

California Drought Update



For December 22, 2016

by Patrick Ruckert

Published weekly since July, 2014

<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org>

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

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A Note To Readers

*“In this state, this section of the United States, of course, the key is water.
And unless we organize every drop to be of service to mankind, this state
is going to stand still...”*

President John F. Kennedy, Salt Lake City, Utah, September 27, 1963

The state and the nation is at a potential turning point of history. Our field of focus in these reports, is, of course, the drought and the water management system, but whether it is the weather or the economic policy, or the dominating culture, we shall not fool ourselves in thinking that we can not address these more universal topics.

Thus, I included in last week's “feature” the first point of Lyndon LaRouche's “Four Cardinal Principles” required to reverse the 40-plus years of economic and cultural degeneration. This series will be continued in next week's report.

Now, with a new President to take office in one month, the moment for a fundamental change is upon us.

As reported below, at least one section of California's population (farmers) are announcing that they have had enough. The hearings in Merced, Modesto and Stockton on the state's policy to increase the

flow of the San Joaquin River system to the ocean, cutting that allocated for farms, saw some real passion. You will enjoy the quotes I have included in this section of the report.

While Governor Brown cries out for resistance to the new President, and that he will go it alone on “combating climate change, even launching his own satellite if he deems it necessary, such behavior is indicative of something much more sinister under way. See the section on Brown below for details.

I guess I should mention in this introduction that we have had a lot of rain, up north anyway, but still more than 40 percent of the state remains in the top two categories of drought. The U.S. Drought Monitor tells the story.

Included in this week's report are the topics of the new Water Bill passed and signed by the President and the increasingly imperiled Water Fix of tunnels through the Delta.

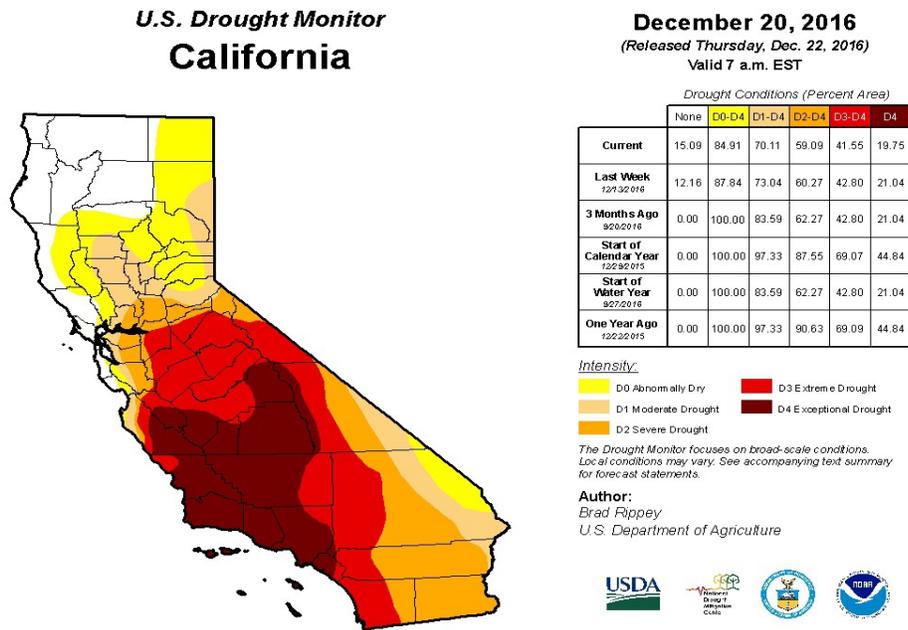
But, please remember, nothing human beings do that is really great is driven forward by being practical:

“But what is nobler than the unpractical spirit? The soul is sustained by the regard for that which transcends all immediate purposes. The sense of the transcendent is the heart of culture, the very essence of humanity. A civilization that is devoted exclusively to the utilitarian is at bottom not different from barbarism. The world is sustained by unworldliness.”

--Abraham Heschel, from his book, “The Earth Is the Lord's” (1950)

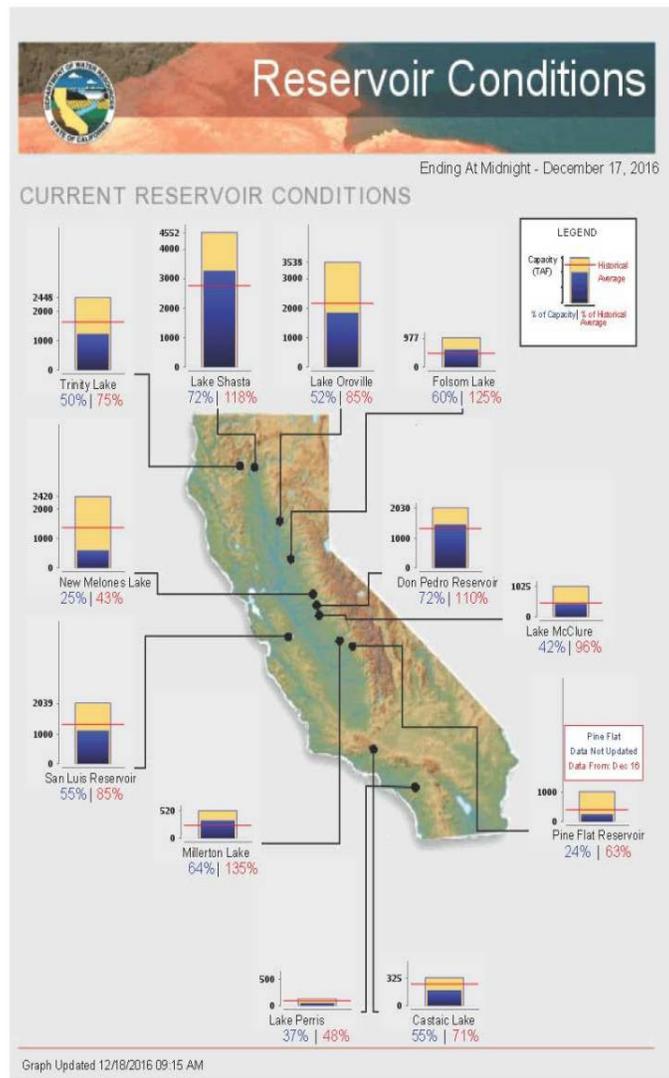
U.S. Drought Monitor

All the rain we have received over the past weeks is beginning to register in the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor. A whopping 16 percent of the state is now completely out of the drought. While over 41 percent of the state remains in Extreme Drought or worse, Exceptional Drought, we have a long ways to go before the light at the end of the tunnel becomes visible.



Reservoir Conditions

Better, but still below normal.



Is the Past a Prelude To What Is To Come?

If you ask the weatherman that question, he or she will shrug their shoulders. As we have seen over the past three months, the rain Gods have been generous to northern California. Not so much for the southern part of the state. A nice graphic from the state's Weather Forecast Office follows the sfgate.com article excerpted here:

Rain totals were 400% of normal in parts of Northern California this fall

By Bill Disbrow

December 21, 2016

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Rain-totals-was-400-of-normal-in-parts-of-10811904.php>

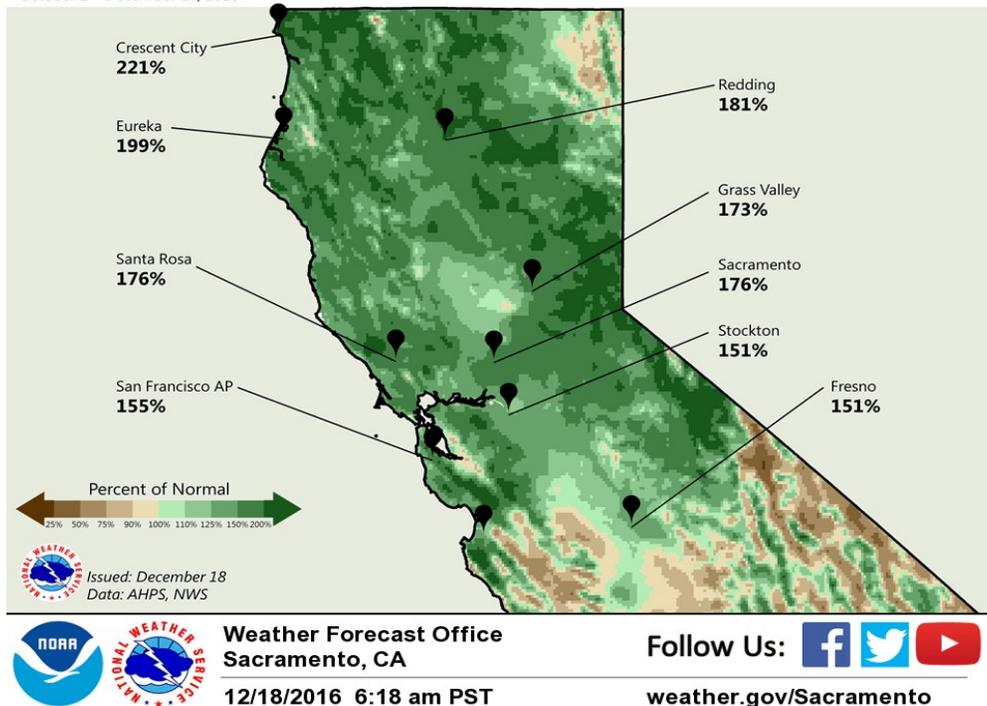
A wet start to the rainy season means much of the Bay Area enters winter with well above average rainfall.

The National Weather Service released maps on Thursday showing the majority of the Bay Area at over 110 percent of normal for this time of year. Much of Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties have seen over 150 percent of normal, with dotted areas in the state seeing as much as 400 percent of the typical rainfall by December 20th.

"Since October 1st many areas located in Northern and Central California have received above normal rainfall, especially from Santa Cruz northward," the National Weather Service wrote on Twitter. "**Drier than normal conditions are more common for many places south of Santa Cruz.**" (Emphasis added)

Wet Start To The Water Year!

October 1 – December 17, 2016



Lots of precipitation in itself is not the whole story. The state depends upon the winter snowpack for 30 percent of the water it uses through the post-winter period. So far this water-year, the snowpack is a little weak, as the excerpted article below indicates:

KPBS Drought Tracker Update: Warm Temps Keeping Snowpack Thin

Thursday, December 15, 2016

By David Wagner

KPBS News

December 16, 2016

<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2016/dec/15/kpbs-drought-tracker-update-warm-temps-keeping-sno/>

Since the state's wet season officially began on Oct. 1, California has seen a bit more rain than in many previous drought years. As of Thursday morning, average rainfall throughout the state has added up to 45 percent of what normally falls by April 1, a date used to mark the official end of the wet season.

But the Sierra Nevada snowpack has stayed pretty thin. On average, it's only 14 percent of the way toward a normal April 1 snowpack measurement.

These numbers come from data compiled by a team at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Scripps climate researcher [David Pierce](#) says you can blame the lack of snow on high temperatures.

"Because of temperature, the precipitation we've had — which has been already even a bit above normal — hasn't been driving much increase in snowpack," said Pierce. "We care about that in California because we depend on the snowpack as a natural reservoir of our winter water."

More Water for Farmers and Cities

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced on December 21 that is raising the amount of water it will deliver to water contractors from the 20 percent earlier announced to 45 percent of their requests. As you can see in the excerpt from the DWR release below, that is still less than the 60 percent released last year, and is in line with the amounts released each year over the past decade.

But, keep in mind, as the Westlands Water District learned last year, what is promised may not be delivered. And until there is, yes, as I have said often, a paradigm shift in thinking in the nation that takes to heart the intent expressed by President John Kennedy's quote above, then we shall limp along until something really breaks.

Storms Dent, Don't End Drought

From the Department of Water Resources:

With reservoirs rising from December storms, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) today boosted its early-season estimate of next year's State Water Project (SWP) supply from 20 to 45 percent of most requests.

"This winter's wet start gives us hope we'll be able to keep increasing the State Water Project allocation," said DWR Director Mark Cowin. "But the faucet can shut off suddenly and leave us dry for a sixth year in a row. Drought always looms over California, so we must use water wisely and sparingly."

Each December, DWR makes its initial estimate of SWP water delivery capability (allocation) for the following calendar year. The allocation is adjusted — hopefully upward — as hydrologic conditions develop through the rainy season. Under the initial 20 percent water allocation for 2017, the 29 public agencies served by the SWP would receive only 839,376 acre-feet of the 4,172,786 acre-feet they collectively requested. Under today's allocation, they would receive 1,894,645 acre-feet.

The last 100 percent SWP allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years because of Delta pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish species – was in 2006. SWP allocations in recent years:

- 2016 – 60 percent
- 2015 – 20 percent
- 2014 – 5 percent
- 2013 – 35 percent
- 2012 – 65 percent
- 2011 – 80 percent
- 2010 – 50 percent
- 2009 – 40 percent
- 2008 – 35 percent
- 2007 – 60 percent

New Water Bill Signed by Obama

As if he had any choice in the matter since the bill passed both houses with a veto-proof majority.

Since I covered the content of the bill in last week's report, I'll just add here some commentary and evaluations of the bill by others. Here is the link to last week's report:

<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/pdf/20161215-California-Drought-Update.pdf>

From the *Hanford Sentinel*:

Water bill could speed water south

- Dec 15, 2016

http://hanfordsentinel.com/news/local/business/water-bill-could-speed-water-south/article_3a4496e8-b7be-5c5c-927c-24d5d0448ac0.html

Friant Water Authority CEO Jason Phillips say he anticipates President Obama will sign the compromise measure that offers assistance to Flint, Mich., as well as relief for the Golden State.

Phillips points to some immediate benefits to drought-stricken Central California.

“We believe this could mean additional pumped water from storms already in the forecast” thanks to the so-called “short-term provisions” in the bill to “maximize winter water pumping when there is no harm to fish.”

From the *Orange County Breeze*:

Poseidon Water happy over new federal water law

December 17th, 2016

http://www.oc-breeze.com/2016/12/17/94068_poseidon-water-happy-new-federal-water-law/

Today, Poseidon Water commended Congress and President Barack Obama on the approval of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act). The WIIN Act includes 98-pages of California specific regulations that, for the first time in nearly twenty-five years, invests more than \$500 million into California water projects.

“Not only is this a critical water bill for the nation, but it also recognizes desalination as a way to address California’s current drought and long-term water shortages,” said Carlos Riva, Chief Executive Officer of Poseidon Water. “The allocation of funds for desalination projects is huge and will give Californians the opportunity to move forward with a multi-pronged approach to combatting our perpetual drought conditions.”

Specifically, the California portion of the WIIN Act will direct \$30 million to desalination projects, including Poseidon’s proposed Huntington Beach Desalination Facility currently under review by state regulatory permitting agencies. The WIIN Act also allocates \$150 million to water recycling and water conservation projects, \$335 million to groundwater and surface storage projects and \$43 million to projects that benefit fish and wildlife.

The *Sacramento Bee* coverage highlights how the provision in the bill on pumping from the Delta may be interpreted. Excerpts follow:

What the New Federal Water Bill Means for the Delta

By Michael Doyle, Dale Kasler and Ryan Sabalow

December 20, 2016

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/water/articles/2016/12/19/water-talks-what-climate-change-will-mean-for-california-water>



Aerial view looks north toward the Dos Amigos Pumping Plant located in Merced County on the San Luis Canal, a segment of the California Aqueduct. Last week President Obama signed a \$12-billion water bill that could send more water south out of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. *California Department of Water Resources*

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama on Friday signed a massive infrastructure bill designed to control floods, fund dams and deliver more water to farmers in California’s drought-ravaged Central Valley.

Obama signed the \$12-billion bill in a distinctly low-key act. Controversial provisions that critics fear could harm fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta were wrapped inside a package stuffed with politically popular projects, ranging from Sacramento-area levees to clean-water aid for beleaguered Flint, Mich.

Thanks to recent rainfall, the massive pumping stations near Tracy are already operating at full capacity, said spokesman Shane Hunt of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the Central Valley Project. Hunt said there are no environmental restrictions hindering pumping currently.

If conditions in the Delta don't change, the differences in how the pumps operate would start to show up in a few weeks. That's when government biologists say endangered fish species, such as the Delta smelt, are believed to be swimming near the giant pumps. At that point, environmental curbs have traditionally kicked in, and the Delta pumps were throttled back.

The law signed by Obama could change that. It says the pumps should be managed "to maximize water supplies for the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project," and it requires agencies essentially to push the limits on how much water can be sent south.

Speaking of the Delta

Since everything Governor Brown touches, proposes or attempts to achieve is driven by his anti-human ideology of environmentalism, it should come as no surprise that his signature project, the California Water Fix, of building two tunnels to by-pass the Delta in sending Sacramento River water south, appears about to crash. A proposal to reduce the tunnels from two to one is now being put forward by the Public Policy Institute, which just adds another fly to Brown's magical ointment. Others are becoming increasingly vocal in their demands to abandon the project entirely. And, of course, still lurking in the background is the possibility that the Valley and southern California agencies that will fund the project may pull out if they find that they will not get the water from the project that has been promised.

So, here are some excerpts from recent articles.

Think Tank Urges Fresh Look at the Delta Water Tunnel Plan

At the 11th hour, the Public Policy Institute of California hopes to rekindle interest in building one water diversion tunnel in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta instead of two. But it might be too late to shift course.

By Matt Weiser

December 19, 2016

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/water/articles/2016/12/19/water-talks-what-climate-change-will-mean-for-california-water>

Everyone is at odds over Gov. Brown's delta tunnels plan-- here's a compromise that could stop the fighting

By George Skelton

Capitol Journal and the Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-skelton-ppic-jerry-brown-delta-tunnels-20161215-story.html>

The nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California came up with that non-rocket science concept, calling it “a grand compromise.”

“If we fail again to find common ground, the political paralysis that has plagued the delta for decades will continue,” the policy institute’s water experts wrote in another Bee op-ed article.

They noted that eliminating one tunnel would limit the water that could be taken and “greatly reduce” construction costs. The best guess is that costs could be lowered by 30% — to less than \$11 billion, plus interest.

It would still “significantly improve the reliability and quality of water supply,” they wrote.

Garamendi’s take on the tunnels

<http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/article120778193.html#storylink=cpy>

*Rep. **John Garamendi** dropped by our editorial board on Tuesday and offered his latest assessment of Gov. **Jerry Brown**’s 30-mile twin-tunnels plan to push water around the Delta:*

“It’s time for a Plan B.”

Garamendi, never a fan of the \$15 billion project, views it as too big, too costly, and too big a target for lawsuits.

But complicating the project, the Obama administration will have left office without having granted federal permits for the tunnels.

*“Not even close,” Garamendi said of the federal permits. And no one has any read on how **Donald Trump**’s Interior Department might view the project.*

*Garamendi broke from most other Northern California Democrats last week by [voting for the big water legislation](#) authored by Sen. **Dianne Feinstein** and House Majority Leader **Kevin McCarthy**, R-Bakersfield.*

Brown still has not offered an assessment of the bill. But Garamendi said the legislation would open the way for tunnel alternatives.

And Speaking of Jerry Brown

I do think the election of Donald Trump has blown Jerry's last fuse. Speaking to the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco on December 14, Brown sounded like a boxer who had taken one too many punches to the head. And the Governor even released an official statement from his office, sort of daring Trump to come into the ring with him.

As pathetic as Brown and his antics may be, there is something much more dangerous in play here. As Obama has spent the last eight years overthrowing and attempting to overthrow legitimate elected governments from Egypt, to Libya, to Syria, and Ukraine, claiming that these governments were not “legitimate,” so too here in the U.S. this fascist policy has been unleashed against President-elect Donald Trump, claiming his election was “illegitimate.” While the vote recount and the manipulation of the Electoral College failed to “invalidate” the

November 8 election, as Paul Craig Roberts, a former Reagan administration official, warned two days ago, “As the Coup against Trump Fails, the Threat against His Life Rises.”

That important point having been made, enjoy the following excerpts:

Jerry Brown: California 'ready to fight' Trump on climate change

*By Jennifer Calfas
December 15, 2016*

<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/310512-california-gov-were-ready-to-fight-trump-on-climate-change>



*“Ready to fight Gerry”
(Getty Images)*

California Gov. Jerry Brown (D) says California is “ready to fight” President-elect [Donald Trump](#) on climate change.

“We’ve got the scientists, we’ve got the lawyers and we’re ready to fight,” Brown said during a heated speech Wednesday night to the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco, the [Los Angeles Times](#) reported.

Brown seized on comments from a top Trump adviser, who said the incoming administration plans to eliminate NASA’s earth science programs. That would end the use of satellites to gather climate information.

“If Trump turns off the satellites, California will launch its own damn satellite,” Brown said.

Governor Brown to Climate Scientists: “We Will Persevere”

December 14, 2016

From the Office of the Governor:

Rallying thousands of scientists at one of the largest international gatherings of its kind, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. today called on the scientific community – the “truth-tellers” and “truth seekers” – to mobilize for the climate fight.

“The time has never been more urgent or your work never more important. The climate is changing, temperatures are rising, oceans are becoming more acidified, habitats are under stress – the world is facing tremendous danger,” said Governor Brown at the American Geophysical Union’s annual fall meeting in San Francisco. “It’ll be up to you as truth-tellers, truth seekers to mobilize all your efforts to fight back. We’ve got a lot of firepower. We’ve got the scientists, we’ve got the universities, we have the national labs and we have the political clout and sophistication for the battle – and we will persevere. Have no doubt about that.”

Of course, Brown is not the only one who has gone a little off the wall. It looks like the Sierra Club has joined him:

Sierra Club Gears Up for Trump

Michael Brune, who leads the S.F.-born environmental organization, explains how he plans to fight the incoming administration.

By Tom Molanphy

December 8, 2016

<http://www.sfweekly.com/news/news-news/sierra-club-gears-trump/>

That's because if President-elect [Donald Trump](#) is held to his tweets, his administration will open up a can of whoop-ass on the planet that will spin Muir in his grave faster than a climate-change-induced hurricane. [Michael Brune](#), the executive director of the Sierra Club, spoke by phone with SF Weekly on the elemental challenges that [California](#) — and the world — may face after Trump takes the oath of office next month.

Finally, Some Sign of Fight

For the past two months, since the Water Board announced that it would be allowing more unrestricted flow of the San Joaquin River system, cutting the amount of water available to farmers and causing hundreds of billions of dollars damage to California's agricultural sector, the anger has been building up, waiting to be unleashed.

Unleashed it now has been at the hearings held in the Valley over the past couple of weeks. I'll not try to even summarize the “piece of mind” expressed by farmers, water board members, and county and city officials. The best I can do is provide you with the links to the reports on the hearings. These reports also explain both the proposed new regulations and their affects.

But, first here are some quotes from some of the articles. The speakers and writers sound like they are determined to fight. But, will they? So far, over these past few years of Brown and his Water Board dictating a policy that not only has been destructive to agriculture, but deliberately so, we have seen no serious fight. Why? I would submit that it has been the complete lack of any idea of what to fight for, too many merely satisfied with complaining. Yes, people say we should build this dam and stop sending water to the ocean, but, I think, they know that such things are neither serious solutions to the water problem nor could ever be done in the present political culture of the nation.

Thus, once again, we return to the comprehensive paradigm shift required as presented in “LaRouche's Four Laws.” More on this next week. <https://larouchepac.com/four-laws>

Now, here are the quotes from the hearings and the press articles:

Paul Campbell, a director for MID, said bluntly that the plan “is not going to accomplish your goals, and it’s going to destroy our economy.”

We hope the state water board left Modesto having heard one message: It won't be easy taking the water the San Joaquin Valley depends on.

“The one plus we have,” said incoming Stanislaus County Supervisor and former Assemblywoman Kristin Olsen, “is water. And you cannot take that away from us.”

“To create a permanent regulatory drought is absolutely unacceptable to us,” said Assemblyman Adam Gray, who represents all of Merced and part of Stanislaus counties.

“Could you please tell the audience what law gives you the authority to double – or more – the amount of water you can take from the irrigation districts?” almond grower Gary Tessier asked the State Water Resources Control Board.

Atwater Mayor Jim Price was even more blunt: “Are you people nuts?”

The state’s plan in the context of current drought conditions may result in 600 more fish a year in exchange for 360,000 acre feet of water that would fallow 240,000 acres in the 209, make thousands of jobs vanish and slam the Northern San Joaquin Valley economy with a \$260 million economic loss.

“The board and the staff have lost the trust of an entire region in the state of California,” he said.

Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, said the plan would add to losses from the drought of recent years, which at times left many farmers with zero river water.

“Folks are mad as hell, and they don’t want to take it anymore,” he said.

The state of California knows its plans to send more water down our rivers into the Delta will cause a lot of pain. In the words of the board’s latest blueprint, it’s “unavoidable.”

That’s all: Unavoidable. It’s also unacceptable.

“The State Water Resources Control Board’s proposed unimpaired flow requirement would literally collapse our community, dismantle our economy and destroy our sustainability,” Scoto said. “Our future as the fifth-largest county in U.S. in total value of agricultural products sold would vanish.”

Here are the links to the articles:

State Water Board Holds “Lively” Hearings on San Joaquin River Flow Proposal

<http://www.acwa.com/news/endangered-and-invasive-species/state-water-board-holds-%E2%80%9Clively%E2%80%9D-hearings-san-joaquin-river-flo>

We want to see a better plan from California’s water board

<http://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/editorials/article122230524.html#storylink=cpy>

Farmers describe problems with river-flow plan

<http://agalert.com/story/?id=10417>

Tell the state it needs a better plan to share our water

<http://www.modbee.com/opinion/editorials/article121878823.html#storylink=cpy>

Leaders, farmers, residents plea against Delta water plan

<http://www.recordnet.com/news/20161216/leaders-farmers-residents-plea-against-delta-water-plan>

The people of San Joaquin County have spoken; let's hope regulators will listen

http://www.lodinews.com/opinion/columnists/article_5d8962a6-c6d9-11e6-bfe9-572bdb8fb5ea.html

Merced crowd decries river flow plan

<http://www.modbee.com/news/article121907968.html>

Farmers 'fed up' with state water grab

<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/article121758753.html#storylink=cpy>

Modesto-area farmers, residents make impassioned plea to water board

<http://www.modbee.com/news/business/agriculture/article122024204.html#storylink=cpy>

With so much less water, we all will suffer

<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/opinion/editorials/article121383288.html#storylink=cpy>

Destroying the 209 to 'save' salmon

<http://www.mantecabulletin.com/section/38/article/140047/>

