

California Drought (and Flood) Update



For August 17, 2017

by Patrick Ruckert

Published weekly since July, 2014

<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org>

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

patruckert@hotmail.com

We just had a great set of briefings upstairs on our infrastructure agenda. My administration is working every day to deliver the world-class infrastructure that our people deserve, and frankly, that our country deserves. That's why I just signed a new executive order to dramatically reform the nation's badly broken infrastructure permitting process.

Our infrastructure will again be the best in the world. We used to have the greatest infrastructure anywhere in the world. And today we're like a third world country. We're literally like a third world country. Our infrastructure will again be the best and we will restore the pride in our communities, our nation and all over the United States, we'll be proud again.

I think that's going to have a huge, positive impact on race relations. You know why? It's jobs. What people want now, they want jobs. They want great jobs with good pay. And when they have that, you watch how race relations will be.

Transcript of President Trump press conference Aug. 15, 2017

A Note To Readers

The quotes above from the President's press conference two days ago you probably did not see or hear from any media you may have been subjected to. Instead, the hysteria that began Saturday in Charlottesville, VA has been the focus of the media, and both the distraction intent and the intent to remove the President continues. The President denounced the Nazis, the KKK and the so-called Anti-Fa, the "two sides" in the bar-room-style brawl; all of them a pathetically small part of the American population; all of them ignorant, violent, emotionally disturbed and, of course, having no idea of, or

intent to inspire or uplift our nation. The notorious role of the FBI in using such groups is well-known. Mr. President: Your words about building infrastructure are the right words, but still you have not confronted the problem that infests your administration-- the Wall Street parasites who are determined to prevent the only policy that can build the infrastructure the nation needs. That policy begins with restoring the Glass-Steagall banking law and then returning our nation to the American System national credit policy begun with Alexander Hamilton.

More on this will be found in the last section of this week's report.

This Week's Report

Two climate studies, one of them, from NASA, with the usual “its global warming” theme, do provide useful material on the time it takes for a drought hit region to recover.

The Oroville Dam update this week begins with two videos on the construction process. Then a few more items include a briefing from the deputy director of the State Water Project, and two items on money, money, money-- who pays and who gets what, maybe.

Water storage here we come, I think, is an appropriate title for all the action on building more water storage in the state that has made the news this past week. The state is finally moving to decide on which projects get funding that was approved by voters in 2014. Both the proposed Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat Dam seem to be moving. Of course, moving is relative. It would be a decade before they will be completed, if they are a go.

Water quality in California has as bad a problem as Flint, Michigan, or worse. Aubrey Bettencourt, of the California Water Alliance, presents a very provocative report on the topic. My headline for it is: “Don't Drink the Poisoned Water”

Wildfires are becoming more intense, more destructive and more difficult to stop. The fire season is also lengthening. One article discusses that, and another reports on the latest fire.

The Colorado River is in better shape this year and it is not expected that rationing in 2018 will be required, which was the forecast one year ago.

The final section this week includes President Trump's press conference on infrastructure of August 15, and more on the theme “If China can do it, so can we.”

Drought Recovery: Just Getting Wet Can Be Deceptive

Why Rain Doesn't Signal the End of a Drought

[Kate Wheeling](#)

August 9, 2017

<https://psmag.com/environment/why-rain-doesnt-signal-the-end-of-a-drought>

*After [several years](#) of [debilitating drought](#), California experienced this year its [wettest winter](#) on record. Water returned to California's rivers and reservoirs, the [Sierra Nevadas](#) were buried beneath a near-record snowpack, and Governor Jerry Brown lifted the drought emergency across the majority of the state. But while the drought may have ended, recovery has likely just begun for the state's ecosystems. A [new study](#), published today in *Nature*, is one of the first to zero in on the factors that determine how long it takes for an ecosystem to return to pre-drought levels of photosynthesis and*

growth.

"When we think about drought impacts on ecosystems or on forests, we tend to stop paying attention once the rainfall returns to normal, once the drought from a climate perspective is done," says [William Anderegg](#), an assistant professor at the University of Utah and an author on the study. "We hadn't really zoomed in on the recovery period as a key piece of an ecosystem's resilience to changes in climate."

To fill in this gap, Anderegg and his colleagues used data collected from satellites and land-based observation sites to estimate photosynthesis rates around the globe and find out which ecosystems recovered faster after droughts. They also wanted to pinpoint which factors controlled the pace of recovery. The team found that temperature and precipitation had a large effect on recovery times. Wetter conditions, like those that followed California's most recent drought, sped up recovery, while both hot or cold temperature extremes slowed recovery down.

[NASA says Land is taking longer to recover from Drought](#)

August 15, 2017

Written by Andrew Good

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory

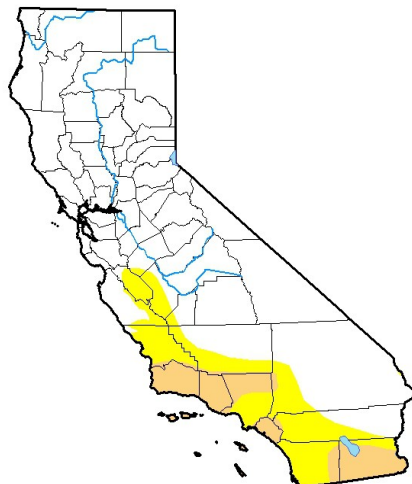
<http://www.clarksvilleonline.com/2017/08/15/nasa-says-land-taking-longer-recover-drought/>

Pasadena, CA – As global temperatures continue to rise, droughts are expected to become more frequent and severe in many regions during this century.

A new study with NASA participation finds that land ecosystems took progressively longer to recover from droughts in the 20th century, and incomplete drought recovery may become the new normal in some areas, possibly leading to tree death and increased emissions of greenhouse gases.

U.S. Drought Monitor and Reservoir Graph

U.S. Drought Monitor California



August 15, 2017
(Released Thursday, Aug. 17, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	77.86	22.14	8.24	0.04	0.00	0.00
Last Week 08-08-2017	77.86	22.14	8.24	1.06	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 05-16-2017	76.47	23.53	8.24	1.06	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-03-2017	18.07	81.93	67.61	54.02	38.17	18.31
Start of Water Year 08-27-2016	0.00	100.00	83.59	62.27	42.80	21.04
One Year Ago 08-16-2016	0.00	100.00	83.59	59.02	42.80	21.04

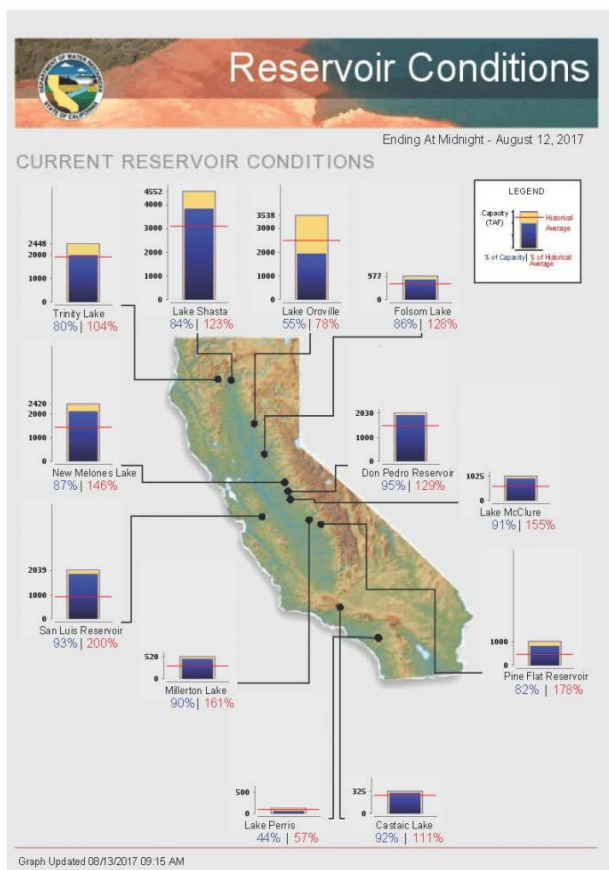
Intensity:
■ D0 Abnormally Dry ■ D3 Extreme Drought
■ D1 Moderate Drought ■ D4 Exceptional Drought
■ D2 Severe Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
Jessica Blunden
NCEI/NOAA



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>



Oroville Dam Update

Videos

Oroville Spillway Update August 10, 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m3VyLdK9pU&list=PLEod6x87Tu6eVFnsyEtQeOVbxvSWYwPlx&index=2>

Published on Aug 11, 2017

Progress is being made at the Lake Oroville Spillways around the clock. Crews continue to work day and night to clean and prepare the remaining rock, while rebar and stay-forms are placed where rock has already been prepared. Structural concrete is being poured in many sections of the upper and lower chute, and roller compacted concrete continues to be placed at night when temperatures are cooler.

Oroville Spillway Update August 15, 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cufBV0pf8YQ&list=PLEod6x87Tu6eVFnsyEtQeOVbxvSWYwPlx&index=1>

Published on Aug 16, 2017

As the intensity of summer temperatures begins to wane, roller-compacted concrete (RCC) is now being placed during daylight hours. The RCC is compacted with road rollers and vibro plates while contraction joints are created using metal strips. The rebar frame is installed for the new spillway wall and concrete continues being poured.

Money and the Spillway: Who Will Pay Whom?

As the report immediately below makes clear, it is no longer clear that the Federal government will provide the quarter million dollars authorized by the Trump administration's FEMA granted a couple of months ago. Why? Because the question has been raised that if some form of “negligence” was the cause of the collapse of the spillway then FEMA will not cover it, since they only cover “emergency disasters” like flood-caused damage. As the article makes clear that question is now on the table.

Trump administration sends payout for Oroville Dam crisis. Could more be on the way?

By Ryan Sabalow

August 09, 2017

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/state/california/water-and-drought/article166330867.html#storylink=cpy>

Federal disaster officials have agreed to chip in \$22.8 million to help California pay the estimated \$500 million cost of the Oroville Dam crisis.

Victor Inge, a spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said Wednesday that the reimbursement is to cover some costs associated with the emergency as well as for removing the massive pile of debris that washed down from the spillway and plugged the Feather River channel below the dam.

Inge said the state's requests for reimbursement still are being reviewed, and additional payouts could take several more months.

It has been uncertain whether Donald Trump's administration would agree to reimburse California after February's spillway crisis at the country's tallest dam. The state has asked the federal government to pay up to 75 percent of the costs of the emergency and ongoing repair and recovery efforts.

The Trump administration approved a disaster declaration in the spring that would make the state eligible for millions of dollars in emergency funding, [but a state official warned lawmakers in May](#) that how much the feds pay could depend on whether the federal government concludes the state properly maintained the dam's spillway before it crumbled.

“Was this deferred maintenance?” Bill Croyle, the then-acting DWR director, asked members of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. “Is there a maintenance issue here, because they're not going to cover that. If it's an emergency response, they're going to cover.”

A recently released federal inspection report further illustrates the extent to which officials were caught off guard by the crisis. In late 2014, federal inspectors said it was so unlikely the main spillway would crumble that there wasn't need for further studies to plan for that emergency scenario.

Federal inspectors concluded that, based on engineering studies, inspections and other geo-technical information they reviewed, the main spillway chute was “in good condition, and the underlying rock is very competent.” “Competent” is a term that engineers and geologists use to describe the ability of

rock to resist erosion.

Should Oroville Dam evacuees get state payment? Suit seeks class-action status

By Ryan Sabalow

August 11, 2017 2:27 PM

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/state/california/water-and-drought/article166798002.html>

Could California give a cash payout to the 188,000 residents who frantically evacuated in February's Oroville Dam crisis?

That's the end goal of a lawsuit filed Friday in Butte County Superior Court by evacuees Francis Bechtel, Jacob Klein, Chantel Ramirez and Denise Johnson.

Their suit seeking class-action status alleges that the state Department of Water Resources negligently allowed maintenance woes at the nation's tallest dam to fester, according to their Los Angeles attorney, Patrick McNicholas.

DWR's Joel Ledesma provides Oroville Dam crisis overview at Water Conference

By [California Water News Daily](#) on August 14, 2017

<http://californiawaternewsdaily.com/drought/dwrs-joel-ledesma-provides-oroville-dam-crisis-overview-at-water-conference/>

Speaking to a crowd of more than 300 attendees at Friday's San Bernardino County (SBC) Water Conference, Joel Ledesma, deputy director, State Water Project with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), detailed the events leading up to February's Oroville Dam disaster, the crisis itself and the some of the specifics surrounding the event. But the majority of his comments focused on the management of disaster, partnerships with other agencies and how the DWR (and other agencies) are looking to better plan for future disasters. Ledesma spoke from a position of authority and experience having served as an incident commander during the prolonged disaster.

New Water Storage Construction-- A Step Forward

The following are a mishmash of articles on developments toward the construction of new dams and water storage facilities in the state. Recall that a part of the the water-drought ballot issue in 2014 was dedicated to new storage facilities. Now, almost three years later the commission established by Governor Brown to make decisions on what to fund is almost ready to act.

While any new dams and storage capability will take up to a decade to build, in that decade the population of the state is expected to increase by several millions more. And within a decade or two or three, the state will be home to more than 50 million people. There are 39 million now. The long-term policy on water by either the state government, or by those with a more narrow focus on a few dams, is not viable. Only in the context of rapid re-industrialization of the nation, the building of nuclear power plants and a few dozen desalination plants do we begin to address reality. The very long-term requires, perhaps, artificial ionization of the atmosphere to produce precipitation, and the continental water management system called the North American Water and Power Alliance.

Here are a sampling of the articles on the new storage projects. All articles are excerpts.

New dams coming to California? A dozen projects seek \$2.7 billion in state funding

By [Paul Rogers](#)

Bay Area News Group

August 15, 2017

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/08/15/new-dams-coming-to-california-a-dozen-projects-seek-2-7-billion-in-state-funding/>

During the drought, Californians often asked why the state wasn't building more reservoirs. On Tuesday, the state finally began taking a major step toward that goal, unveiling a list of 12 huge new water projects — from massive new dams in the north to expanded groundwater banks in the south — that will compete for \$2.7 billion in state bond funding for new water storage projects.

The money comes from [Proposition 1](#), a \$7.5 billion water bond overwhelmingly passed by voters in November 2014 during the depths of the state's historic 2011-2016 drought.

Monday was the deadline for water agencies to submit applications for storage projects to the [California Water Commission](#), an agency in Sacramento run by a nine-member board appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The commission will decide by June 2018 which projects receive bond funding, as well as how much, if any, each will receive, after rating them on their public benefits.

As expected, there is more demand than money. All 12 projects would cost roughly \$13.1 billion to construct — five times as much money as is available under the bond. That means some won't get built, and others will need to find the bulk of their funding from federal or local sources — which could include raising water rates or taxes, which local voters may or may not approve.

The list of applicants includes many ideas that have been around for years. Among them:

- *Sites Reservoir: A proposed \$5 billion reservoir in Colusa County, roughly 100 miles north of Napa, the reservoir would be built "off stream" in a valley and would divert water from the Sacramento River, holding 1.8 million acre feet. That's enough water for the needs of 9 million people a year. It would rank Sites as the seventh largest reservoir in the state, roughly the size of San Luis between Gilroy and Los Banos.*
- *Los Vaqueros: The Contra Costa Water District is proposing to raise the earthen dam at Los Vaqueros reservoir by 55 feet, increasing the reservoir's storage capacity from 160,000 acre feet to 275,000-acre feet, enough water to meet the annual needs of 1.4 million people. The \$914 million project has a dozen Bay Area partners that would put up some of the money and receive some of the water as drought insurance. Among them are the Santa Clara Valley Water District, East Bay Municipal Utility District and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The project was endorsed Monday by a coalition of six prominent environmental groups — including the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society and Planning and Conservation League — because some of the water would go to Central Valley wetland refuges for ducks, geese and other wildlife, in addition to people and farms.*
- *Pacheco Pass: The Santa Clara Valley Water District is hoping to build a new reservoir in southern Santa Clara County near Pacheco Pass, along with a dam up to 300 feet high. The reservoir, which would cost roughly \$900 million, would hold 130,000 acre-feet of water — enough to meet the water needs of 650,000 people for a year. The project would replace an existing small reservoir of 6,000 acre-feet that is used to recharge farmers' groundwater.*

- *Temperance Flat: The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has proposed building a 665-foot-high dam on the San Joaquin River in the Sierra foothills in Fresno County. The \$3 billion project, which would construct the second-tallest dam in California, behind Oroville Dam, would create a reservoir of 1.3 million acre-feet, enough water for 6.5 million people a year.*
- *Semitropic: The groundwater district near Bakersfield, which stores water for agencies from the Bay Area to Los Angeles, has proposed an expansion.*
- *Kern Fan: The Irvine Ranch Water District in Irvine, which serves 380,000 residents of Orange County, is proposing to build a \$171 million groundwater storage project at the south end of the Kern River.*
- *San Diego: The city of San Diego, which wants to produce one-third of its water by 2035 from recycled wastewater, is planning a \$1.2 billion project to purify it and deliver it to Miramar Reservoir.*
- *Centennial Reservoir: The Nevada Irrigation District in Grass Valley is proposing building a 275-foot-tall dam and 110,000 acre-foot reservoir on the Bear River near Colfax in Placer County.*

Under the terms of the initiative, the state will pay up to 50 percent of each storage project it funds. The commission will evaluate the applications, some of which are hundreds of pages long and which cost millions of dollars in engineering studies, computer modeling and other work to compile. Once the money is handed out, it could take up to 10 years for agencies to find the rest of the money, complete engineering studies, acquire land and take other steps to finish the projects.

From the Bureau of Reclamation on the Sites Reservoir:

Offstream storage project in Northern California takes critical step forward

Submittal of application to the California Water Commission for Prop 1 funds and release of draft environmental review documents

Media Contact: Erin Curtis, 916-978-5100

Janet Barbieri, Sites Project Authority, 530-919-9306

For Release: August 14, 2017

<https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=60298>

MAXWELL, Calif. —The Sites Project Authority (Authority) today has submitted its application to the California Water Commission for Proposition 1 Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) funding for the Sites Reservoir Project. This important milestone marks substantial project momentum, as demonstrated by the over 170 organizations, agencies, businesses and elected officials that support the project. Representing labor, business, water and agricultural interests, and various local and statewide agencies, as well as several cities and counties, this diverse coalition views Sites as a viable, modern solution to securing statewide water supplies while benefitting critical ecosystems.

In another step forward for project planning, the Authority, the state lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, and U.S. Bureau Reclamation (Reclamation), the federal lead agency

under National Environmental Policy Act, have also posted a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) for public review and are accepting comments through November 13, 2017.

An extensive interview with Jim Watson, general manager of the Sites project is found here:

Agreements in Place to Fund Largest California Reservoir Proposal

The Sites Reservoir project in Colusa County has funding commitments from 32 water agencies throughout California. But the developers still plan to seek state bond funds to leverage environmental benefits.

by [Matt Weiser](#)

August 15, 2017

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/water/community/2017/08/15/agreements-in-place-to-fund-largest-california-reservoir-proposal>

Yet Jim Watson, general manager of the Sites project, said he still hopes to secure state bond funds for the project. This is because the money would not only reduce costs for the water investors but also secure a role for Sites as a next-generation water storage reservoir that also benefits endangered species.

Water Deeply recently interviewed Watson about how the Sites project crossed this funding hurdle, and why the project is still a good candidate for state bond funds.



Cattle graze in the Sites Valley, location of the proposed Sites Reservoir, near Maxwell, Calif. After building several dams, water would be pumped into the valley from the Sacramento River during wet years. The 1.8 million-acre-foot project has enough funding commitments from water agencies to proceed toward construction, but organizers also plan to seek state bond funds. (Rich Pedroncelli, AP)

ACWA Study Highlights New Approaches to Water Storage

By *Emily Allshouse*

August 7, 2017

Water News

<https://www.acwa.com/news/acwa-study-highlights-new-approaches-water-storage/>

ACWA has released a [technical study](#) that highlights how investments in 21st century water infrastructure could provide tools to bring much-needed resiliency and flexibility to California's water supply system.

The study by MBK Engineers modeled real-world capabilities of several proposed storage projects. The findings suggest that adding storage assets to the system and operating them in an integrated way would result in significant value, including new water available to meet the coequal goals of improving ecosystem health and water supply reliability, enhanced groundwater recharge capabilities, protection of existing water supplies, and a more resilient water system for both the environment and water users.

The study and an eight-page briefing piece are available on ACWA's website [here](#).

Sites Reservoir Supporters Want \$1.6 Billion From Water Bond

By [Amy Quinton](#)

Monday, August 14, 2017 | Sacramento, CA

[http://www.capradio.org/articles/2017/08/14/sites-reservoir-supporters-want-\\$16-billion-from-water-bond/#.WZGvx5EXfYo.twitter](http://www.capradio.org/articles/2017/08/14/sites-reservoir-supporters-want-$16-billion-from-water-bond/#.WZGvx5EXfYo.twitter)



If built, Sites Reservoir would flood this 14,000 acre landscape near Maxwell, CA.

Photo / Curtis Jerome Haynes

This week is the application deadline for projects requesting funding from the \$7.5 billion Proposition 1 water bond that California voters approved in 2014.

Supporters of Sites Reservoir, which would be located an hour northwest of Sacramento, say they are asking for \$1.6 billion from the bond. That's more than half of the money in the bond that is set aside for water storage projects in California.

At a capacity of 1.8 million acre-feet, it would be the largest reservoir built in California since 1979. An acre foot is about enough water for an average California household for a year.

More than two dozen water agencies have signed on to purchase water and build the \$4.7 billion

reservoir. Fritz Durst, vice-chair of the Sites Reservoir Joint Powers Authority, says the reservoir would be able to capture high flows in the Sacramento River to help provide more water in dry years.

Temperance Flat Dam investment will pay off for California

By Dr. Joaquin Arambula

August 13, 2017 3:37 PM

<http://www.modbee.com/news/article166821472.html>

Temperance Flat will nearly triple storage capacity above Friant Dam and deliver water from the San Joaquin River to farms on the west side, ensuring higher and more reliable flows, and restoring the San Joaquin River back to the levels and flows that once occurred naturally.

Don't Drink the Poisoned Water

A pervasive and deadly element of the state's water supply is addressed in the following excerpted article by the always polemical and ready to fight Aubrey Bettencourt, the executive director of the California Water Alliance.

Flint and California, a painfully parallel water-quality universe

By Aubrey Bettencourt

The Fresno Bee

July 07, 2017 2:49 PM

<http://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article160193829.html#storylink=cpy>

Flint, Michigan, and its 100,000 citizens exist in one universe; California's Central Valley and its population of nearly a million cling to survival in another. Both have economic woes. Both suffer a deadly water supply made toxic with lead. Beyond that, all comparison ends.

Flint, Michigan, and its 100,000 citizens exist in one universe; California's Central Valley and its population of nearly a million cling to survival in another. Both have economic woes. Both suffer a deadly water supply made toxic with lead. Beyond that, all comparison ends.

First, there's Flint. Rightly, consider the tragedy that befell that broadly poor and disadvantaged Michigan community just three years ago. As [reported](#) recently, "In April 2014, to save money, the Michigan city decided to take its water from the [Flint] river instead of Lake Huron and created a still-ongoing hell that affected its entire population of 100,000."

In one case, Flint, state and federal governments saw a problem, punished those responsible and are working to fix it. In the other, California, a million children and adults still suffer.

There is no parallel justice or outcome for many small, rural Central Valley towns located in a triangular arc between Bakersfield, Fresno and Interstate 5. Like Flint, an estimated million people live at ground zero with a drinking water supply contaminated with a toxic brew of arsenic, lead, radon, selenium and hexavalent chromium-6 at levels far more potent and harmful than that found in Flint's faucets.

Even more deadly problems than drinking from contaminated wells face as many as 15,000 other Californians: They have no water at all. Hundreds of domestic wells in the triangle are dry due to a combination of the 2012–2016 drought and reduced state and federal water deliveries that forced local communities and farmers to turn to pumping deeper and deeper groundwater reserves.

For decades, California and the federal government have ignored these communities and their toxic water supplies. There have been no criminal investigations, no evoking of the Clean Water Act by EPA to order cleanup of water sources, no largess of millions of dollars thrown at the problem by a concerned legislature or Congress as there was for Flint.

Michigan's Flint, California's Oakland and the Central Valley represent contrasting views into what will become a national problem for this generation to solve. In one case, state and federal governments saw a problem, punished those responsible and are working to fix it. In the other, a million children and adults still suffer.

Neither the State of California nor California politicians – certainly not the EPA or U.S. Congress – are stepping up to solve their problems.

Millions of our fellow citizens live in third-world conditions without clean drinking water, with thousands more denied any water at all. Men, women and children – entire communities – have demonstrable health problems rooted in governmental inaction. More become sick every day.

This should be our collective concern and our collective goal: to recognize their plight and undertake an immediate solution.

A moral imperative exists for all of California and the U.S. to provide its citizens with reliable, clean, healthful water in California, just as the state and federal government did in Michigan.

(Aubrey Bettencourt is the executive director of the California Water Alliance, a statewide water policy nonprofit that advocates for the water needs of California families, cities, businesses, farmers and the environment. Follow @AubBettencourt and visit CaliforniaWaterAlliance.org for more information.)

Wildfires

Wildfires in the American West blaze hotter, fiercer and longer than ever before

[Living on Earth](#)

August 15, 2017 · 2:00 PM EDT

Writer [Adam Wernick](#)

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-08-15/wildfires-american-west-blaze-hotter-fiercer-and-longer-ever>

This new, alarming situation has several causes, and a new book lays them out. It's called "[Land On Fire: The New Reality of Wildfire in the West](#)," by nature writer Gary Ferguson.

“Our landscapes throughout the country, but especially in the American West, have been shaped by fire for thousands of years,” Ferguson says. “Everything we see — the shapes of the trees, the way they're clustered, the plants that grow there, the animals that exist — has been shaped by fire.”

In the last 15 to 20 years, however, a different kind of fire has been roaring across the West, Ferguson says. “These are not the natural stand maintenance fires that burned across thousands of years every

10 or 12 years to clean the forest and stem disease,” he explains. “These are bigger and hotter. They're coming more often and they're having a pretty big consequence to both the landscape and the communities.”

Wildfires once took hold only during hot, dry summer months. This year in the United States, more than 2 million acres of land were burned before the first day of spring. The US has experienced a dozen “megafires” — gigantic fire events of 100,000 acres or more — in 12 of the last 15 years. “That’s a profound difference [compared with] what was going on in the late 20th century,” Ferguson warns.

Since 1972, fire season has grown by about 75 days in the West. In fact, Ferguson says, some places in the Southwest are nearly to the point where they're having fires all year long.

South Fork Fire closes campgrounds, trails in Yosemite

By Mark Evan Smith

[*msmith@sierrastar.com*](mailto:msmith@sierrastar.com)

August 16, 2017 9:59 AM

[*http://www.sierrastar.com/news/local/article167514512.html*](http://www.sierrastar.com/news/local/article167514512.html)

A growing blaze in Yosemite National Park, near the community of Wawona, has forced the closure of multiple campgrounds and periodic closures of one of the park’s well-traveled roads.

The South Fork Fire, which began early Sunday, grew to 2,296 acres with 5% contained Wednesday afternoon.

Located about a mile east of Wawona, more than 250 personnel, alongside at least 10 aircraft and numerous engines are at work to control the flames.



Colorado River: No Rationing Next Year

US: 'Zero' chance of Colorado River water shortage in 2018

By KEN RITTER and DAN ELLIOTT
Associated Press

August 15, 2017

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/APFN_US_WESTERN_WATER_LAKE_MEAD?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

LAS VEGAS (AP) -- Heavy winter snows in the Rocky Mountains have rescued the thirsty Western U.S. for another year.

U.S. water managers said Tuesday there will be no water cutbacks in 2018 for millions of residents and farmers served by the Lake Mead reservoir on the Colorado River that lies behind the Hoover Dam.

"The projection indicates there is no chance of shortage in 2018," said Rose Davis, spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. "Zero."

January water levels are expected to be 8 feet (2.5 meters) above the point that triggers a drought-shortage declaration on the closely watched lake, according to a key 24-month projection by the water system management agency.

The report is a turnabout from a year ago, when the agency projected a 50-50 chance the lake level would fall just below the shortage point of 1,075 feet (330 meters) above sea level.

Feature: Infrastructure and How To Do It

President Trump once again spoke about infrastructure on August 15, though the only thing the media reported was the hysterical media attacking him on Charlottesville.

Trump signs order to speed infrastructure construction

*By JOAN LOWY and MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press*

August 15, 2017

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_TRUMP_INFRASTRUCTURE?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Donald Trump said Tuesday he has signed a new executive order intended to make more efficient the federal permitting process for construction of transportation, water and other infrastructure projects without harming the environment.

Describing his action, Trump said projects will still be subjected to environmental safeguards.

"It's going to be quick, it's going to be a very streamlined process," Trump said. "And by the way, if it doesn't meet environmental safeguards, we're not going to approve it. Very simple. We're not going to approve it."

"We used to have the greatest infrastructure anywhere in the world. And today we're like a third-world country," Trump said, using a term referring to the economically developing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Well said, Mr. President. Perhaps your administration should take a lesson from China on the subject.

China Spends More on Infrastructure Than the U.S. and Europe Combined

Western countries put less money into roads and bridges now than they did before the global financial crisis.

By Peter Coy

June 15, 2016, 1:00 AM PDT

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-15/china-spends-more-on-infrastructure-than-the-u-s-and-europe-combined>

Despite a crying need for better infrastructure, investment in it has fallen in 10 major economies, including the U.S., since the financial crisis, according to a [new study](#) by the McKinsey Global Institute. Meanwhile, China is still going gangbusters on roads, bridges, sewers, and everything else that makes a country run.

"China spends more on economic infrastructure annually than North America and Western Europe combined," according to the report published on Wednesday.

The U.S. federal government actually now spends zero net on infrastructure, after depreciation of the value of the existing infrastructure is taken into account.

Another article making the same point as the one immediately above was included in the August 10 issue of this report:

As Belt and Road Projects Grow, U.S. De-Invests in Infrastructure

[http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/pdf/20170810-California-Drought-\(and-Flood\)-Update.pdf](http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/pdf/20170810-California-Drought-(and-Flood)-Update.pdf)

Let's Rub It In: If China Can Do It So Can the U.S.

Jason Ross

LaRouche PAC New York City Town Hall meeting

August 12, 2017

I want to read a few quotes from President Xi Jinping about what's behind this outlook coming from China, which is coming from LaRouche. So, here's what Xi Jinping had to say in 2017 in Beijing in May at the Belt and Road Forum. President Xi said:

"First, we should build the Belt and Road into a road for peace. The ancient silk routes thrived in times of peace, but lost vigor in times of war. The pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative requires a peaceful and stable environment. We should foster a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation; and we should forge partnerships of dialogue with no confrontation and of friendship rather than alliance. All countries should respect each other's sovereignty, dignity and territorial integrity, each other's development paths and social systems, and each other's core interests and major

concerns....

"Industries are the foundation of economy."

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm]

How many American political leaders, economists do you hear saying "Industry is the foundation of economy"? Is that something that we frequently read in the {Wall Street Journal}? Is that the source of New York's great strength in the country right now, is New York as an industry center? No, right? The money that's supposedly being made all around us in Manhattan and Wall Street is not related to industry; it's related to finance. This is a very different outlook coming from China.

China has, in the past generation, pulled 600 million people out of poverty; this [Fig. 1] is a chart of people living on less than \$1.90 a day. Look at that! 90% poverty in the '70s. Below 10% now. And China has plans to completely eliminate poverty by the end of this decade. No more poverty in China, period; and they're on track towards doing that worldwide. That's a pretty phenomenal achievement. It's a wonderful achievement. Some people say "Well, yeah, but China was starting from a really bad position, so it's easy to catch up. So, this isn't that impressive." Not every country in the world did this; this is very impressive. So, how did they do it, and what are they offering the world now and how can we join in on that?

A couple other statistics about this growth. China, in the years 2011 to 2013, used more cement than the U.S. did in the entire 20th century! They poured more cement in those three years than the United States did in the 20th century. That sounds like a pretty phenomenal statistic to me. They've gone from zero to being the world's leader in high-speed rail. They had no high-speed rail a decade ago; now they've got more than any other country on the planet. They're expecting to double the size of their currently existing high-speed rail by 2025 – absolutely phenomenal. They've got 37 nuclear power plants, 70% of which were built just in the last decade. They've got 20 more under construction.