That is not good news for the upcoming wild fire season, as vegetation growth will be abundant.

Perhaps that is what has led to the announcement this week that State Farm Insurance is canceling the home insurance policies of more than 70,000 homeowners who live in fire-prone areas of the state.

Meanwhile the state Department of Water Resources and the federal Bureau of Reclamation

announced a second increase in the State Water Project (SWP) allocation forecast for 2024. The forecast allocation is now 30 percent of requested supplies, up from the 15 percent allocation update announced last month. Of course, the farmers are protesting once again that the agencies are favoring fish over growing food for humans.

Hydropower in some years provides 20% of the electricity for California. While last year and this year that is likely to be reached, the remainder of the West, because of drought in those states has resulted in Western states hydropower production falling to a 22-year low last year.

This headline summarizes this week's report on the Colorado River: *“Recent storms have pushed This snowpack above ‘normal,’ but crucial water reservoirs are lagging behind last year.”*

All is not peaches and cream with solar power, as this headline and article demonstrates: *“Texas Hail Storm Smashes Solar Farm.”* (See the article on page 11)

This week's **Feature** highlights the critical role of infrastructure of all kinds in the economic growth and well-being of the nation. Excerpts from a *Baltimore Sun* article on the affect on the local and national economy that will ensue with the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge earlier this week. I provide the first few paragraphs and the link to two more articles that develop the theme further.

The Snowpack this Winter Is Very Good, With More to Come

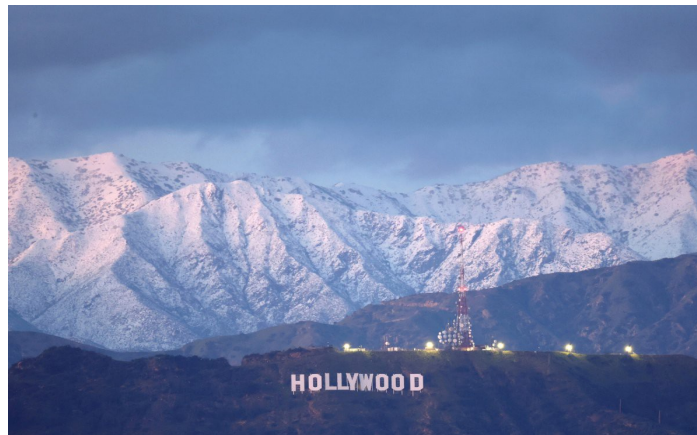
California Snowpack Update as Three Storms Hit Back-to-Back

Published Mar 26, 2024 at 2:08 PM EDT

By [Anna Skinner](#)

Senior Writer, General Assignment

<https://www.newsweek.com/california-snowpack-update-winter-storms-1883739>



The Hollywood sign in front of snow-covered mountains after another storm in Southern California on March 1. Three back-to-back storms will hit California and potentially boost the state's snowpack. Getty

The first of three, back-to-back storms hit California over the weekend, and the state's [snowpack is expected to improve](#) as two more storms will hit the state this week.

The average snowpack in California has skyrocketed since early January. At the start of the year,

snowpack levels were much lower than expected. A series of atmospheric rivers have since brought torrential rain and heavy snowfall to the state, and the snowpack is now near 100 percent of its average—good news after the state battled years of drought that severely depleted its reservoirs.

Atmospheric rivers are defined as a "long, narrow region in the atmosphere—like rivers in the sky—that transport most of the water vapor outside of the tropics," according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The second in the series of storms is expected to hit by Wednesday, bringing snow and rain across the northern half of California and into nearby states like Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Snowpack is at 99 percent of normal for the central Sierra Nevada mountains and 91 percent of normal for the southern mountains. Snowpack is at 102 percent of normal statewide.

Sierra Nevada Snowpack Spells a Healthy Water Year

SCE hydrographers forecast a return to normal conditions for the state's power-generating reservoirs.

Gabriela Ornelas

ENERGIZED by Edison Writer

Contributors

Photo Credit: **Alan Hogan**

Video Credit: **Alan Hogan & Ernesto Sanchez**

<https://energized.edison.com/stories/sierra-nevada-snowpack-spells-a-healthy-water-year>

Published on March 26, 2024

For those trained to study the Earth's surface, looking at the pristine snowpack - Opens in new window atop the Sierra Nevada is like looking into the future. Most of the snow blanketing the Sierra peaks today eventually melts and flows downstream, filling rivers and lakes and providing water to millions of California residents, farms and recreation sites.

Each year, Southern California Edison conducts several snow surveys - Opens in new window where hydrographers scale the Sierra to measure snow density at multiple points along the more than 400-mile-long mountain range. Their job is to anticipate how much snowmelt will flow when it gets warmer. Capturing an accurate forecast is critical to determining a significant portion of the state's water supply and as a key indicator of the hydroelectric power that can be safely generated from the runoff.

SCE hydrographers use specialized sampling techniques and instruments to collect accurate measurements of the snowpack's density.

"These surveys help us stay in line with dam safety guidelines for managing the reservoirs," said Jay Kimbler, generation senior manager of SCE's western operations. "We start making adjustments to reservoir levels and generation now in order to safely accommodate the forecast runoff."

Still As Stingy As Hell, the California Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation, Elicit Complaints Once Again From Farmers

Forecasted State Water Project Water Supply Allocation Doubles Following February Storms

Published: Mar 22, 2024

<https://water.ca.gov/News/News-Releases/2024/Mar-24/Forecasted-State-Water-Project-Water-Supply-Allocation-Doubles-Following-February-Storms>

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today announced a second increase in the State Water Project (SWP) allocation forecast for 2024. The forecasted allocation is now 30 percent of requested supplies, up from the 15 percent allocation update announced last month. The State Water Project is a critical water source for 29 public water agencies that serve 27 million Californians.

The revised allocation forecast is based on snow survey measurements and data up until March 1 and spring runoff forecasts outlined in the [latest Bulletin 120](#), which was released on March 8. The next possible allocation update would come after the next round of snow surveys around April 1. Currently, the statewide snowpack is 98 percent of average for this date.

With snowpack at normal, what's the hold up with Ag water allocation?

by: [Ben Morris](#)

Posted: Mar 26, 2024 / 06:50 PM PDT

<https://www.yourcentralvalley.com/news/local-news/with-snowpack-at-normal-whats-the-hold-up-with-ag-water-allocation/>

FRESNO, Calif. ([KSEE/KGPE](#)) – The frustration for farmers continues to grow after recent news of recent water allocation numbers.

The Bureau of Reclamation has announced a 35 percent federal allocation for Central Valley Project recipients, as the California Department of Water Resources has allocated 30 percent of State Water Project requests.

The news comes as the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada sits at or near normal.

While it is an improvement to February's number of 15 percent allocation for both state and federal recipients, farmers argue that with the current water year allocations should be far greater.

“A 35 percent water supply isn't enough for all of our crops,” said Joe Del Bosque of Del Bosque Farms.

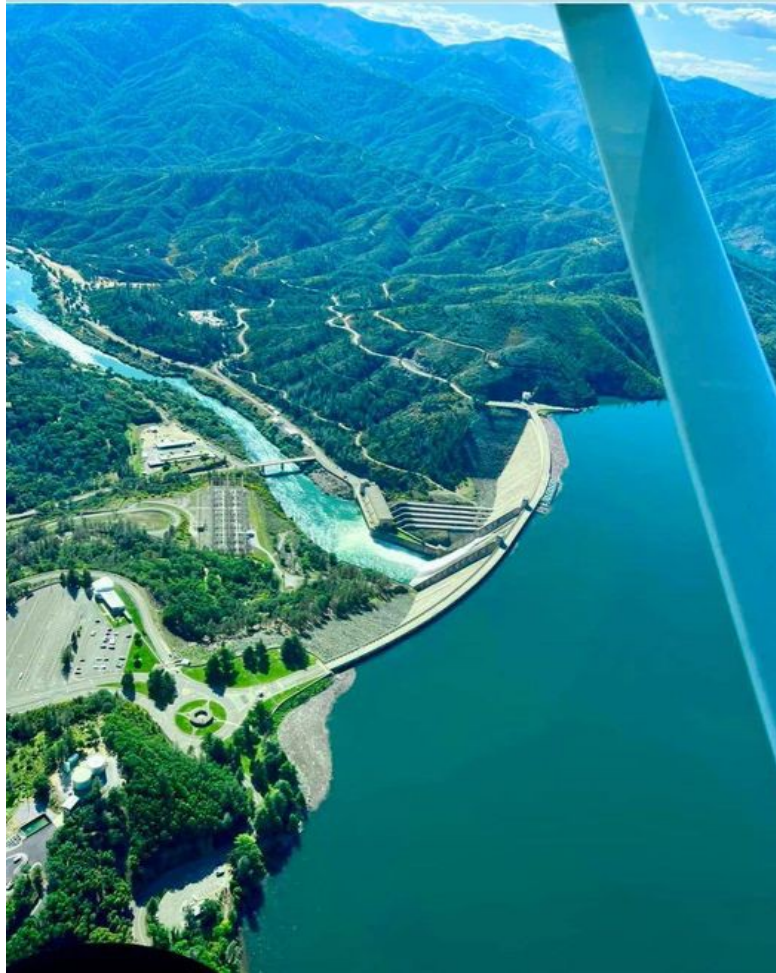
One potential reason for the allocation shortfall, according to the California Department of Water Resources, is the potential impacts that could be felt on threatened and endangered fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The Delta works to move water from Northern California to the southern part of the state. Much of that water moves through the San Joaquin Valley. With endangered and threatened species found near a State Water Project pumping facility in the south Delta, the pumps that work to move that water south have been significantly slowed.

To date, the statewide snowpack is measuring at 101% of average — a welcome return to normalcy following a record winter that [pushed reservoirs to capacity - Opens in new window](#).

The Sierra Nevada snowpack accounts for roughly 30% of California's annual water supply.

California Reservoirs in Good Shape: Lake Shasta Soon to Be Full



Lake Shasta-- nearly full

'Finally the year:' Lake Shasta expected to fill by the end of April

Damon Arthur

Redding Record Searchlight

March 28, 2024

<https://www.redding.com/story/news/local/2024/03/28/lake-shasta-could-fill-by-end-of-april-finally-after-drought-years/73118853007/>

For the past month, the water level in Lake Shasta has been slowly filling — a half a foot, a whole foot each day.

Since March 1, the lake level had risen 12 feet, as of Tuesday, bringing the reservoir to within 17 feet of full. But the lake isn't done filling yet, said Don Bader, area manager for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which manages Shasta Dam.

"We're expecting it to creep right up to the top," Bader said.

This week the bureau significantly reduced the amount of water being released from Shasta Dam, so the lake could begin to fill.

Lake Shasta is the largest reservoir in California and as part of the Central Valley Water Project, water

from lake gets sent as far south as Bakersfield to be used as drinking water, agricultural irrigation and wildlife habitat.

The last 10% to 20% of space in the lake is the most difficult to fill, Bader said. The lake is shaped similar to a funnel — narrow at the bottom and wide at the top. The reservoir fills slower the closer it gets to full because it is wider at that point, he said.

As of Wednesday, Lake Shasta was 115% of average for this time of year and 90% full. The other major North State reservoir, Trinity Lake, was 109% of average and 79% full, according to the state.

And a Bit of Satire From Edward Ring

Drain the Reservoirs, Return California's Stolen Land

[Edward Ring](#)

Director, Water and Energy Policy

[Californians for Energy and Water Abundance](#)

March 22, 2024

<https://californiapolicycenter.org/social-media-use-for-public-officials-an-explainer-based-on-lindke-v-freed-and-oconnor-ratcliff-v-garnier/>

The logical extension of California's environmentalist policies is to end civilization as we know it. But California's progressive elites are not crazy or stupid. So what is their actual motivation?

The destruction of dams on the Klamath River provides an encouraging precedent for progressives throughout California. As was [breathlessly reported](#) in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and elsewhere, indigenous tribes are now able to recover their sacred land and revive their ancestral villages and way of life. It is time for California's progressive supermajority to do the right thing and return all stolen land to the first peoples. They can start by draining the rest of California's reservoirs.

Not only is demolishing California's dams, draining all of its reservoirs, and returning the restored riverfront property to their rightful claimants an appropriate reparatory gesture, but it will also set the rivers themselves free. Unshackled, they will again be welcoming habitats for salmon and other aquatic life, able to send torrents

The destruction of the Klamath River farming and ranching economy is part of a broader assault, coming from a technology-driven elite that masquerades as virtuous proponents of environmentalism and racial equity. They are confident they shall suppress the protestations of those who recognize how these virtues have devolved into nihilism, and confident they shall sustain the masquerade until they dominate the world.

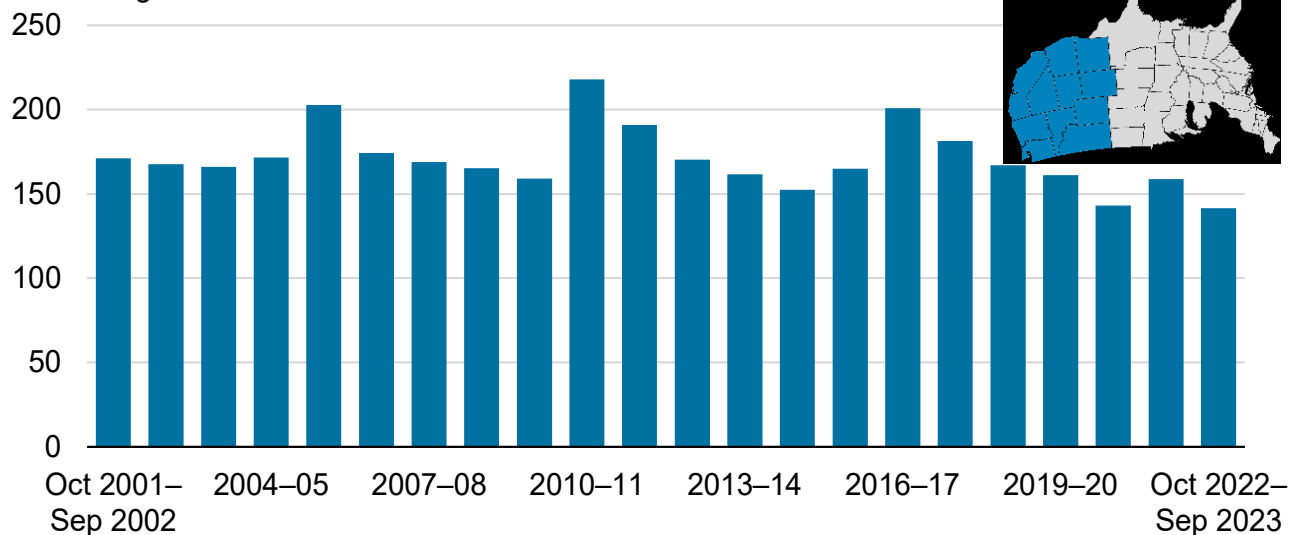
Hydropower Report

Western U.S. hydropower generation fell to a 22-year low last year

March 26, 2024

Western U.S. hydropower generation by water year (Oct 2001–Sep 2023)

million megawatthours



Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Electricity Data Browser](#)

Note: The water year runs from October 1 to September 30.

According to preliminary data from our [Electricity Data Browser](#), the least hydropower was generated in the western United States during the 2022–23 [water year \(October 1 through September 30\)](#) since at least 2001. Western region hydropower generation dropped by 11% from the previous water year to 141.6 million megawatthours (MWh). Hydropower generation in the western United States can vary significantly from year to year because the amount of precipitation influences generation.

Precipitation mostly accumulates in the fall and winter months in the form of snow at higher elevations. Snowpack accumulated during the winter serves as natural water storage that starts to melt in the springtime as temperatures gradually increase.

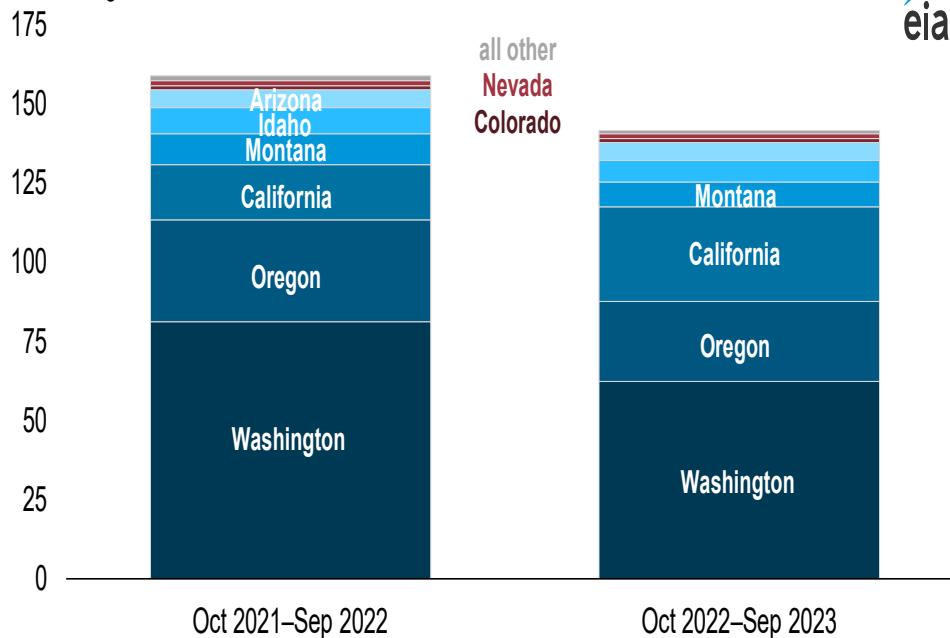
The western United States—Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, California, Oregon, and Washington—produced most (60%) of the country’s hydroelectricity last water year (2022–23).

A combined 37% of total [U.S. hydropower capacity](#) is located in Washington and Oregon. Drought conditions last year affected these states and other states around the Columbia River Basin. These conditions contributed to historically low hydropower generation in these states.

In contrast, hydropower generation grew in California last year. From December 2022 to March 2023, a series of [atmospheric rivers](#) drenched parts of the western United States, especially California, with record rain and snow.

Information from the [California Department of Water Resources](#) shows that last winter’s snowpack in the state was higher than any other reading since records began in the mid-1980s. The significant snowpack in the Sierra Nevada range helped replenish reservoirs after three consecutive years of drought in the state. California hydropower generation in the 2022–23 water year nearly doubled compared with the previous water year, totaling 30.0 million MWh.

Western U.S. hydropower generation by state and water year (2021–2022 and 2022–2023)
million megawatthours



Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Electricity Data Browser](#)

Other southwestern states also experienced above-normal precipitation. Lake Powell, which is formed by the [Glen Canyon Dam](#), is considered an indicator of the hydrologic conditions in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Hydropower generation at the Glen Canyon Dam increased by 27% during water year 2022–23 compared with the water year before. However, [water conservation efforts](#) downstream at Lake Mead reduced water releases. The [Hoover Dam](#), which forms Lake Mead, generated 11% less electricity in the 2022–23 water year than it did in the previous water year.

Just As Fire Season Is About to Begin in California: The Largest Insurer of Homes Announces It Is Canceling the Policies of Those Homeowners in Fire Prone Areas

California home insurance meltdown worsens as State Farm sheds 72,000 policies. Announcement comes as state proposes regulation changes

By [John Woolfolk](#) | jwoolfolk@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: March 21, 2024 at 3:42 p.m. | UPDATED: March 21, 2024 at 4:58 p.m.

https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2024/03/21/california-home-insurance-meltdown-worsens-as-state-farm-sheds-72000-policies/?utm_email=452034416564659205A55473A5&g2i_eui=xb%2bxbZw7R3ZqbcxDzp9NTj5NrKz8QTCY&g2i_source=newsletter&lctg=452034416564659205A55473A5&active=no&utm_source=listrak&utm_medium=email&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fwww.eastbaytimes.com%2f2024%2f03%2f21%2fcalifornia-home-insurance-meltdown-worsens-as-state-farm-sheds-72000-policies%2f&utm_campaign=bang-mult-nl-pm-report-nl&utm_content=curated

State Farm, California’s largest insurer, announced that it will discontinue coverage for 72,000 homes and apartments starting this summer, a move likely to sharply inflate housing costs for affected residents in a state that’s reeling from a series of destructive recent wildfires.

The Illinois-based insurance giant, which accounts for a fifth of the California home insurance market and is the largest property and auto insurer in the U.S., cited rising costs, increasing catastrophe risk and outdated regulations in declaring it won’t renew California policies for 30,000 homes and 42,000 apartments.

“This decision was not made lightly and only after careful analysis of State Farm General’s financial health,” the company [said in a March 20 statement](#). “State Farm General takes seriously our responsibility to maintain adequate claims-paying capacity for our customers and to comply with applicable financial solvency laws. It is necessary to take these actions now.”

The announcement comes less than a year after [State Farm announced it would not issue new policies in California](#), citing similar concerns. And it comes as the state’s elected [insurance commissioner embarks on a yearlong overhaul of home insurance regulations aimed at calming California’s imploding market](#) by giving insurers more latitude to raise premiums while extracting commitments from them to extend coverage in fire-risk areas.

On the Colorado River



The Colorado River: “Horseshoe Bend “

Recent storms have pushed Colorado’s snowpack above ‘normal,’ but crucial water reservoirs are lagging behind last year

By [Joe Wertz](#)

Mar. 22, 2024, 4:00 am

<https://www.cpr.org/2024/03/22/colorados-snowpack-above-normal-but-crucial-water-reservoirs-are-lagging-behind-last-year/>

A wave of late-winter storms has pushed snow accumulation in all of Colorado’s major water-storage

basins above normal levels for the first time this year, data show.

Statewide, snowpack — which melts into a crucial water source for the state and becomes the primary supply for the Colorado River system that supplies 40 million people across the West — has now exceeded long-term climate averages.

It's been a good year for snow — which bodes well for water negotiations

By [Lauren Gilger](#)

Published: Monday, March 25, 2024 - 12:15pm

<https://fronterasdesk.org/content/1875147/its-been-good-year-snow-which-bodes-well-water-negotiations>

Spring is officially here, winter is over — but the snow is still coming down in the Colorado mountains, where the Colorado River starts.

It's been a good year for snowpack up north, and we've seen a lot of rain in Phoenix as this El Niño year lives up to its name.

Alex Hager covers the Colorado River for KUNC in Colorado and joined The Show to talk about it.

Full interview

LAUREN GILGER: So tell us, is this good news?

ALEX HAGER: It is good news. About two-thirds of the river of the Colorado River starts as snow in Colorado. So when we're looking at the future of the water supply, how much pressure is going to be on the Colorado River this summer, we're talking about snow that fell this winter. There's really not much that rain in Phoenix or pretty much anywhere else in the Southwest for that matter can do to tip the scale. So it is good news for the short term. It kind of does not make a huge difference in terms of the long term Colorado River crisis, but it will buy decisionmakers a little bit of time to try to sort that crisis out.

GILGER: All right, we'll dig into that more in a moment but give us the numbers first. Like, what do we look like? What does it look like when we say, you know, we're seeing a good year for snowpack up in the Colorado mountains?

HAGER: Yeah, snow is measured as a percentage of average. So right now, everything is a little bit above average in Colorado and also Utah where we also see some Colorado River water start as snow. Right now, it's just slightly above average in most of those mountain regions, about, you know, 105% to 110% of normal for the amount of snow that's in the mountains in late March every year.

GILGER: All right. All right. So as you talked about at the beginning there, this matters a lot for the health of the Colorado River. How much snow happens up in the north in the, in the mountains up there in Colorado. Two-thirds of the river starts as snow pack in those mountains. We always refer to the Colorado River as as shrinking, right? Like that, that it's in crisis. Does this make a dent?

HAGER: It makes a small dent. The state of Western water is pretty dire. In the Colorado River basin, we have seen a long term drying trend going back to the year 2000, meaning that it is going to take more than just one wet winter to turn things around. However, because the crisis has gotten so severe, a lot of decisions are being made on a year-to-year basis. The amount of water that's in the nation's two largest reservoirs, Lake Powell and Lake Mead, is record low and because of that, it's being very tightly managed year to year just to make sure that there's enough to keep sending through the pipes that allow water to pass through the Glen Canyon Dam. The hydropower generators that are inside that dam, they need very specific levels of water and it alleviates some of the pressure on decisionmakers to, you

know, really focus on managing the reservoir just this year.

In the grand scheme of things, it does not fix the Colorado River crisis, but it might create a little bit of space for the people in charge of deciding how we share Western water to focus less on the year-to-year crisis management at those big dams and focus a little bit more on the big picture of long term. How do we reduce our demand on a resource that's been getting smaller for more than two decades?

Texas Hail Storm Smashes Solar Farm

Green Energy Beaten Black And Blue: Video Shows Massive Hail Damage To Texas Solar Farm

by Tyler Durden

Thursday, Mar 28, 2024 - 09:30 AM

<https://www.zerohedge.com/energy/green-energy-beaten-black-and-blue-video-shows-massive-hail-damage-texas-solar-farm>

In the latest of countless cautionary tales about green energy, a large-scale Texas solar farm has been devastated by a hail storm that took much of the facility off-line for an unknown duration.

The March 15 storm battered thousands of panels with hail described as anywhere between golf ball- and baseball-sized. “They look like somebody took a shotgun and blasted it into the air and let the pellets fall down and shatter holes all in them,” awestruck Fort Bend County resident Nick Kaminski told ABC 13. Actually, the damage looks much more like it was inflicted with direct fire:



Hail-shattered panels at the solar farm in Fort Bend County, Texas (FOX26 and Houston KRIV via Fox News)

*Located about 43 miles southwest of downtown Houston, the [Fighting Jays Solar farm](#) is a joint venture of Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners and AP Solar Holdings LLC. **Sprawling across 3300 acres, it's billed as promising 350 MW of capacity.** Or, at least, it was before Mother Nature intervened.*

Flyover video showed the sweeping breadth of the destruction:

A spokeswoman for GOP Rep. Troy Nehls, whose district encompasses the solar farm, told [Fox News Digital](#) that the incident raises serious questions about where solar farms are built, and undermines green zealots' belief that fossil fuels can be retired anytime soon:

"As far as solar farms being damaged where hail and tornadoes are common, those companies knowingly run the risk of building solar panel farms in these areas. Events like this underscore the importance of having an all-of-the-above energy approach to meet our energy needs and showcase how our country cannot solely rely on or fully transition to renewable energy sources like this."

Feature: Infrastructure and the Real Economy

First, some longer excerpts from a *Freightwaves* article. Then two links to further develop the theme of the importance of infrastructure for the economy, and the vulnerability of all areas of U.S. infrastructure to consequences similar to those now being experienced from the bridge collapse.

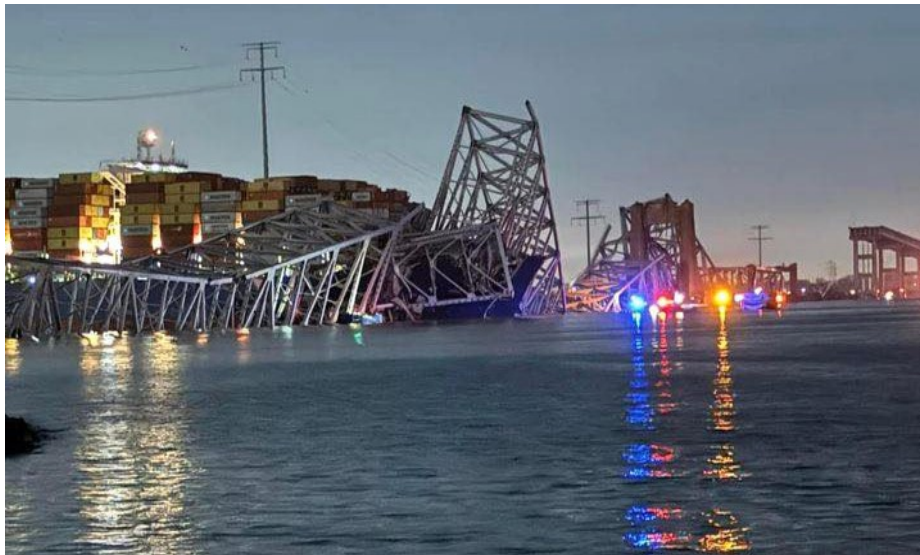
Port of Baltimore's indefinite closure deals blow to city, state economy

Maryland at risk of losing \$1 billion in total value of goods and services

[Noi Mahoney](#)

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

<https://www.freightwaves.com/news/port-of-baltimores-indefinite-closure-deals-blow-to-city-state-economy>



The Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after the Singapore-flagged MV Dali container ship slammed into the bridge on Tuesday Morning. (Photo: Harford County Maryland Fire and EMS)

The collapse of the [Francis Scott Key Bridge](#) on Tuesday after it was struck by a container ship has disrupted the Port of Baltimore's container shipping services, which will impact the economy of the city and beyond, analysts said.

Six people are missing and presumed dead after the Singapore-flagged MV Dali slammed into the bridge in the early morning hours, sending debris into the Patapsco River that continues to block a large portion of the channel that leads into Baltimore's harbor.

The state of Maryland and the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the closure of the shipping lane to the port until further notice as the investigation, recovery and cleanup get underway.

Economist Anirban Basu said that along with the Johns Hopkins Health System, the Port of Baltimore is one of the main drivers of the city and state economy, and its indefinite closure will impact jobs and revenue across the region.

Baltimore is the largest city in Maryland, with a population of about 576,000. It has more than 2.8 million in its metropolitan area.

“I would say the Port of Baltimore is the leading economic driver for the region in Baltimore,” Basu, chairman and CEO of Baltimore-based [Sage Policy Group Inc.](#), told FreightWaves. “One could argue that the leading driver is Johns Hopkins. It’s a difficult comparison, because you’re talking about two very different fields of endeavor. But the Baltimore region has been one of the nation’s underperformers in recent years. In the Baltimore region, we have had to clawback the jobs lost early during the pandemic.”

The port is the deepest harbor in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay, with five public and 12 private terminals. It handled over \$80 billion worth of cargo in 2023. It serves more than 50 ocean carriers making nearly 1,800 annual port calls.

The port generated nearly \$3.3 billion in total personal income and supports 15,330 direct jobs and 139,180 jobs connected to the port, according to [state data](#).

“If you were to compare the jobs in the Baltimore region in February of 2020 just before the pandemic, to February of 2024, the Baltimore region is down 34,900 jobs, the state of Maryland is down 41,100 jobs, while the nation is up 5.5 million jobs during this period ...,” Basu said. f Baltimore was not going anywhere.”

According to recent data from [Implan](#), the port’s 15,000-plus direct employees could lose an estimated \$275 million in labor income if container operations are down for a month.

“Before we even performed the analysis, we knew this event would have a negligible loss to the U.S. gross domestic product,” Candi Clouse, Implan’s vice president of customer success and education services, told FreightWaves. “The logistics and shipping will just shift to another U.S. port temporarily. However, the potential impact to Maryland is something to keep an eye on. Even if the port is only closed for 30 days, Maryland would be at risk for losing \$550 million to its gross domestic product and \$1 billion loss in total value of goods and services.”

“The short-term effects are very large. ... There is a significant amount of cargo being diverted away from the Port of Baltimore to other ports, who are often competitors,” Basu said. “This impact is multimodal, because not only is the ocean carrier community impacted by this, but so too is rail transport, trucking and even air cargo, including cargo operations at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.”

Supply chain visibility platform [project44](#) released a [report](#) detailing how an estimated \$1 billion per week in goods will be affected by the bridge collapse and indefinite suspension of container activities at the port.

“The Port of Baltimore handles freight from major automakers including, but not limited to, Nissan, Toyota, General Motors, and Volvo,” the project44 report said. “Expect disruptions to manufacturing in the automobile market until companies can establish dray networks through neighboring ports.”

Economic impact of the Baltimore bridge collapse

[Joseph W. Kane](#) and [Fred Dews](#)

March 28, 2024

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/economic-impact-of-the-baltimore-bridge-collapse/>

Transcript

DEWS: *This is The Current, part of the Brookings Podcast Network. I'm your host, Fred Dews.*

The recent collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore after being struck by a container ship is both a human tragedy and an economic disaster. Six construction workers doing repair work on the bridge span in the early morning hours lost their lives when the bridge plunged into the cold Patapsco River. They were immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The wreckage of the bridge now sits in the channel that connects Baltimore Harbor to the Chesapeake Bay, effectively closing the Port of Baltimore. Here to talk about the impacts of that closure on our economy and prospects for rebuilding the bridge is Joe Kane, a fellow in Brookings Metro. Joe, welcome back to The Current.

KANE: *Thanks for having me, Fred.*

Thousands Of Bridges Are One Freak Accident Away From Collapse

[Joan Lowy,](#)

[Associated Press](#)

May 25, 2013, 5:23 PM PDT

https://www.businessinsider.com/thousands-of-bridges-are-one-freak-accident-away-from-collapse-2013-5?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=yahoo.com

SEATTLE (AP) — Thousands of bridges around the U.S. may be one freak accident or mistake away from collapse, even if the spans are deemed structurally sound.

The crossings are kept standing by engineering design, not supported with brute strength or redundant protections like their more modern counterparts. Bridge regulators call the more risky spans "fracture critical," meaning that if a single, vital component of the bridge is compromised, it can crumple.

Those vulnerable crossings carry millions of drivers every day. In Boston, a six-lane highway 1A near Logan airport includes a "fracture critical" bridge over Bennington Street. In northern Chicago, an I-90 pass that goes over Ashland Avenue is in the same category. An I-880 bridge over 5th Avenue in Oakland, Calif., is also on the list.

Also in that category is the Interstate 5 bridge over the Skagit River north of Seattle, which collapsed into the water days ago after officials say an oversized truck load clipped the steel truss.