

California Drought Update



For September 22, 2016
by Patrick Ruckert

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A Note To Readers

God! Can't they do anything right?

Two new, but not so new, developments this past week demonstrate beyond a doubt the criminal incompetence of the Brown administration, the dead-end trap that 40 years of environmentalism has brought us to, and the complete lack of an actual alternative policy from anyone, either in political office or responsible for any level of management of the state's water-supply system. To be blunt, the last point refers to the so-called pro-development Republicans, the farm sector and the entire batch of “conservatives” who just keep moaning about “all we need is more storage.”

The last item in this week's report is a summary of the policy required, which states clearly that there is no solution to California's water crisis within the state. I'll say no more about it here and leave it to you to read it.

The two “new” developments are not really new, since warning signs have been flashing for years, and the flashing had even become brighter during the past few years of the drought.

The first is the release of an analysis commissioned by the state last year, but never released, that states that the “Water Fix,” Governor Brown's twin tunnels to by-pass the Delta, will require one third of the \$16 billion cost to be paid for by the federal government. The full report on this fly in the ointment follows the Drought Monitor and Reservoir graph.

The second “God! Can't they do anything right” item actually develops further the story we reported on

last week. That is, the state regulators proposal of leaving hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water flowing from the San Joaquin River and its tributaries. If enacted, the proposal will mean large cuts in water deliveries to San Francisco, Modesto, Merced, Turlock as well as to San Joaquin Valley farmers. As you will read below, this proposal is nothing less than lighting a fuse of 1,000 tons of political TNT.

Last week I mentioned the four performances of the Mozart's Requiem Mass performed by our Schiller Institute in New York City and New Jersey as a "living memorial" for those who died on 9/11 and the regime change wars since. Here is a link to one of those performances:

9/11 Memorial Concert: Mozart Requiem (Morristown, NJ)

On the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, the NYC Schiller Institute Chorus participated in a series of performances of the Mozart Requiem as a living memorial dedicated to the victims of 9/11 and its aftermath. This final performance in the series took place on September 12, 2016 at the Presbyterian Church in Morristown, NJ. The Schiller Institute NYC Community Chorus was directed by John Sigerson, with soloists Indira Mahajan (soprano), Mary Phillips (mezzo-soprano), Everett Suttle (tenor), and Philip Cutlip (baritone). The concert also includes four choral arrangements of African-American spirituals, directed by Diane Sare. Performed at the Verdi proper tuning of A=432 Hz. (Archival video posted for educational purposes only.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC5tcIseG10>



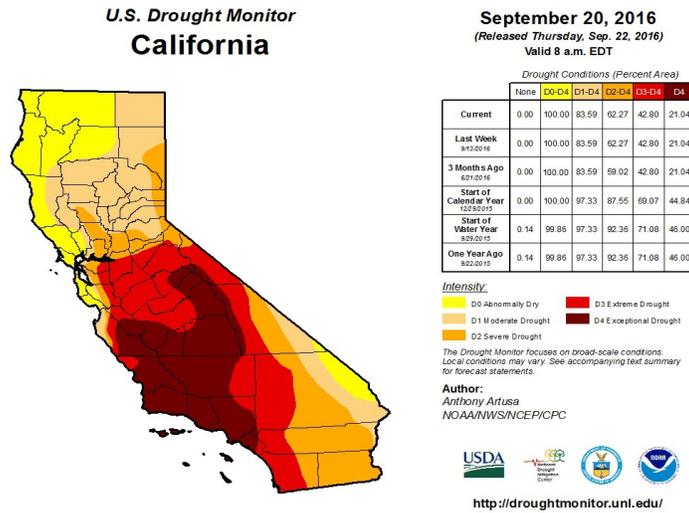
Finally, it is nice to report some sanity being presented at the United Nations as it begins its opening presentations by heads of state this week. In this case the speaker is Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, who properly defined the term "sustainable development," in a way that refutes all the zero-growth environmentalists. Here is a summary of some of his remarks from *EIRNS* on September 21:

Speaking to the United Nations General Assembly today, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang made abundantly clear the Chinese view of the "sustainable development agenda", which may have ruffled a few feathers of the Green lobby.

"China is among the first countries to submit its own plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The foundation of sustainable development is development itself. Sustainability has no meaning without development," Li said. "Many problems around the world are caused by the lack of development, including poverty, the refugee crisis, wars and conflicts, as well

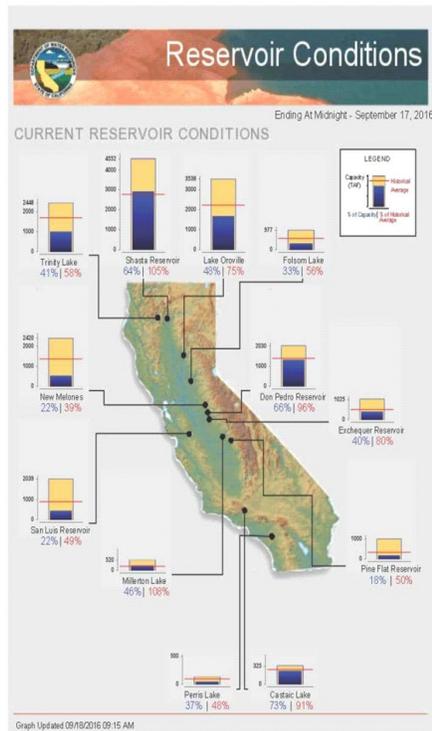
as terrorism. We need to find the root causes of these problems and solve them through development."

The U.S. Drought Monitor



Reservoir Conditions

A couple of points to note in this week's reservoir conditions graphic. Folsom Lake, which was at 100 percent of normal a few months ago, is near empty once again. The San Luis Reservoir, which really is the marker for water availability south of the Delta has increased its level from a low of 10 percent of normal a month ago, to 22 percent today, due to not pumping water to the contractors in the Valley and Southern California.



Jerry's Tunnels Will Require Billions of Federal Government Funding

Just to remind everyone, the entire \$16 billion price tag for the “Water Fix” is suppose to be paid for by the water districts that would get the water from the tunnels. Many of these districts are now debating whether or not to throw themselves into the project at all, especially the two big ones-- the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and the Westlands District. The analysis commissioned by the state last year, but never released points to why the districts are potentially balking-- they may not get anymore water with the tunnels than they are getting today, which is not much. For the Westlands that means less than 5 percent of what they have contracted for. For MWD, less than 20 percent. Thus, the report states, that the federal government may be required to pay one-third of the \$16 billion. As the saying goes, “good luck with that one.”

Here are some excerpts from the *Sacramento Bee* article on this from September 14:

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/state/article101796097.html>

California water tunnels would need US funding, analyst says

Giant tunnels that Gov. Jerry Brown wants to build to haul water across California are economically feasible only if the federal government bears a third of the nearly \$16 billion cost because local water districts may not benefit as expected, according to an analysis that the state commissioned last year but never released.

The findings run counter to longstanding state pledges that the districts that would get water from the tunnels would pay the full cost. Restore the Delta, a group opposing the project, obtained the fall 2015 cost analysis and subsequent state emails on revising the findings through open record laws and released them.

The cost-benefit analysis by economist David Sunding of the University of California, Berkeley, for the first time raises the prospect that federal funding would be needed. U.S. officials have not publicly said they would share in the price tag.

Further, no local water districts have agreed to pay their slated share for the tunnels because of uncertainty over regulatory approval and whether it would be worth the expense for them. Spending on the project has become the subject of an ongoing state audit and federal financial review.

The state's Natural Resources Agency commissioned the study from Sunding, who works as an economist with Brattle Group consultants. It looked at the share of costs that rural and urban water districts would pay and whether they would get enough water consistently to make the project's price worthwhile for them.

However, even if the federal government or another party steps in to pay a third of the costs, the tunnels as proposed now would pay off only for the urban water districts involved, not for the rural districts, Sunding wrote.

If the water districts have to pay all the costs, as the state has said it intends, "then the net benefits of the project are even more negative" for the rural districts that would help pay for it, Sunding wrote.

Maven's notebook on September 14 ran the Restore the Delta release on the study, which has links to the study itself. I excerpt it below.

<https://mavensnotebook.com/2016/09/14/this-just-in-delta-tunnels-would-need-us-funding/>

Restore the Delta: Unreleased Economic Analysis Shows Delta Tunnels Will Require \$6.5B Subsidy from State and Federal Taxpayers

From Restore the Delta:

A recent Public Records Act request from the CA Department of Water Resources, delivered to Restore the Delta, uncovered a [draft economic analysis](#) for Governor Brown's Delta tunnels project authored by Dr. David Sunding of the Brattle Group from Fall 2015.

Read the PRA documents [here](#).

The state's cost benefit analysis calls for a \$4.6 billion Federal taxpayer subsidy for the project to cover expenses for Central Valley Project water users, and additional subsidies to be paid for by California taxpayers. In total, CA WaterFix will require a \$6.5 billion taxpayer subsidy.

In a [memo](#) reviewing the Brattle Group's analysis of CA WaterFix, Dr. Jeffrey Michael, Director of the Center for Business and Policy Research at the University of the Pacific, notes, "Clearly, this huge subsidy is in stark contrast to ten years of public statements that all construction and mitigation costs would be paid by water users."

They Will Not Stop Unless You Stop Them

Probably a more clear example of the arrogance of those in the Brown administration like Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus cannot be found than the proposal of leaving hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water flowing from the San Joaquin River and its tributaries. If enacted, the proposal will mean large cuts in water deliveries to San Francisco, Modesto, Merced, Turlock as well as to San Joaquin Valley farmers. Yes, even San Francisco may have its water-supply cut. I include in this section a number of articles whose contents overlap each other, but each does include something the others lack. So, some repetition of certain points is unavoidable without losing the character of each article.

The *Chico Enterprise-Record* on September 16 covers this development, adding in a divide and conquer comment by Barbara Vlamis of *AquAlliance.net*. I have highlighted that comment below.

State's call for more water for fish turns to northern rivers next

<http://www.chicoer.com/article/NA/20160916/NEWS/160919722>

By Heather Hacking

Watching water regulations unfold for the San Joaquin River has local agricultural water users on edge. The proposed flow objectives call for more water from the San Joaquin's main waterways to the delta, to improve conditions for dwindling fish populations.

People in Northern California are watching carefully because the Sacramento Valley is next.

Assemblyman Adam Gray, D-Merced, fired off a [press release](#) calling the move for increased flows an

“economic death sentence,” to the agriculturally-based San Joaquin Valley.

That’s the fear from many in Northern California as well.

The proposed regulations announced by the state Water Resources Control Board call for 30-50 percent of “unimpaired flows” within the San Joaquin River, with a general suggestion of 40 percent.

If that same figure is used in the Sacramento Valley, the question would be “how do we come up with that amount of water,” said Thad Bettner, manager of Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, which provides water to more than 1,000 farmers who grow crops on about 140,000 acres

He predicted the area would see crops taken out of production.

As it sits now, the state Water Resources Control Board is poised to release rules for the Sacramento Valley in 2018, he said.

In Chico, Barbara Vlamis of AquAlliance.net has been watching the process unfold for years.

More water is needed, she said.

She said it’s curious to her why people in the Sacramento Valley would discourage increased flows from the San Joaquin system to the lower delta. If the San Joaquin River provides less water, state water leaders would probably ask Sacramento Valley water users to make up the difference, she said.

The bottom line is “we have failed to grapple with the fundamental problem that we live in an age of limits. Water is finite,” Jennings said. People in California need to be creative and “bring our demand for water into a rough approximation” of how much is available.

Putting a block of water down the river would end up draining Lake Oroville and Lake Shasta, he said, and draining the valley.

Thursday’s announcement, <http://tinyurl.com/gl3nf8l>, from the state Water Board, sets a starting point of 40 percent of natural flows in the San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced rivers, with a range of 30-50 percent of “unimpaired flow.” Currently the flow in some of these river gets as low as 20 percent after diversions, the document states.

On September 18, the *Modesto Bee* ran an Opinion column by two state assembly members Kristin Olsen and Adam Gray, ripping into the Water Board for not only refusing to seriously consult with those areas and people affected by such a decision, but the fraud that underlies the policy. Here are excerpts from that column:

What alternatives is state water board leaving us?

By Kristin Olsen and Adam Gray

<http://www.modbee.com/opinion/article102330202.html>

Over the past three years, the State Water Resources Control Board has been updating its Bay-Delta Water Quality Management Plan, which was first presented in 2012.

The plan’s purpose is to find common ground and balance that helps restore declining fisheries while maintaining groundwater and drinking water quality for our communities and the health of our local economic drivers, including agriculture. By law, it must be a balanced approach.

In 2012, the plan called for increasing unimpaired flows to 35 percent. This, in effect, would almost double the amount of water flowing to the Delta from the three rivers in our area and consequently reduce the amount of water stored in reservoirs and available for irrigation and replenishment of our

groundwater basins.

Our communities rallied in opposition to the 2012 plan. It would have caused serious groundwater depletion by removing essential water for recharging the basins. This, in turn, would seriously undercut the drinking water quality upon which most of our residents in Stanislaus, Merced and south San Joaquin counties depend.

Last year, the two of us, along with Fish and Wildlife Director Chuck Bonham, formally asked the chair of the state water board to express the board's support for good-faith settlement discussions between the interested parties. All agreed that honest efforts to find common ground were a better approach than endless and costly litigation.

Unfortunately, and to our utter dismay, the water board has rejected this approach. Instead, Thursday it released its [latest 2,000-page report](#), making it available for comment for only 60 days. It calls for a range of flows from 30 to 50 percent, but starting at 40 percent – higher than even the 2012 plan recommended.

Good faith negotiations require leadership and open, honest discussions. The water board has failed to demonstrate either in its work to date.

Three years and one major drought later, the water board now wants to substantially increase the unimpaired flow requirements of these rivers – ignoring the economic devastation such an action would impose on our communities.

With last week's release of the state water board's revised report, Chairwoman Felicia Marcus now touts the board's willingness to entertain settlement offers going forward. We hope she is sincere.

Research shows that increasing water flows into the Delta has done nothing to increase fish populations. The fact is, other measures, including predator suppression and habitat restoration are essential to solving the problem. A multifaceted approach is required, not a proposal that relies solely on a water flow strategy that, according to science and data, is destined to fail in halting the decline of fisheries.

The *Ventura County Star* gives a compact statement of the numbers involved in an editorial on September 16. Some excerpts follow.

Editorial: Water wars aren't just about fish

<http://www.vcstar.com/story/opinion/editorials/2016/09/16/editorial-water-wars-arent-just-fish/90494084/>

Today, there is less than a 20 percent unimpaired flow of water in some of those rivers. In 2010, the state water board established a criteria that a 60 percent unimpaired flow was necessary if all you looked at was helping fish species. After looking at other users, the staff dropped that to a range of between 30 and 50 percent and settled in the middle — 40 percent — as the target to shoot for in its recommendation.

That will keep between 288,000 and 485,000 acre-feet of additional water in the river system each year. That's water that is now going to farms and cities. The water board estimated a \$64 million impact on agricultural production. Farm groups immediately jumped in to estimate the loss at closer to \$150 million, and the California Farm Bureau Federation estimated it could idle up to 240,000 acres of Central Valley farmland.

Here is the San Joaquin River Watershed

Note: The San Joaquin River flows north to the Delta



This article from *weather.com* on September 19, makes the point that the rapidly declining ground water reserves would also be prevented from refilling by the policy if carried out. Excerpts:

California's Proposed Water Plan Could Devastate Farms, Local Officials Say

By Sean Breslin

A new plan proposed by state officials would double the amount of water sent down the San Joaquin River and out to the sea.

Officials hope the plan would help protect threatened species of fish that are struggling to survive in the parched waterways.

Local officials say taking away water from farmers and residents could force many of them to pack up and leave Central California.

The proposed plan would take even more water away from the region's residents and crops; new plans call for [40 percent of the San Joaquin River's water to be sent out to the ocean](#) so threatened species of fish, like salmon and steelhead, can have a chance to thrive again.

But that plan would double the amount of water used to save these fish, and local officials are disgusted to think that this much water could be sent out to the sea, flowing right past a parched state.

"[It's just so preposterous](#)," Merced County supervisor Deidre Kelsey told Buzzfeed. "It can't work. Unless everybody picks and moves out of the valley."

In addition to losing important water, the new plan would also prevent groundwater reserves from being refilled as frequently, and some parts of Central California are already sinking as a result of the depleted supply.

"It's killing the valley," Merced County supervisor Daron McDaniel told Buzzfeed. "It's very frustrating for us who are living here at ground zero."

Carolyn Lochhead from *sfgate.com* focuses her article on the affect of the policy on San Francisco on September 15. At issue here is the flow of the Tuolumne River, one of the tributaries to the San Joaquin River, and the source of San Francisco's water supply. Some excerpts are below.

New state water plan may force tighter conservation restrictions

<http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/New-state-water-plan-may-force-tighter-9226103.php>

WASHINGTON — San Francisco faces potentially drastic cutbacks in its water supply, as state regulators proposed leaving more water in three Northern California rivers Thursday to protect wildlife in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta estuary, the linchpin of California's water supply.

The draft rules by the [State Water Resources Control Board](#) would raise the amount of water into the Merced, Stanislaus and Tuolumne rivers to 30 to 50 percent of what would naturally flow in them. That means less water would be available for urban users and farmers in the northern San Joaquin Valley, compounding their need to conserve.

Current flows into those rivers dip as low as 10 percent during parts of the year, and, if the plan is made final, state officials said they would start the increase with a midpoint of 40 percent during spring flows from February through June.

"The bottom line is we've simply diverted too much water for fish to be able to survive," said board [Chairwoman Felicia Marcus](#) in a telephone interview. "This should have been done earlier, but it's a hard thing to do in the worst drought in modern history."

The Tuolumne has become one of the most over-drafted rivers in the state, with about 80 percent of its normal flow diverted to human uses. San Francisco draws its water from the river, which it dammed in the early 20th century in Yosemite National Park, and is one of its largest water rights holders. Even as the Tuolumne has been over-drafted, the city has aggressively defended its water rights.

In all, the river provides water to 2.6 million residents and businesses in the Bay Area and also supplies water to farmers through the Modesto and Turlock irrigation districts.

Farm groups, which often say water left in rivers is "wasted to the sea," swiftly denounced the proposal.

California [Farm Bureau](#) President [Paul Wenger](#) said in a statement that the plan could idle as many as 240,000 acres of farmland. Farmers have made great strides in improving water efficiency, he said,

and “it’s time to apply the same standards to water dedicated to environmental flows.” Efforts to protect fish by simply increasing the water available to them have not worked, he said.

But fish biologists said the state continues to shortchange fish, even with the new rule.

“There is no evidence that 40 percent is going to cut it,” said [Jon Rosenfield](#), a salmon biologist at the [Bay Institute](#), an environmental group. “All the fish and wildlife agencies have said that way more than 40 percent of tributary flows is necessary to protect the hardiest fish, the salmon, and that’s not counting other fish and wildlife that might require more flows.”

The threat to the water rights laws is pointed to in this article from Lauren Sommer at [KQED](#) on September 16. Excerpts below.

Bay Area Water Supply in the Crosshairs of New River Plan

<https://ww2.kqed.org/science/2016/09/16/bay-area-water-supply-in-the-crosshairs-of-new-river-plan/>

State water officials have released a proposal to boost the flow of California’s second-longest river, the San Joaquin. The river plays a [huge role in the state’s water supply](#), which means even San Francisco and other Bay Area cities could be facing cutbacks.

The State Water Resources Control Board says restoring water to the river is necessary to bring back endangered salmon and protect water quality.

In an unprecedented move, the water board will likely take that water from districts with “senior” rights, like the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Their water rights have long been considered untouchable because they’re some of the oldest in the state.

Taking recent salmon declines into account, the board is proposing that 40 percent of the river’s flow be restored, including the water flowing down the river’s three tributaries.

Bay Area Supply

The SFPUC and its Hetch Hetchy Water System gets the majority of its water from one of those tributaries, the Tuolumne River. It supplies more than two million people in San Francisco and on the Peninsula.

“It’s a big deal,” says Steven Ritchie, SFPUC’s Assistant General Manager. “It’s not whether or not, but how much of an impact an action like this would have on us.”

The cutbacks could also affect the agricultural water districts on the river.

“This is an all-out assault on the people in these affected communities,” says Jake Wenger of Modesto Irrigation District.

‘It’s going to be huge because it’s going to set a precedent for every water rights holder in the state of California.’ Jake Wenger, Modesto Irrigation District

Wenger expects to see fallowed farmland and job losses in his district. State officials estimate \$64 million dollars in economic losses statewide, though agricultural areas estimate it to be higher.

The SFPUC’s water supply would be cut before supplies for agricultural areas like Turlock Irrigation District and Modesto Irrigation District, because its water rights are junior to theirs. The state water board will hold lengthy hearings determining where the water cuts should come from.

What Is To Be Done?

Here is my proposed approach to the California water crisis. It was originally published in the August 6, 2015 "California Drought Update:"

First, recognize that this is not a California water crisis, but a political, cultural and economic crisis of the nation. There has been zero water infrastructure built in this state in more than 40 years-- we ceased creating a future for ourselves and for future generations. After the death of President Kennedy, and the death of his policies of building nuclear-powered desalination plants and the North American Water and Power Alliance, the nation gave up the idea of progress and development and turned the nation into a speculative gambling casino with an ideology of environmentalism to match.

Second, the central issue to be put on the table is the real nature of progress; the real nature of progress for mankind. Mankind is the only species that creates his own future through the action of the creative power of his mind. It is scientific discovery, and applying that to increasingly master the universe that that future is created. By allowing that to be destroyed we are creating the conditions for our own extinction.

Third, creating new sources of water requires the recognition that processes on our planet, like the water cycle, are largely determined, not by processes on Earth, but by galactic forces like cosmic radiation which affects how water vapor behaves-- whether there are clouds, where they are located, and when precipitation falls. Initial experiments in several nations of artificially ionizing the atmosphere have demonstrated initial success in increasing rainfall. An aggressive program to put such experiments into action must be carried out now.

Providing more water to this state and to all arid areas of the world depends upon unleashing the creative power of mankind to discover how to control those processes. That is the fundamental solution. That requires a new Presidency; it requires the restoration of the Glass-Steagall Act to bankrupt this speculative system; and it requires a return to classical principles of culture to once again unleash the creative powers of our people.

In the meantime, an Apollo Project-style mobilization to build desalination plants over the next few years is what is required to minimize the current disaster. The Carlsbad desalination plant now being built will begin delivering 50 million gallons of water per day to San Diego later this year. That facility will have taken less than two years to build. By putting the construction of dozens of plants, from San Francisco Bay to San Diego, on a 24 hours a day/ 7 days per week schedule, in less than a year, rivers of water will flow from the sea to the land. Providing the electricity required will require another crash program to build nuclear power plants. We have accomplished such great tasks before, and we can do it again.

At the same time, recognizing and acting to end the domination of the state by the Brownshirts of the California State Water Board, whose actions of sending millions of acre-feet of water out to sea to protect fish at the expense of human needs, can immediately prevent the further destruction of food production and end the environment of virtual terror they have created.

Here is one link providing more background and a more elaboration:

<https://larouchepac.com/20150401/new-perspectives-western-water-crisis>