BAY AREA WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

May 13, 2021

Correspondence and media coverage of interest between April 26, 2021 and May 10, 2021

Correspondence

From: Environmental and Fishing Non-Governmental Agencies
To: Secretary Haaland, Department of the Interior
Secretary Raimondo, Department of Commerce
Date: May 7, 2021
Subject: Request of Biden Administration no to endorse so-called "voluntary agreements" Water supplies, and the length of the Design Drought

From: Nicole Sandkulla, BAWSCA CEO/General Manager
To: Steve Ritchie, Asst. General Manager, SFPUC Water Enterprise
Date: May 5, 2021
Subject: San Francisco's 2020 Urban Water Management Plan – BAWSCA Comments

From: Environmental and Fishing Non-Governmental Agencies
To: Sophie Maxwell, SFPUC Commission President, and Commissioners
Date: May 5, 2021
Subject: Request for timely actions to address population and demand projections, alternative Water supplies, and the length of the Design Drought

From: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Date: April 29, 2021
Subject: PRESS RELEASE: SFPUC Calling for 10 Percent Voluntary Irrigation Reduction As Dry Conditions Continue in California

From: Peter Drekmeier, Policy Director, Tuolumne River Trust
To: Sophie Maxwell, SFPUC Commission President, and Commissioners
Date: April 26, 2021
Subject: April 27 Agenda Item 7: Discussion of the Commission Water Workshops

Media Coverage

Drought/Water Supply Conditions

Date: May 10, 2021
Source: Maven
Article: Governor Newsom Expands Drought Emergency To Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Tulare Lake Watershed Counties

Date: May 10, 2021
Source: The Mercury News
Article: Hosing down the driveway? Why California has no statewide water wasting rules as it heads into a new drought

Date: May 8, 2021
Source: Sacramento Bee
Article: 'We got unlucky.' Why melting Sierra snow won't save California from extreme drought

Drought/Water Supply Conditions, cont'd.

Date: May 6, 2021
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: Entire Bay Area has gone from 'severe' to 'extreme' drought levels in just 2 weeks

Date: May 6, 2021
Source: NBC Bay Area
Article: Eye Opening 20 Year Drought Data

Date: May 3, 2021
Source: Public Policy Institute of California
Article: California's Latest Drought in 4 Charts

Date: May 3, 2021
Source: California Department of Water Resources
Article: State Develops Tool and Recommendations to Support Those Most Vulnerable to Drought

Date: May 3, 2021
Source: AgNet
Article: State Senate lays Out $3.4 Billion Drought Relief Package

Date: April 30, 2021
Source: Sacramento Bee
Article: Will Gavin Newsom make emergency drought declaration statewide? Valley lawmakers say it's a must

Date: April 29, 2021
Source: KPIX
Article: South Bay Water Officials Draw On Distant Reserves, Weigh Options As Drought Deepens

Date: April 29, 2021
Source: The Guardian
Article: From dust bowl to California drought: a climate scientist on the lessons we still haven't Learned

Date: April 29, 2021
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: The Bay Area has turned red on this map showing drought conditions

Climate Change:

Date: May 3, 2021
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: Bay Area Democrats want to pass climate change laws. Can they deliver?

Date: April 28, 2021
Source: Stanford News
Article: Q&A with Stanford experts: Why is climate change at the center of a $2.3 trillion federal plan?

Water Infrastructure:

Date: May 10, 2021
Source: Maven
Article: Governor Newsom Announces $5.1 Billion Package for Water Infrastructure and Drought Response as Part of $100 Billion California Comeback Plan

Date: April 23, 2021
Source: California Department of Water Resources
Article: DWR Awards $26 Million in Grants to Support Critically Overdrafted Groundwater Basins

Water Policy:

Date: April 30, 2021
Source: Western Water
Editorial: Pandemic Lockdown Exposes The Vulnerability Some Californians Face Keeping Up With Water Bills

SFPUC:

Date: April 27, 2021
Source: San Francisco Chronicle
Article: Mayor Breed taps City Attorney Herrera to lead agency rolled by S.F. City hall corruption Scandal

Date: April 26, 2021
Source: KTVU Fox 2
Article: Mayor nominates City Attorney Herrera to lead SFPUC

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May 7, 2021

Secretary Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Secretary Raimondo
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Haaland and Secretary Raimondo:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge the Biden Administration not to endorse so-called "voluntary agreements" that propose inadequate environmental requirements for California's San Francisco Bay-Delta watershed ("Bay-Delta"), which some agencies of the State are negotiating behind closed doors with numerous water districts but without participation from conservation and environmental justice organizations, fishing industry groups, or Native American tribes.

We understand that these negotiations are being pursued based on the wholly inadequate proposed Framework for voluntary agreements announced by the State in February 2020. That Framework would utterly fail to protect and restore the health of the Bay-Delta watershed and the communities and jobs that depend on it, and it has not been substantively improved during the 14 months since it was released. We urge the Biden Administration to resist calls by water districts and State officials to endorse these voluntary agreements.

The Bay-Delta water quality standards that are being implemented today are a quarter-century old. Improved water quality protections are urgently needed, are long overdue, and are required by both state and federal law. California's salmon runs in the Central Valley, which sustain thousands of fishing jobs across the West Coast and are of inestimable cultural importance to tribal peoples of this area, continue to decline.[1] Harmful algal blooms are proliferating in the Delta,[2] threatening public health for communities like Stockton, which already bear the brunt of environmental injustice. Longfin Smelt and other native species that were once some of the most abundant species in the estuary are now trending towards extinction.[3] The Obama Administration concluded in 2016 that protections for endangered and threatened species in the Bay-Delta watershed must be strengthened to avoid extinction and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Yet the 2020 Framework for voluntary agreements, which is guiding the current negotiations, fails to provide adequate instream flows and other critical environmental protections for fish and wildlife and lacks adequate consideration of the impacts of impaired water quality on communities in the Delta and Central Valley tribes. Moreover, negotiations over Bay-Delta voluntary agreements over the past decade have unacceptably delayed the adoption of updated water quality standards that would actually protect fish and wildlife and water quality in the Delta.

Rather than endorsing these backroom negotiations that are based on a fundamentally flawed Framework, our organizations strongly support the Biden Administration withdrawing the Trump Administration's 2019 biological opinions and fully engaging in a science-based, transparent, public process at the State Water Resources Control Board to adopt and implement improved water quality standards for the Bay-Delta watershed.

Thank you for consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

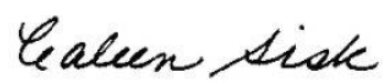
Rachel Zwillinger
Defenders of Wildlife

Doug Obegi
Natural Resources Defense Council

Brandon Dawson
Sierra Club California

[1] *See* California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Central Valley Chinook Population Database Report, updated April 22, 2020, available online at: https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=84381&inline.
[2] *See* Dr. Peggy Lehman, California Department of Water Resources, Presentation to the Delta Independent Science Board, December 11, 2021.
[3] California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2021. Table of Monthly Abundance Indices from the Fall Midwater Trawl, available online at: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/delta/data/fmwt/indices.asp.

John McManus
Golden State Salmon Association



Caleen Sisk
Winnemem Wintu Tribe

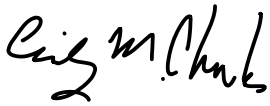
Jonathan Rosenfield
San Francisco Baykeeper

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla
Restore the Delta

Mark Rockwell
Northern California Council Fly Fishers International

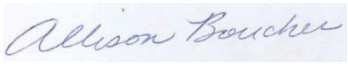
Chris Shutes
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Danielle Cloutier
American Sportfishing Association



Cindy Charles
Golden West Women Flyfishers

Regina Chichizola
Save California Salmon



Allison Boucher
Tuolumne River Conservancy

Mike Conroy
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

Gary Bobker
The Bay Institute

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BAWSCA
Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation Agency

May 5, 2021

Mr. Steve Ritchie
Assistant General Manager, Water
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
525 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: **San Francisco's 2020 Urban Water Management Plan – BAWSCA Comments**

Dear Mr. Ritchie,

The Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) appreciates the opportunity to provide public comment on the San Francisco Public Utility Commission (SFPUC) Draft 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). BAWSCA represents the interests of the 26 cities and water agencies in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties that purchase approximately two thirds of their water from the San Francisco Regional Water System (RWS).

This letter presents BAWSCA's findings and recommendations based on our review. UWMPs provide a detailed look at current and future water use and an analysis of water supply reliability under certain drought conditions. BAWSCA's recommendations are intended to help the SFPUC present a more complete picture of system demand and supplies. We hope the Commission will consider them as part of its action.

Findings:

1. The SFPUC has already incorporated the majority of BAWSCA's requested edits as part of its UWMP development.
2. The projected Wholesale Customer purchases in the UWMP does not reflect the additional 6.5 mgd water supply requests of the City of San Jose and the City of Santa Clara.
3. The UWMP presents an estimate of the projected water supply yield for some, but not all, of the projects proposed as part of the SFPUC's Alternative Water Supply Planning Program.
4. The UWMP does not present a water supply reliability scenario that reflects implementation of the Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement (TRVA) as an alternative to the Adopted Bay-Delta Plan.
5. Cutbacks to the Wholesale Customers in drought years under the Bay-Delta Plan scenario are significant and unsustainable. These system-wide shortages indicate that the SFPUC will not meet its established Level of Service Goals to limit rationing to no more than 20% system-wide during droughts should the Bay-Delta Plan be implemented as adopted.

Recommendations:

1. **The SFPUC should reflect the additional purchase requests of the City of San Jose and the City of Santa Clara in its regional water planning efforts and in this**

UWMP. The Cities of San Jose and Santa Clara wish to purchase 6.5 mgd, collectively, 4.5 mgd and 2 mgd, respectively, above their existing contract limit. The SFPUC is aware of these additional purchase requests and has incorporated them into its 2020 Water Supply and Demand Worksheet, which has been developed at the Commission's request. It is therefore appropriate for these additional requests to be included in this comprehensive planning document.

2. **The estimated yield for each individual alternative water supply project should be included in the project description presented in *Section 7.2 (WSIP Dry-Year Water Supply Projects), Section 8.4 (Alternative Water Supply Program),* and *Table 8-1 (WSIP Project Assumptions for RWS Supply Modeling)***. These yield estimates were presented by SFPUC staff to the Commission at its March 26, 2021 workshop on water supply planning. Considering the significant system-wide shortfalls under drought conditions outlined in Section 8, BAWSCA believes it is prudent to characterize each project's contribution to narrowing that gap.
3. **A discussion of the TRVA and the associated modeling results should be included in the UWMP.** This information was presented by SFPUC staff to the Commission at its March 26, 2021 workshop on water supply planning, but is not included in the draft UWMP. This information is important for the water customers' full understanding of the potential water supply reliability of the RWS following implementation of the TRVA and should be included in this comprehensive planning document.

The UWMP presents the important impacts to long-term water supply reliability for the RWS following the implementation of the adopted Phase 1 Bay-Delta Plan. Specifically, the UWMP identifies system-wide shortages as high as 49% in multiple dry years assuming the Bay-Delta Plan is implemented as adopted. This translates to shortages to the Wholesale Customers between 45% and 54% in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th consecutive years of a drought. Cutbacks at these levels would have devastating impacts on the regional economy and would challenge many of the Wholesale Customers' ability to provide water for basic health and safety needs for their existing and planned communities.

The SFPUC has adopted Level of Service Goals to limit rationing to no more than 20% system-wide during droughts. Additionally, the SFPUC has a perpetual obligation to supply the Wholesale Customers with the 184 mgd Supply Assurance. For these reasons, BAWSCA respectfully requests the SFPUC to fully commit to the voluntary agreement process and fund the Alternative Water Supply Planning Program at levels necessary to meet its Level of Service Goals and perpetual obligation to the Wholesale Customers.

Sincerely,

Nicole Sandkulla
CEO/General Manager

cc: Sarah Triolo, SFPUC
Alison Kastama, SFPUC
BAWSCA Board of Directors
BAWSCA Water Management Representatives
Allison Schutte, Hanson Bridgett

May 5, 2021

President Sophie Maxwell and Commissioners
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC)
525 Golden Gate Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102

Via Email

Re: Request for timely actions to address population and demand projections, alternative water supplies, and the length of the Design Drought.

Dear President Maxwell and Commissioners:

On behalf of the above environmental and fishing groups, we would like to thank you for hosting the three workshops focusing on the Tuolumne River. The depth of information provided and productive dialogue were refreshing.

We request that you take three immediate actions to advance some of the issues identified at the March 26 workshop focusing on water supply and demand. They are:

1) Direct your staff to produce an appendix for the SFPUC and BAWSCA Urban Water Management Plans (UWMP) that analyzes the impact on water supply of reducing the Design Drought to 7.5 years. This could be inserted easily into the UWMPs, and if in the future the SFPUC were to adopt this policy change, water agencies could simply use figures from the appendix in their Water Supply Assessments and other planning documents. We believe the BAWSCA agencies would support this addition, as it would make the approval of future housing projects much less problematic.

2) Commit to developing alternative water supplies, and incorporate the yield into the SFPUC's water supply projections in the UWMP. The current draft does not commit the SFPUC to developing any new water supplies for the next 25 years. Recycling water provides the additional benefit of reducing the nutrient load from wastewater entering the Bay, and with stricter limits on the horizon, developing recycled water projects would give the SFPUC a jumpstart on adhering to future effluent reduction requirements.

3) Commission a peer review of San Francisco's and BAWSCA's population and demand projections. The review should explore why past UWMP demand projections were off by as much as 33%, and what has been done to correct over-projections. It should explain how population forecasts in the UWMP were determined, and why they are so much greater than those produced by the California Department of Finance. It also should explain why the demand projections in the UWMP are so far afield from those forecasted by the SFPUC's financial department.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Peter Drekmeier
Tuolumne River Trust

Heinrich Albert
Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter

Carol Steinfeld
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Kristina Pappas
San Francisco League of Conservation Voters

Jeff Miller
Alameda Creek Alliance

Eric Wesselman
Friends of the River

Chris Shutes
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Cindy Charles
Golden West Women Flyfishers

Allison Boucher
Tuolumne River Conservancy

Mark Rockwell
Fly Fishers International, Northern California Council

Mike Conroy
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Institute for Fisheries Resources

Dick Allen
Lake Merced Task Force

Lauren Weston
Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet

Greg Reis
The Bay Institute

Laura Allen
Greywater Action

Elizabeth Dougherty
Wholly H2O

Larry Collins
San Francisco Community Fishing Association
San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association

John Buckley
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center

Stuart Gross
San Francisco Herring Association

Konrad Fisher
Water Climate Trust

Bill Uyeki
Peninsula Fly Fishers

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NEWS RELEASE

SFPUC Contact:
Will Reisman
415-551-4346
wreisman@sfwater.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 29, 2021

SFPUC Calling for 10 Percent Voluntary Irrigation Reduction As Dry Conditions Continue in California

Measure will bolster agency's existing conservation and water reuse efforts

San Francisco, CA – With dry weather conditions continuing to persist throughout California, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is asking for a 10 percent voluntary reduction in use from its irrigation customers and a similar request for City departments, while reminding San Franciscans to maintain efficient use and avoid water waste indoors and outside.

"This year is the second dry year in a row for the State of California and we must do what we can to make the most of our water supplies in case this trend continues," said Mayor London N. Breed. "Thanks to our innovative water policies and strong management, San Francisco is at the forefront of conserving water, but we have to look ahead. The steps we take now to use our water wisely will help us become more resilient and make it through future dry years."

San Franciscans consume an average of 42 gallons of water per day, one of the lowest rates in California and half the state average. Currently, the SFPUC's reservoirs are at 76.8 percent of maximum storage capacity, which is slightly lower than the historical averages of 81 percent at this time of year.

By relying on multiple sources of water supply, the SFPUC protects its customers from potential disruptions in water supply from emergencies, natural disasters and extended drought periods. The SFPUC is mindful about being good stewards of the resources in its care and using our current supplies as efficiently as possible.

"We are fortunate to have multiple sources of water supply, which makes our system more resilient in dry years," said SFPUC Acting General Manager Michael Carlin. "However, we do not know how long this dry weather will last. We also want to be supportive of our communities as we recover from the devastating effects of this pandemic. Therefore, we are asking for small changes for irrigation customers that can make a big difference in stretching our water supply."

The SFPUC is taking measures now like the voluntary 10 percent reduction for its roughly 1,600 irrigation customers and for its City departments to ensure that the water in the agency's reservoirs and groundwater basins lasts through this dry period. The agency continues to work with its retail customers to provide resources and tips on best conservation practices.

The agency offers many resources to encourage efficient water use for customers. These include free onsite irrigation checkups and landscape evaluations, grants, and leak alerts. The SFPUC also offers extensive indoor water-saving assistance, including free replacement of old toilets, rebates for efficient clothes washers and other equipment, and home and business conservation consultations. For more information, residents can visit www.sfpuc.org/savewater

SFPUC customers who register to pay their bills online through MyAccount also can track their water use on a daily or even hourly level to detect water waste. Registration is available at myaccount.sfwater.org/

Additionally, the SFPUC's innovative Leak Alert Program sends automated notifications to single-family homes, multi-family properties, commercial and irrigation accounts with nonstop water use for three-plus days, which indicates that there might be a plumbing leak.

Along with those consumer-focused measures, the SFPUC has been a national leader on water reuse and recycling efforts. Since first supporting a citywide ordinance in 2012, the SFPUC has become a pioneer in onsite water reuse programs, which allow for the collection, treatment, and use of alternate water sources for non-potable applications in individual buildings.

The SFPUC is expanding its water recycling programs, which reuse water for non-drinking purposes such as landscape irrigation, toilet flushing and street cleaning. Despite the pandemic, construction continues on the Westside Enhanced Water Recycling Project, a critical undertaking that is set to be completed in 2022.

The SFPUC provides drinking water to 2.7 million people throughout the Bay Area. The water comes from a combination of sources, including the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite and five reservoirs in the Bay Area. Additionally, since 2017, the SFPUC has been adding groundwater into its blend or sources.

The agency is engaged in an Alternative Supply Planning Program to evaluate all potential sources of future water supply and begin the work of bringing some of those sources online so they may be available in the coming decades. As part of that study, the SFPUC is looking at the feasibility of eight Bay Area and three Sierra Nevada area projects, the majority of which will require partnerships with multiple other entities to accomplish. It is also evaluating three projects within San Francisco.

About the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is a department of the City and County of San Francisco. It delivers drinking water to 2.7 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area, collects and treats wastewater for the City and County of San Francisco, and generates clean power for municipal buildings, residential customers, and businesses. Our mission is to provide our customers with high quality, efficient and reliable water, power, and sewer services in a manner that values environmental and community interests and sustains the resources entrusted to our care. Learn more at www.sfpuc.org

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Tuolumne River Trust

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April 26, 2021

President Sophie Maxwell and Commissioners
SFPUC
525 Golden Gate Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102
Via Email

Re: April 27 Agenda Item 7: Discussion of the Commission Water Workshops.

Dear President Maxwell and Commissioners:

Thank you again for hosting the three workshops focusing on the Tuolumne River. We appreciated the deep dives, and look forward to working with you to achieve the State's co-equal goals of restoring the greater Bay-Delta ecosystem and ensuring reliable water supplies. We're optimistic a balance can be achieved, and we're pleased the Commission will be considering next steps at tomorrow's meeting.

One issue we hope you will consider soon is the possibility of removing one year from the Design Drought. If a decision is made before the Urban Water Management Plans (UWMP) are submitted to the State by July 1, this simple change would make it much easier for San Francisco and the BAWSCA agencies to approve housing projects over the next five years.

Two weeks ago, I attended a Menlo Park City Council meeting where they discussed some process issues for their UWMP. I was pleased to hear their consultant from EKI Environment and Water mention that several BAWSCA agencies had joined TRT in encouraging the SFPUC to use demand projections rather than contractual obligations to represent water demand. The BAWSCA agencies were concerned the higher rationing figures from the initial SFPUC document would provide ammunition for anti-growth advocates to oppose housing projects. By simply using demand projections instead of the sales cap, rationing in Year 3 of a drought was reduced from 55% to 40%.

We now ask you to go a step further and consider removing a year from the Design Drought. The new, improved 7.5-year Design Drought still would be more severe than any drought over the past 1,100 years, based on tree-ring data. Regarding climate change, the SFPUC's water entitlements will likely improve due to earlier runoff, shifting water from the post-April 15 time frame, when the Irrigation Districts are entitled to the first 4,000 cfs, to earlier in the season, when the Districts are entitled to the first 2,350 cfs.

Scenario VII at the March 26 workshop demonstrated that removing a year from the Design Drought would add between 27 and 33 mgd to Total Yield. That's a lot of water, and would reduce potential rationing considerably. This would help remove a substantial barrier to the approval of much-needed housing.

We request that you take up this issue in time to amend the 2020 UWMP, which will guide development decisions for the next five years.

Other Factors that Influence Potential Rationing

In addition to the length of drought planning, several other factors influence potential rationing. These include unimpaired flow requirements, population growth, water demand and the development of alternative water supplies. We believe the population and demand forecasts in the UWMP are highly inflated, and the pace of developing alternative water supplies is extremely slow. We request that the SFPUC schedule a deep dive into these issues to better understand past over-projections and how they might be avoided in the current UWMP.

Population Growth

According to the draft UWMP, between 2005 and 2020 the population of San Francisco grew from 781,806 to 899,732. That amounted to 15% growth over a 15-year period, or 1% per year. The 2020 UWMP is projecting San Francisco's population will grow by 25% over the next 15 years, reaching 1,251,214. That's a substantially higher growth rate of 1.67% per year. Given the increase in outmigration from California in recent years and growing community opposition to development, we believe these projections are unreasonable.

While the UWMP forecasts San Francisco's population will grow by 39% over the next 25 years, the California Department of Finance forecasts growth of only 10%. That's a huge difference, and worthy of analysis.

Between 2005 and 2020 the population of the BAWSCA agencies grew from 1.69 million to 1.86 million. That amounted to 10% growth in population over the 15-year period. The current UWMP is projecting the BAWSCA agencies will grow to 2.19 million by 2035 – a considerably higher growth rate of 18% over the same time period.

While the UWMP forecasts the population of the BAWSCA territory to grow by 31% over the next 25 years, the Department of Finance forecasts the population of the three counties with BAWSCA member agencies (San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda) will grow by only 14%. The UWMP projections are more than twice those of the Department of Finance.

Demand Projections

SFPUC and BAWSCA demand projections have always been highly inflated. Since UWMPs were first required in 2000, demand has been over-projected by an average of 22%. Leading up to the Water System Improvement Program (WSIP) in 2008, demand in the Regional Water System service area was projected to reach 285 mgd by 2018. Actual demand was only 196 mgd, a difference of 31% over the 10-year period.

The main reason demand has decreased so much has been rising water rates, which send a strong price signal to consumers. Water rates have tripled over the past 13 years to pay for the $4.8 billion (plus debt service) incurred by the WSIP. Rates are now expected to increase by another 33% over the next five years.

The SFPUC's water supply division and BAWSCA have been slow to grasp the major role price plays in demand. Most recently, demand projections from the SFPUC's 2015 UWMP were off by 15% in 2020. The SFPUC's financial division has been much more accurate, with good reason. If they were to over-project sales, the SFPUC would face a deficit. The SFPUC's current 10-Year Financial Plan forecasts water sales will remain flat over the next decade. These projections are 8% lower than those assumed in the UWMP.

Following is a table showing the difference between demand projections in the previous four UWMPs and actual demand.

	Difference: Projected vs. Actual			
UWMP Year	2005	2010	2015	2020
2000	3%	22%	33%	32%
2005	NA	20%	31%	31%
2010	NA	NA	22%	21%
2015	NA	NA	NA	15%

Alternative Water Supplies

The SFPUC has identified about 35 mgd of alternative water supplies, but the UWMP assumes none of these potential sources will become available in the next 25 years. It states:

> The capital projects that are under consideration would be costly and are still in the early feasibility or conceptual planning stages. Because these water supply projects would take 10 to 30 years to implement, and because required environmental permitting negotiations may reduce the amount of water that can be developed, the yield from these projects are not currently incorporated into the SFPUC's supply projections.

If the SFPUC were to prioritize the development of these alternative water supplies, they could be available by 2040. This seems worthy of a discussion to determine whether they should be factored into future supply in the UWMP.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Peter Drekmeier
Policy Director

THIS JUST IN … GOVERNOR NEWSOM EXPANDS DROUGHT EMERGENCY TO KLAMATH RIVER, SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AND TULARE LAKE WATERSHED COUNTIES

Maven | May 10, 2021 | From the Office of the Governor:

41 COUNTIES NOW UNDER DROUGHT STATE OF EMERGENCY TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT, REPRESENTING 30 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S POPULATION

Governor Gavin Newsom today significantly expanded his April 21 drought emergency proclamation to include Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Tulare Lake Watershed counties where accelerated action is needed to protect public health, safety and the environment. In total, 41 counties are now under a drought state of emergency, representing 30 percent of the state's population.

Climate change-induced early warm temperatures and extremely dry soils have further depleted the expected runoff water from the Sierra-Cascade snowpack, resulting in historic and unanticipated reductions in the amount of water flowing to major reservoirs, especially in Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Tulare Lake Watershed counties.

"With the reality of climate change abundantly clear in California, we're taking urgent action to address acute water supply shortfalls in northern and central California while also building our water resilience to safeguard communities in the decades ahead," said Governor Newsom. "We're working with local officials and other partners to protect public health and safety and the environment, and call on all Californians to help meet this challenge by stepping up their efforts to save water."

In April, Governor Newsom signed an emergency proclamation directing state agencies to take immediate action to bolster drought resilience across the state and declaring a State of Emergency in Mendocino and Sonoma counties due to severe drought conditions in the Russian River Watershed. Today, the Governor took action to ensure an expedited response to address acute drought impacts in Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Tulare Lake Watershed counties.

Today's drought emergency proclamation adds the following 39 counties: Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, Trinity, Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Joaquin, Shasta, Sierra, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo and Yuba counties. Additionally, the proclamation provides new authority for the existing drought emergency announced on April 21 for Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

Extraordinarily warm temperatures in April and early May separate this critically dry year from all others on California record. California experienced an accelerated rate of snow melt in the Sacramento, Feather and American River watersheds, which feed the major reservoirs of the state and federal water projects. This was exacerbated when much of the snowpack, sitting on very dry ground, seeped into the earth rather than flowing into our rivers and streams and into these reservoirs. Warming temperatures also prompted water diverters below the dams to withdraw their water much earlier and in greater volumes than typical even in other recent critically dry years. These factors reduced expected water supplies by more than 500,000 acre

feet, enough to supply up to one million households with water for a year. The drastic reduction in water supplies means these reservoirs are extremely low for water users, including farmers, and fish and wildlife in the counties the drought proclamation covers.

The Governor's proclamation directs the State Water Board to consider modifying requirements for reservoir releases and diversion limitations to conserve water upstream later in the year to maintain water supply, improve water quality and protect cold water pools for salmon and steelhead. The state of emergency also enables flexibilities in regulatory requirements and procurement processes to mitigate drought impacts and directs state water officials to expedite the review and processing of voluntary transfers of water from one water right holder to another, enabling available water to flow where it is needed most.

The text of today's emergency proclamation can be found here.

The Governor's executive action last month directed state agencies to partner with local water suppliers to promote conservation through the Save Our Water campaign, a critical resources for Californians during the 2012-2016 drought. Some municipalities have already adopted mandatory local water-saving requirements, and many more have called for voluntary water use reductions.

"It's time for Californians to pull together once again to save water," said California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot. "All of us need to find every opportunity to save water where we can: limit outdoor watering, take shorter showers, turn off the water while brushing your teeth or washing dishes. Homeowners, municipalities, and water diverters can help by addressing leaks and other types of water loss, which can account for over 30 percent of water use in some areas."

Actions by the Administration to address drought to date include:

- Identifying water suppliers at extreme financial risk that may need additional support due to the combined impacts of COVID and drought.
- Updating the Department of Water Resources' Dry Well website, which tracks voluntarily reported supply issues by counties.
- Streamlining water transfer processes.
- Issuing letters from the State Water Resources Control Board to water right holders, urging them to plan for potential shortages by reducing water use and adopting practical conservation measures.
- Completing the state's first drinking water needs assessment in which the State Water Board identified small water systems and domestic wells that are failing or at risk of failing to meet the state's drinking water standards. By working toward solutions with these systems, we are improving their drought resiliency.
-

For more tips on saving water, visit www.saveourwater.com

Learn more about current conditions, the state's response and informational resources available to the public at the state's new drought preparedness website.

# # #

Hosing down the driveway? Why California has no statewide water wasting rules as it heads into a new drought

Emergency conservation rules expired in 2017, and Newsom administration hasn't renewed them

The Mercury News | May 10, 2021 | Paul Rogers

ALAMEDA, CA - MAY 4: A person cleans the sidewalk and waters the lawn in the front yard of a house in Alameda California on Tuesday, May 4, 2021.(Ray Chavez/Bay Area News Group)

Anyone who lived through California's last big drought from 2012 to 2016 remembers the rules.

You couldn't water your yard so much that the water ran off into the street or sidewalk. Or hose down a driveway. Hotels had to put up signs telling customers they could choose not to have sheets and towels washed every day. Ornamental fountains were prohibited unless they recycled water. Watering landscaping within 48 hours of rain was forbidden. Cities couldn't water grass on street medians. And if you washed a car with a hose, it had to have a nozzle.

Now California is entering a new drought with dwindling reservoir levels. But so far, there are no statewide prohibitions against wasting water.

The previous rules — which were widely considered common-sense ways to conserve water — expired in November 2017, after former Gov. Jerry Brown lifted the state's emergency drought declaration when soaking winter rains filled reservoirs and caused flooding.

State officials tried to make the rules permanent, with fines of up to $500 for violators. But they quietly dropped the issue in 2018, after lawyers for several water agencies called the rules overly broad and said they infringed on their water rights, hinting at lawsuits.

Some conservation experts say the Newsom administration should put the rules back in place.

“You want to get them out the door now,” said Newsha Ajami, a civil engineer and director of Stanford University’s Urban Water Policy Program. “These are easy things. Every drop of water we save now will be available for us later.”

Some say the state doesn’t need to revisit the rules. They say the decision is best left up to local cities and water agencies, many of which already have some form of water-wasting rules on the books.

“To adopt a statewide mandate by the governor to do something that’s already been done doesn’t seem to be necessarily the most effective use of time and resources,” said Dave Eggerton, executive director of the Association of California Water Agencies, an influential organization that represents 460 water agencies in California, including most of the largest.

But others say even if the rules don’t save large amounts of water by themselves, they remind the public that California is a dry state and water is a precious resource, a mindset that encourages responsible water use across society.

“As we head into another drought, prohibiting water waste seems like a no-brainer,” said Tracy Quinn, director of California urban water policy for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. “This was a missed opportunity.”

Among the urban areas that still have local water-wasting rules in place are the city of San Jose, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, San Francisco, Sacramento and Los Angeles.

But the rules vary by area. Most places haven’t been issuing fines for violators. And state officials say they don’t know how many of California’s 40 million residents are subject to local water-wasting prohibitions and how many aren’t.

The most recent study, done in 2015 by the State Water Resources Control Board, found that 95% of water agencies had local rules banning overwatering landscaping that allowed water to run into the street, sidewalks or other properties. But only 65% required hotels to notify guests they don’t have to have sheets and towels washed daily, and just 40% prohibited watering lawns within 48 hours of rain, while 18% banned watering grass on street medians.

Why the statewide rules were never renewed remains murky.

“The urgency was less intense, because it was raining, and folks had done a real good job reducing their water use,” said Felicia Marcus, former chairwoman of the state water board. “We

got caught up in all the other things we were trying to get done before the end of the Brown administration, and it just didn't get across the finish line."

Lake Oroville in Butte County, California's second-largest reservoir, shown here on April 27, 2021, is just 42% full — half of its historical average for this time of year after two dry winters in a row. (Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

Other sources familiar with the issue said that after the drought ended, Brown was focusing intently on trying to build two giant tunnels under the Delta to deliver water more easily to Southern California, and the threat of lawsuits over the water-wasting rules caused some state officials to back off.

A key moment three years ago revealed how passionate and intense California water debates can become, even over seemingly non-controversial issues.

On Feb. 20, 2018, the state water board, whose members are appointed by the governor, held a hearing to make the rules permanent. Some city water officials quibbled with the particulars.

But attorneys for several powerful water agencies said the rules were tantamount to the state curbing their water rights. They were upset that the water board was citing a provision in the state constitution that prohibits "waste or unreasonable use" of water as the legal basis for the rules, and they worried that if it invoked that authority with the urban water wasting rules, the board would use it in other areas.

Commenting back then, Robert Donlan, an attorney for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, said the rules would set “a dangerous and unnecessary precedent.” Phil Williams, general counsel of Westlands Water District in Fresno, quoted Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” at the public meeting, recounted societal collapse in Iraq and cited Shakespeare, saying “the erosion of our laws results in the erosion of us as a people.”

Jackson Minasian, a lawyer for the Stanford Vina Ranch Irrigation Company, said at the meeting that if the board passed the rules, it might next tell farmers what crops to grow, or cities that they can’t provide water to undocumented immigrants.

Marcus said this week those arguments were overblown and the state water board has won most lawsuits over water rights.

“I think it would be a good idea to revisit the rules,” Marcus said. “You have push-back from water agencies that don’t like being told what to do, but they are pretty common-sense rules.”

Her successor, state water board chairman Joaquin Esquivel, said in an interview that California’s urban residents are still using 16% less water now than they were in 2013. He said state lawmakers have passed laws that will require further conservation in the years ahead, but if the drought worsens, all options are possible.

“It’s not off the table,” Esquivel said. “We need to be conserving. Even though this summer some agencies might not be in an emergency mode, we need to make conservation a way of life. We’re going to need to be doing more.”

# # #

‘We got unlucky.’ Why melting Sierra snow won’t save California from extreme drought
Sacramento Bee | May 8, 2021 | Dale Kasler

California water officials on April 1, 2021, reported the statewide snowpack is just 59% of average for this time of year as the state continues to experience one of the driest years on record.

California’s drought conditions have gone from bad to worse in scarcely a month.

In the weeks following April 1, the traditional end of the rainy season, warm temperatures have burned off most of the Sierra Nevada snowpack and left the state’s water network gasping. Instead of delivering a generous volume of melted snow into California’s rivers and reservoirs, the snowpack has largely evaporated into the air or trickled into the ground.

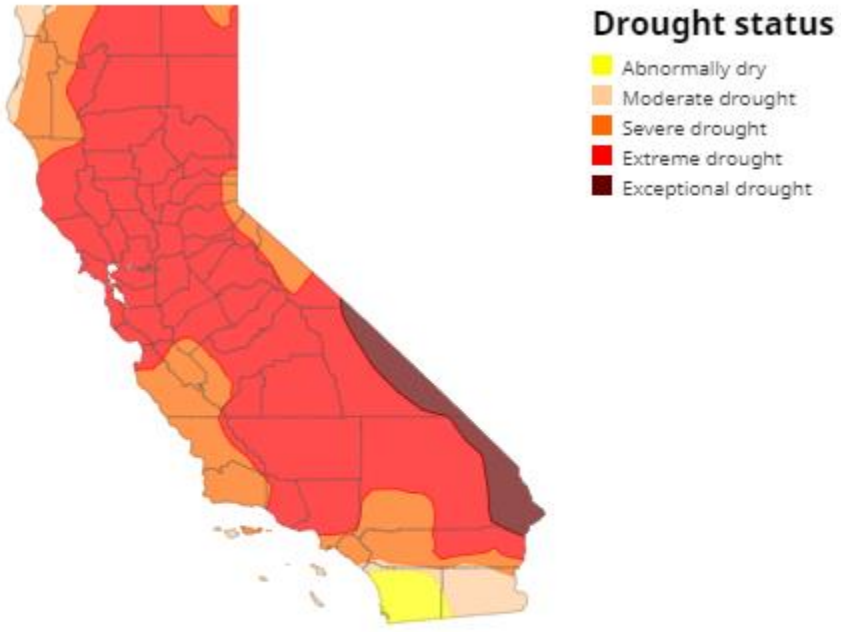
“We got unlucky. A lot of it didn’t make it into the reservoirs,” said Jeffrey Mount, a geologist and water expert at the Public Policy Institute of California.

The miserly output from the Sierra Nevada helps explain why the U.S. Drought Monitor, a weekly hydrological analysis by the federal government, shows 93% of California in either “severe,” “extreme” or “exceptional” drought. A month ago, only about two-thirds of the state was facing those conditions.

The rapidly worsening drought has led to even sharper cutbacks in allocations to those who depend on California’s elaborate complex of dams, reservoirs and canals for their water.

Many farmers in the Sacramento Valley had been counting on getting a 5% allocation this year from the federal government's Central Valley Project. On Wednesday, the Bureau of Reclamation put that meager shipment on hold, explaining that the melting snow wasn't contributing much to the reservoirs.

The announcement was particularly bad news for Sacramento Valley rice farmers, who produce 97% of the state's rice crop. Although many Valley farmers have special contractual rights that will give them enhanced deliveries from the Central Valley Project, every grower is facing a minimum 25% reduction, said Jim Morris, spokesman for the California Rice Commission.



Sources: drought.gov, water.ca.gov
Graphic by: Acton H. Gorton
Last update: 5/10/2021, 10:00:15 AM

Morris said farmers expect to plant 400,000 acres of rice this spring, leaving about 100,000 acres fallowed because of the water shortages.

That will depress the Valley's rural economies, where unemployment rates range between 7.3% and 15.4%. It will also hurt the Pacific Flyway, the migration route for millions of geese and other waterfowl that depend on rice fields for nourishment.

"There's a lot of impact beyond the amount of rice grown," Morris said.

The increasing severity of the state's water condition could ramp up the pressure on Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a statewide drought emergency. So far the governor has resisted issuing

such an order. Instead he has issued a regional emergency covering Sonoma and Mendocino counties, reflecting dire conditions on the Russian River.

CALIFORNIA'S VANISHING SIERRA SNOWPACK

Conditions were already bad when the rainy season ended in early April, capping a second straight dry winter. Sierra snow levels were just 59% of average.

The Sierra Nevada snowpack can provide up to 60% of the state's water and is particularly important in summer and fall, when there's no rainfall.

In a normal year, the snowpack "hopefully runs off in a predictable manner" and replenishes the state's reservoirs as hot weather sets in, Mount said.

This year, though, a combination of factors has meant very little runoff has reached the reservoirs. Among other things, "the soils are so dry this year that the water's not making it into the rivers," Mount said.

And there's very little snow left in reserve. While the spring hasn't been scorching hot, it's been warm enough that much of the snowpack is gone, with a fair amount of it evaporating, Mount said.

Scientists are struck by "how little of the snowmelt is turning into runoff," Mount said. "It's going back into the atmosphere."

As of Friday, the snowpack was just 10% of average for early May, according to measurements taken by the state Department of Water Resources.

The reservoirs are suffering as a result. Folsom and Oroville lakes are holding about half as much water as they should for this time of year. Shasta Lake, the largest reservoir in California, is at 57% of average.

Which means it's shaping up as a rough summer.

"It's a pretty challenging year," said Morris of the Rice Commission.

# # #

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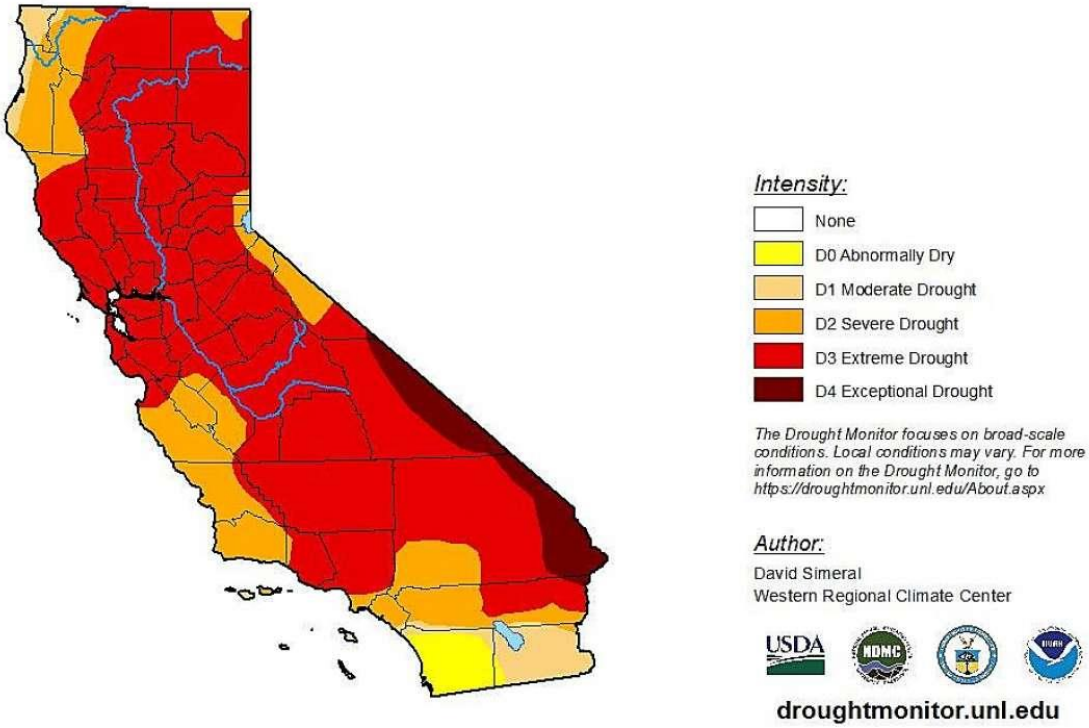
Entire Bay Area has gone from 'severe' to 'extreme' drought levels in just 2 weeks
San Francisco Chronicle | May 6, 2021 | Kellie Hwang



The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows the entire Bay Area in extreme drought conditions as of May 4, 2021.

The drought situation in the Bay Area has officially gone from bad to worse.

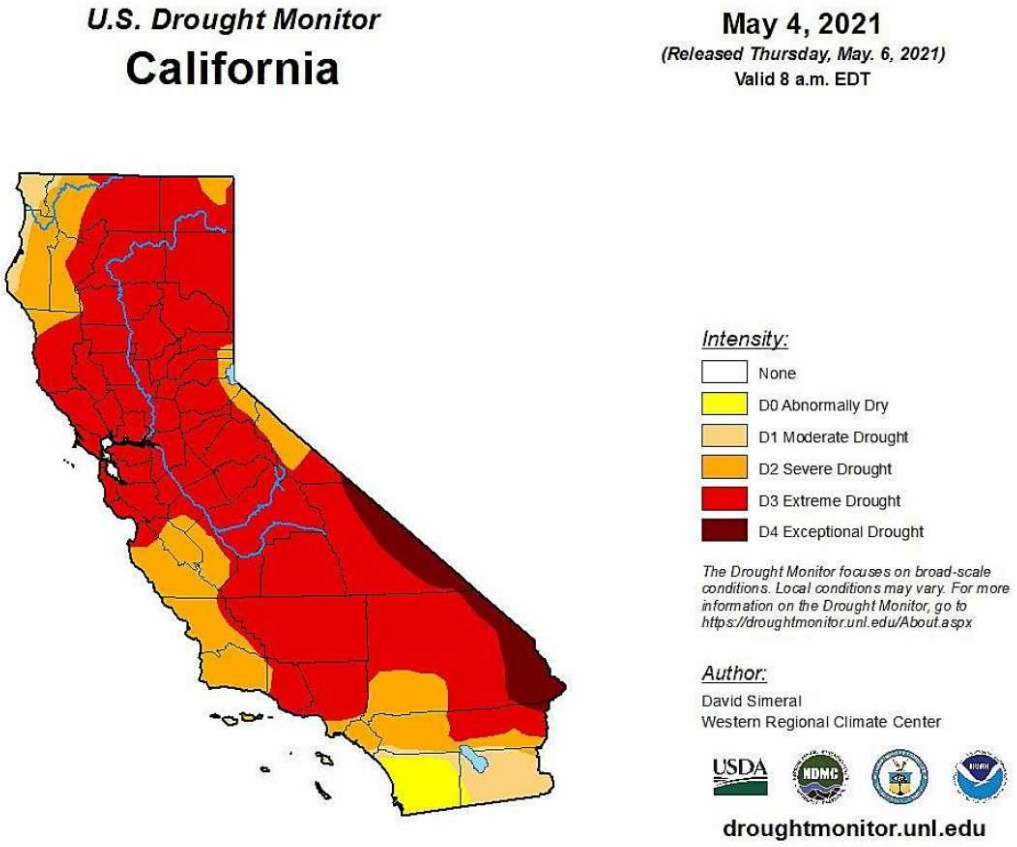
According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the entire Bay Area is now in the “extreme” drought category, along with nearly three-quarters of California. According to the latest summary, precipitation in the state for the water year that began Oct. 1 is well below normal, in the bottom 10th percentile, and the greater Bay Area is “experiencing record or near-record dryness.”

A week ago, parts of Alameda, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties hadn’t quite reached that designation yet, and the week before that, most of the Bay Area was in the “severe” drought category.

Currently, the Bay Area’s major cities are showing only 35% to 38% of normal rainfall for this time of year. The extreme drought category signals many impacts including water shortages or restrictions, loss of crops and inadequate water levels to sustain agriculture operations.

A more active wildfire season is also a concern, with fire agencies already on alert this year. So far 1,575 fires have started, more than twice the activity level compared to the five-year average.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Agriculture and the University of Nebraska manage the monitor, which produces a weekly report and takes into account many factors including soil moisture, river levels and precipitation.



The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows the entire Bay Area in extreme drought conditions as of May 4, 2021.

Some Bay Area counties have already responded to the dire drought conditions. The Marin Municipal Water District enacted widespread restrictions on customers last month, and on Tuesday, the agency's board voted to impose more, including limiting overhead sprinkler irrigation to two days a week and requiring covers for pools and spas.

Last month, the East Bay Municipal Utility District asked customers to voluntarily conserve water, while Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a drought emergency for Sonoma and Mendocino counties.

# # #

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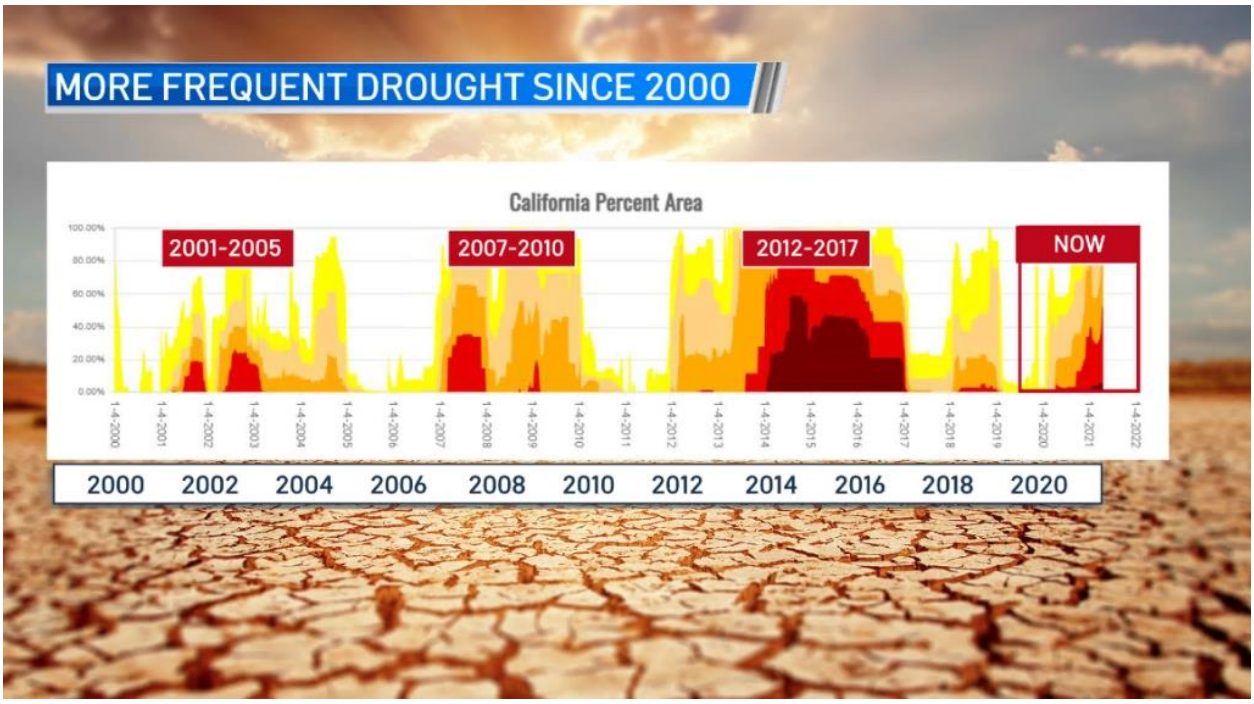
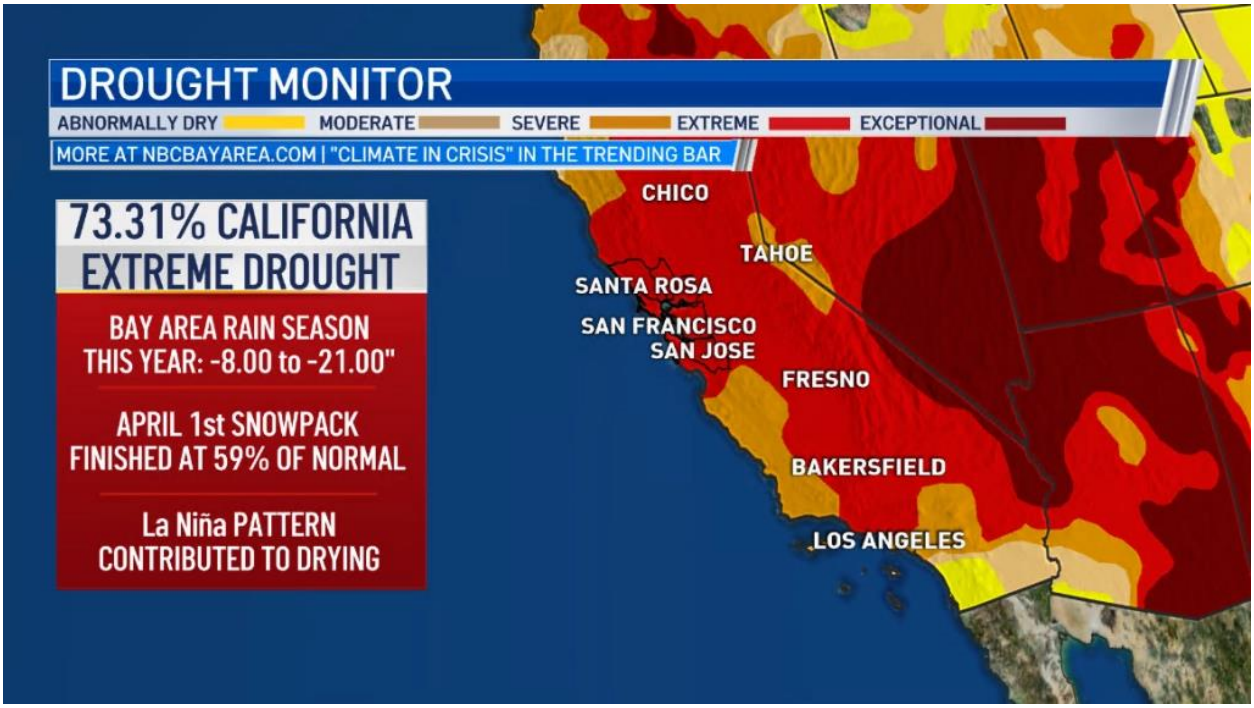
Eye Opening 20 Year Drought Data
NBC Bay Area | May 6, 2021| Jeff Ranieri

Some sort of drought is part of the cycle over the west but it's the frequency of drought and intensity that has really started to change the past 20 years with our increasing temperatures and changing climate.

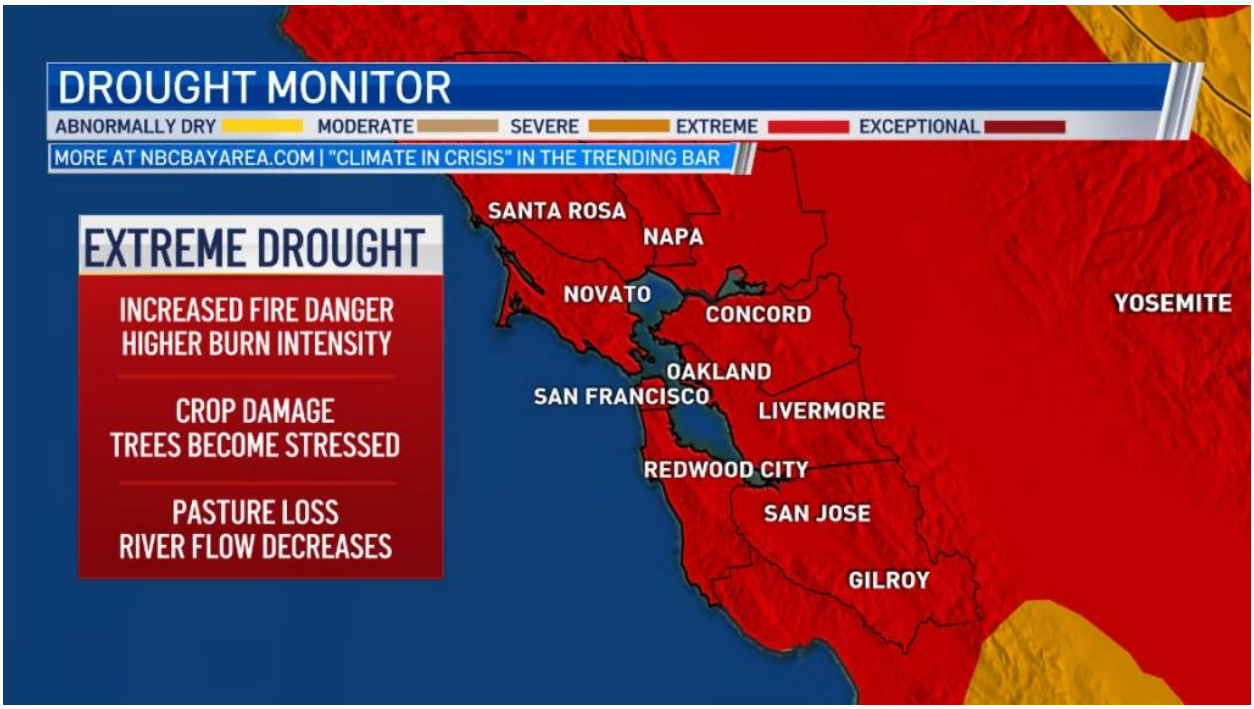
It may come as a surprise or even eye opening when you look at the data below. You can see we've had more years with drought conditions than without. This includes the years of 2001-2005, 2007-2010, 2012-2017, 2018-2019 and our current drought that started to ramp back up in 2020.



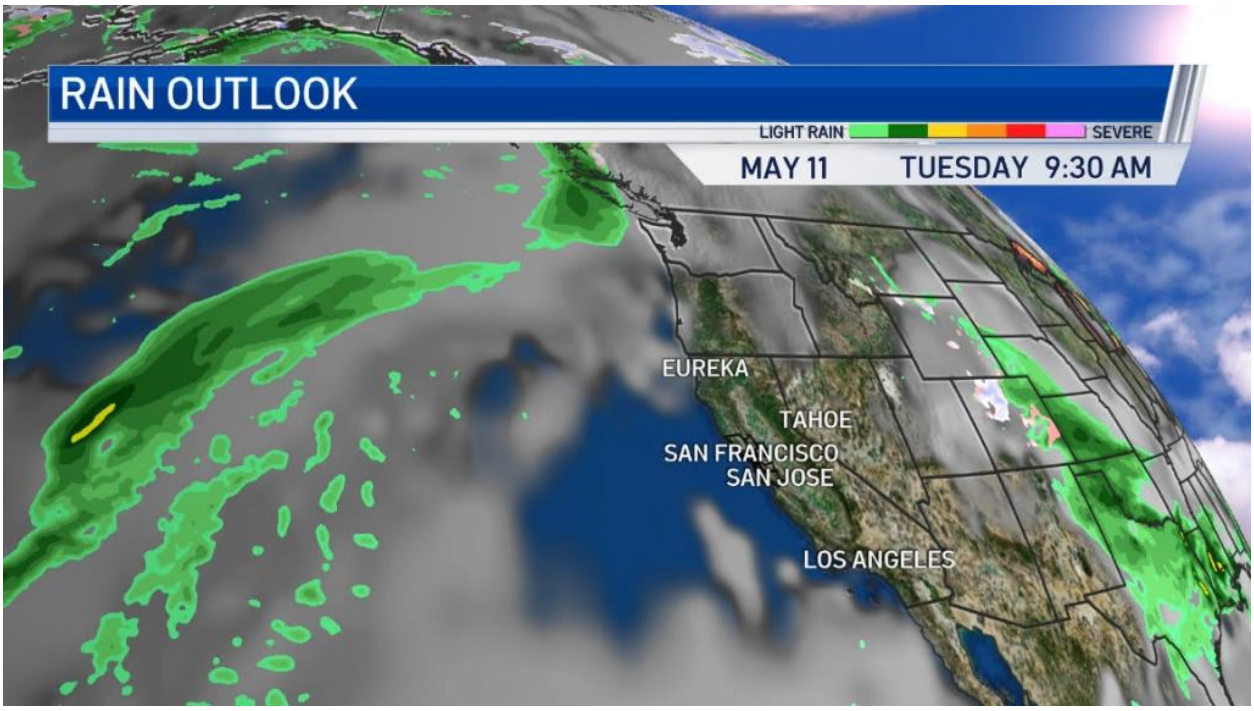
As you can see in the photo below, the latest drought has also started to become worse as most of California 73.31% is covered in "extreme" drought and this includes the Bay Area. Two horrible rain and snowpack seasons in a row are to blame. This year we are running -8.00 to -21.00" behind on rainfall and our Sierra snowpack only finished at 59% of normal.



So what does “extreme” drought bring? Increased fire danger with a higher burn intensity, crop damage, trees are stressed and lower river flows.



What about our rain chances ahead? You’ll see in the image below there’s rainfall in the Pacific that looks promising but unfortunately it’s expected to move well north of the Bay Area. At this point we are really starting to see our rain season end as we move into our typical dry months starting in June through September.



You can find out more about how the Bay Area climate is changing in a series of stories the Microclimate Weather Team worked on across the Bay Area.

# # #

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California's Latest Drought in 4 Charts
Public Policy Institute of California | May 3, 2021 | Alvar Escriva-Bou, Jeffrey Mount, Michael Dettinger

California is grappling with drought again, facing many of the same conditions and challenges that were features of the 2012–16 drought—including stressed ecosystems, depleted reservoirs, hard-hit farms and rural communities, threats to urban water supplies, and the potential for extensive wildfires. Knowing what's different and what's similar to our last major drought can help us better prepare the most vulnerable sectors for ongoing dry times.

To put this drought in context, this is only its second year. Historically, droughts have lasted up to six years. Our most recent one lasted five. We cannot know if this drought will break next year or four years from now, but we should plan for continuing drought.

The past two years were comparable to the worst of the 2012–16 drought in two key ways (Figure 1). First, April 2019 to March 2021—a period including the past two rainy seasons—was the fourth driest two-year period on record. Second, while not quite as warm as the last drought, these two years are among the warmest. The combination of low precipitation and high temperatures made the last drought very intense. The same pattern is unfolding again.

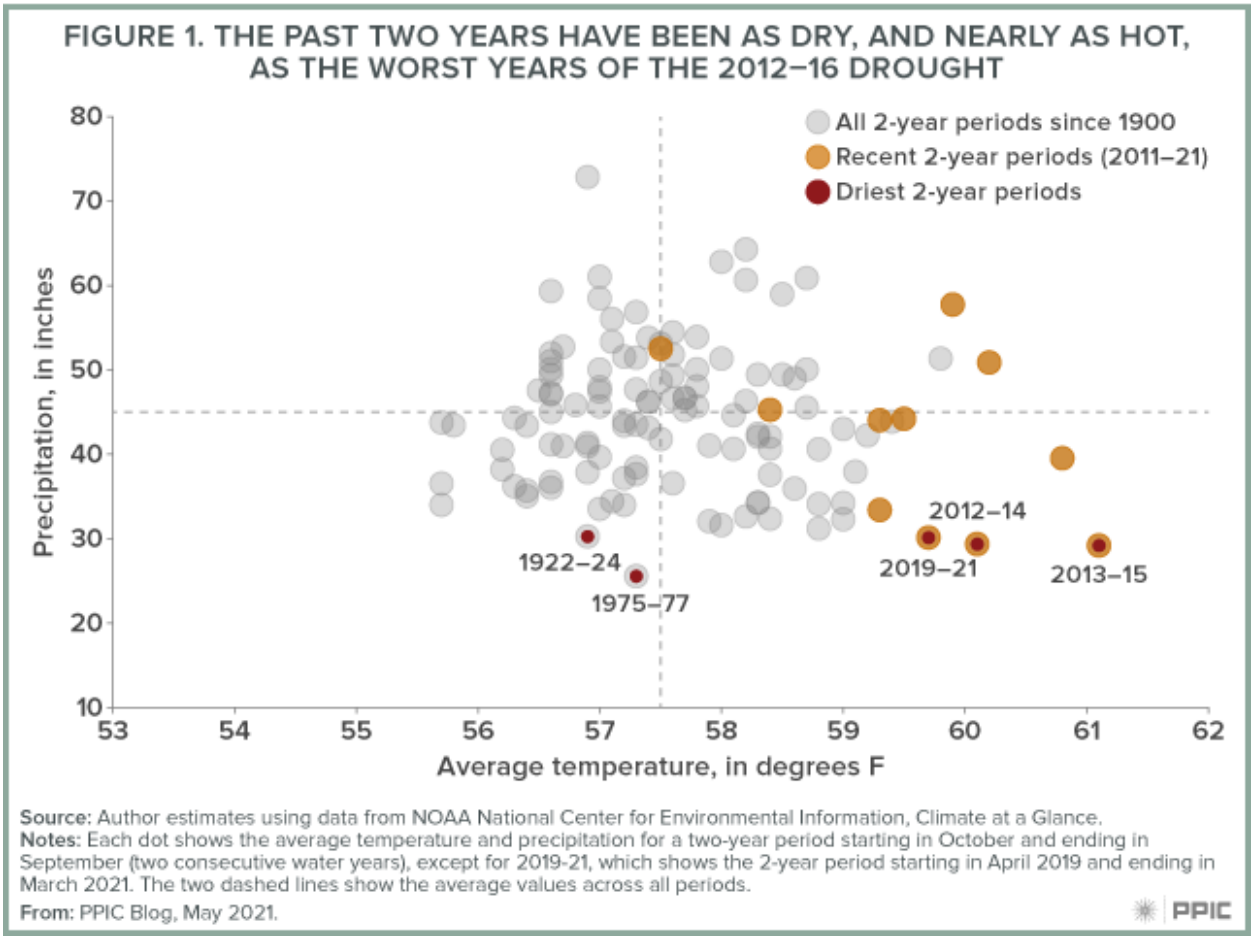

figure 1 - The Past Two Years Have Been as Dry, and Nearly as Hot, as the Worst Years of the 2012–16 Drought

But there are also some important differences that will affect options for drought management. Most striking are strong regional differences in drought intensity, as shown in Figure 2.

Although Southern California is also dry, this drought has hit the normally water-rich portions of the state particularly hard. So far, the North Coast and Sacramento River watersheds have been the epicenter of dryness and high temperatures, in contrast to the central and southern focus of the 2012–16 drought. This is driving a supply crisis to farmers in the Klamath basin, and acute water shortages in the Russian River watershed, the area targeted by Governor Newsom's Regional Drought Emergency Declaration.

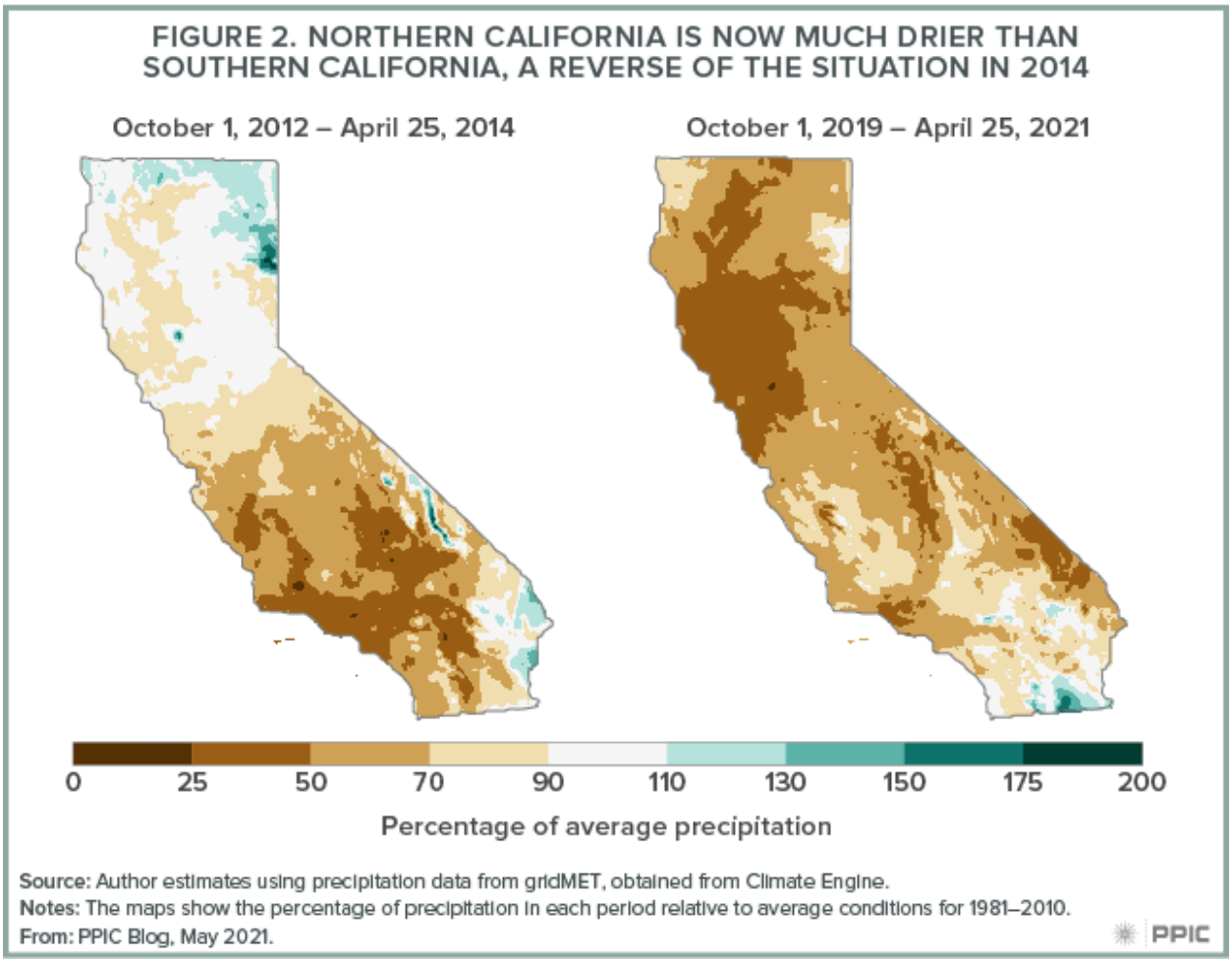

figure 2 - Northern California Is Now Much Drier than Southern California, a Reverse of the Situation in 2014

Regional differences in drought intensity also show up in streamflow conditions (Figure 3). Roughly two-thirds of the gages that measure streamflow in the North Coast show severe drought conditions, and many are at record lows. Flows at most of these gages were already quite low last year, marking two consecutive years of stressful conditions for these ecosystems.

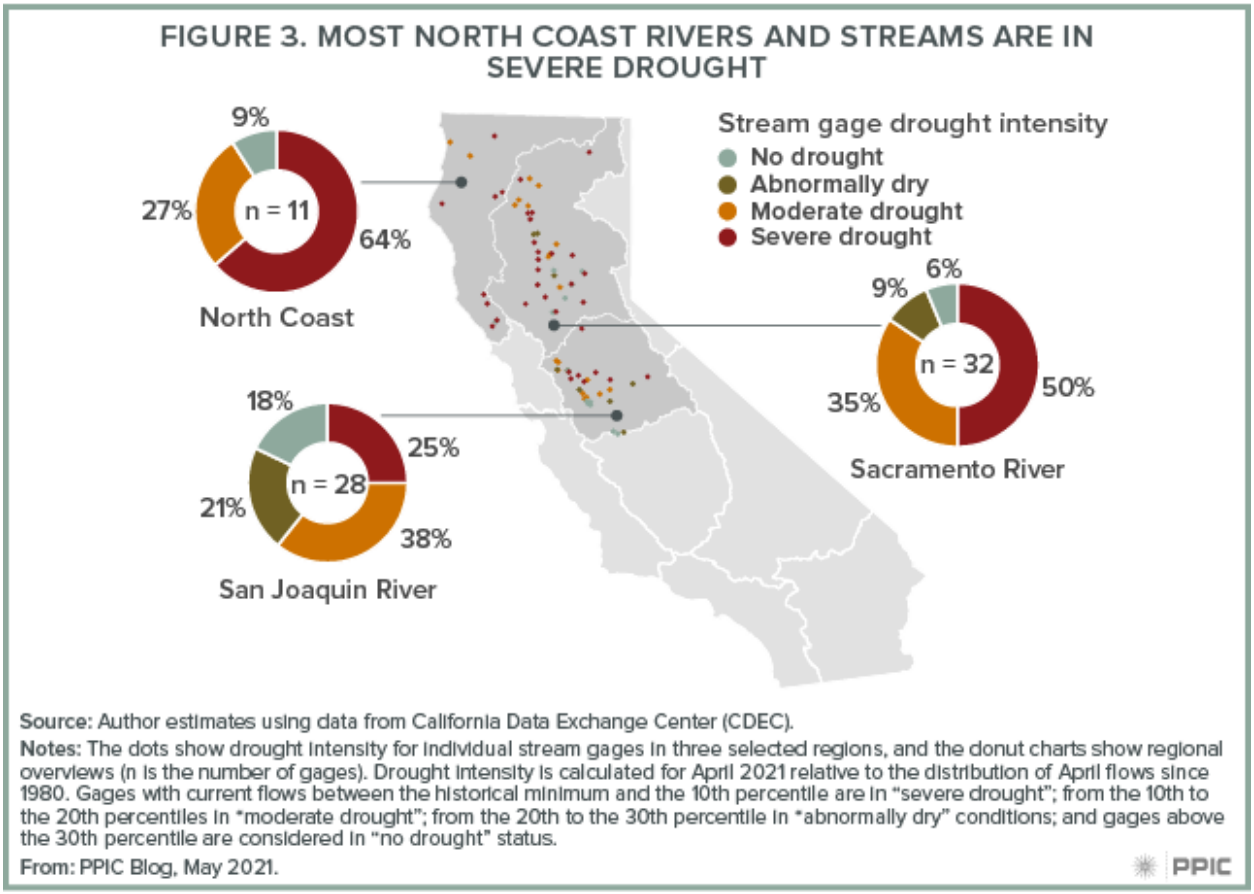

figure 3 - Most North Coast Rivers and Streams Are in Severe Drought

There are also significant differences in streamflow conditions between the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley watersheds. This reflects differences in both precipitation (Figure 2) and the status of reservoirs (Figure 4), since reservoir releases tend to dominate flows in these regions during drought. Storage in the Sacramento watershed is quite low—comparable to year three of the past drought. In the San Joaquin Valley, reservoir levels are also worrisome, although not as bad as in 2014. In both regions, snowpack is better than it was in 2014 and 2015—but not enough to provide significant drought relief.

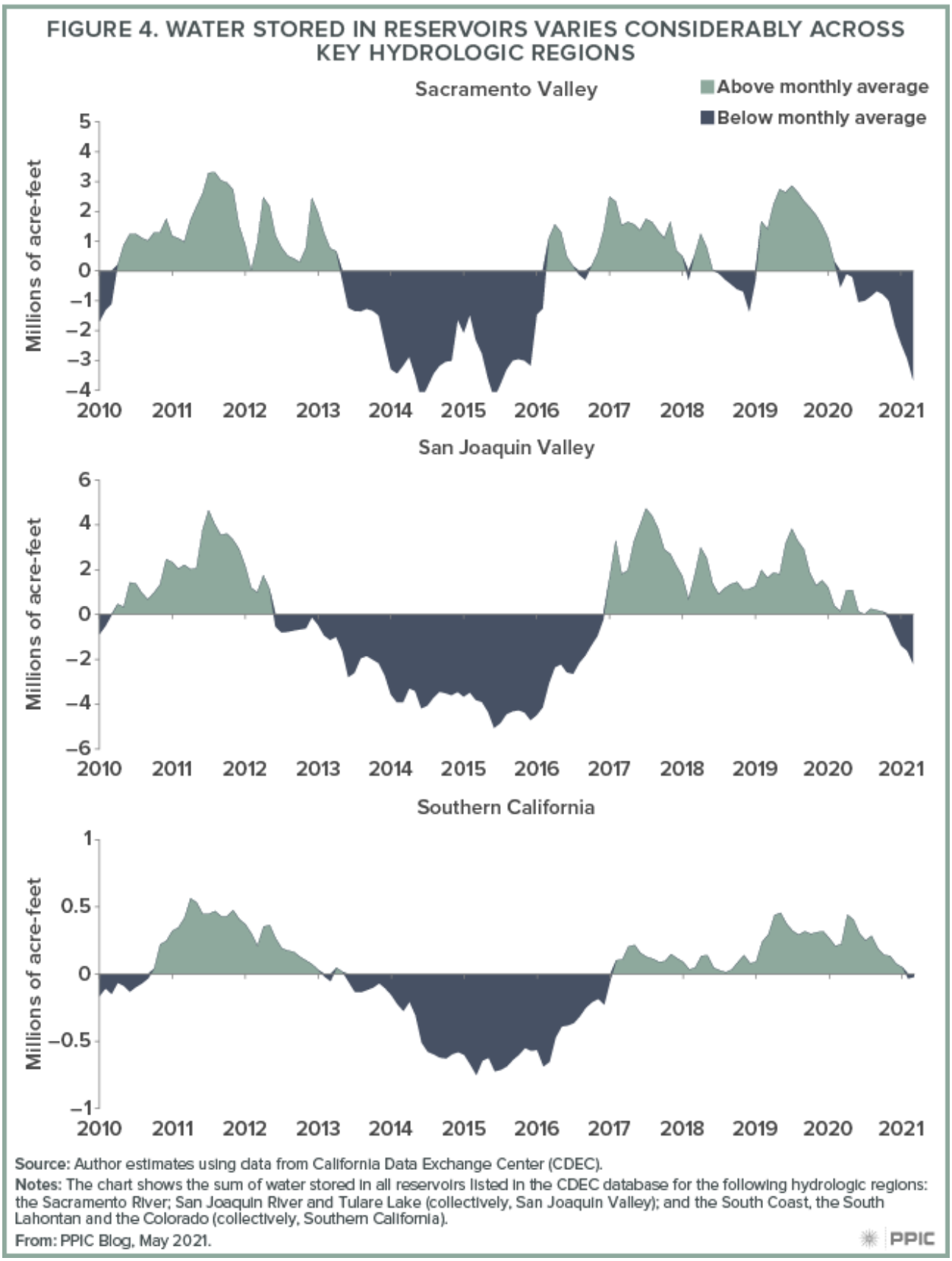

figure 4 - Water Stored in Reservoirs Varies Considerably across Key Hydrologic Regions

Reservoir conditions in the Sacramento watershed are critical not only for the region itself, but also for Bay Area and Southern California cities and San Joaquin Valley farms served by the

Central Valley Project and State Water Project. Although we are only in year two of the current drought, water allocations from these projects have fallen precipitously—to 0% for the CVP and 5% for the SWP—on par with 2014, the third year of the past drought. This will spur more groundwater pumping, and cause groundwater levels to fall again.

Reservoir status in Southern California is still relatively good, in sharp contrast to the rest of the state. This highlights an important point about regional differences in drought conditions: even though it has been very dry in Southern California, water scarcity is not yet a problem due to reserves, which also include water stored in Lake Mead and groundwater banks. The portfolio of water sources for California's large urban areas plays an important role in drought resilience.

The combination of low precipitation and high temperatures made the last drought difficult to manage—conditions that are building with this drought as well. This time there are some different early hot spots, such as the Klamath and the Russian River watersheds. And just two years in, the dry conditions in the Sacramento watershed are already having significant statewide ramifications. Our next post evaluates some of the actions that can be taken now to reduce drought impacts and prepare for continuing drought.

# # #

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State Develops Tool and Recommendations to Support Those Most Vulnerable to Drought

Ca. Department of Water Resources | May 3, 2021

Dried earth is seen at Lake Mendocino in Mendocino County, CA. Photo taken April 20, 2021.
Dried earth is seen at Lake Mendocino in Mendocino County. Photo taken April 20, 2021.

With drought conditions returning to California, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has finalized a tool and recommendations to support those communities most at risk during drought.

Historically, small water systems and rural communities that rely on private domestic wells have been hit the hardest by prolonged periods of dry conditions. To provide increased state support, DWR led a two-year process learning from stakeholder experiences about what puts small water systems and rural communities at higher risk of water shortages and what is needed to build their resilience to drought.

The final report is now available online and could inform future legislation and efforts to help small water suppliers and rural communities reduce their risk of inadequate water supply amid a drought or other extreme event.

Recommendations in the report include:

- Planning: Small water suppliers serving more than 1,000 customers would create an abridged version of a water shortage contingency plan. This plan would be a less stringent version of the water contingency plan that urban water suppliers are required to submit as part of their Urban Water Management Plans every five years. The report also calls for county governments or regional entities to conduct water shortage contingency planning to cover all their rural communities.

- Preparedness: Small water systems should compile a list of resources needed to assist them in a drought or water shortage emergency. The list could include local community-based organizations that work with vulnerable populations, contractors for drilling wells, certified water haulers, and emergency shower vendors. DWR recommends that counties and regional entities use periodic statewide water shortage risk assessment prepared by the state to prioritize needs for drought and water shortage assistance.

In addition to the report, a new online tool has been finalized that enables small water suppliers and rural communities to explore their relative risk of water shortage. The tool represents California's first effort to systematically and holistically describe the risk of water shortage across small water suppliers and rural communities statewide. This information will also be useful for groundwater sustainability agencies as they develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans as part of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Small water systems that serve 15 to 2,999 customers and those serving schools were assessed. The analysis of rural communities seeks to assess water shortage risk for households on domestic wells and those customers served by “state smalls,” or water suppliers serving fewer than 15 customers.

The recommendations contained in the report were developed in coordination with multiple state agencies and vetted through an extensive stakeholder process with input from the County Drought Advisory Group, which included nearly three dozen experts in this field.

# # #

State Senate Lays Out $3.4 Billion Drought Relief Package
AgNet | May 3, 2021 | Brian German

California Senators have unveiled a $3.4 billion drought relief package to address the hardships created by ongoing dry conditions. The Senate Budget Plan on Drought, Safe Drinking Water, Water Supply Reliability, and Ratepayer Assistance would be the single largest investment to address drought challenges in California. During the Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Subcommittee 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy hearing, the proposal was passed by a 4-0 vote. The proposal offers a comprehensive approach to drought relief, with funding designated for water supply projects, research, and water-use efficiency projects.

Drought Relief Package

"This comprehensive Senate drought package will provide crucial relief for ratepayers and make immediate investments to help homeowners, businesses and the agricultural sector use water more efficiently," Senator Bob Wieckowski said in a press release. "It aids local agencies, promotes water connections to larger systems, boosts water recycling, protects fish and wildlife, uses the latest technology to improve forecasting, and invests in sustainable groundwater management."

The drought relief package includes $1 billion for recovery efforts related to COVID to assist community water systems, ratepayers, and public utilities. Another $600 million would be used to assist with resilient water infrastructure projects, recycled water, and stormwater management. A total of $500 million would be divided between efficiency efforts for urban and agricultural water use. The proposal includes $500 million for immediate drought relief for California communities. Sustainable groundwater management initiatives would receive $350 million in support.

The proposal would be financed through a variety of funding sources. Federal money from the American Rescue Plan will be combined with funding from the General Fund, as well as an acceleration of General Obligation Bonds. Several water agencies have expressed support for the plan including the East Valley Water District, Westlands Water District, and the Association of California Water Agencies. The drought relief package will now be considered in the Senate Budget Committee.

# # #

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Will Gavin Newsom make emergency drought declaration statewide? Valley lawmakers say it's a must

Sacramento Bee | April 30, 2021 | Joshua Tehee

State & local lawmakers as well as farmers, gathered to announce a regional drought emergency for much of the San Joaquin Valley and to urge Governor Newsom to issue a statewide declaration of emergency, April 30, 2021. BY JOHN WALKER

More than a dozen Central Valley lawmakers and elected officials met on Friday to declare a regional drought emergency and urge Gov. Gavin Newsom to do the same statewide.

Three state senators and three Assembly members joined the chairs of the boards of supervisors from Fresno, Madera, Tulare and Kings counties in a bipartisan news conference at Harlan Ranch in Clovis to call for action that the group said is necessary to divert a crisis.

"This is about mankind and surviving," said Sen. Melissa Hurtado, D-Sanger, who represents the state's 14th district. "The Central Valley feeds the world and the current drought, coupled with the coronavirus pandemic, has set us on the verge of a global food crisis — a repeat of 1974, when California entered its driest three years on record.

"Our actions will determine whether that happens," she said.

The stats show reason to worry.

California is at 50% of its average precipitation for the year, according to the California Department of Water Resources. The state's snowpack is at 59% of normal for the year. This puts 2021 on pace to be one of the driest on record for the state.

More than 85% of California is in "severe" drought or worse, according to the National Drought Mitigation Center.

The U.S. Drought Monitor says 76.5% of Fresno County is in a severe drought. Another 39% of the county — namely, the foothill and mountain areas — is classified as being in extreme drought.

Tulare County is in even worse shape: 94.5% of the county is already in extreme drought. Madera and Kings counties are “just” in severe droughts.

FOOD GROWS WHERE WATER FLOWS

The drought’s effects, of course, are being felt by the region’s farmers.

The choice of location — the original Harlan Ranch farm off Highway 168 east of Fresno — was chosen for a reason: It made a fitting backdrop, set among vast fields of dry grasses dotted with large tangled piles of dead trees.

“This is no accident,” said Ryan Jacobsen, CEO of the Fresno County Farm Bureau. The drought is forcing farmers to stop irrigating crops or to sell off trees and land just to survive.

Jacobsen said he has seen farmers bulldoze productive trees and fallow crops.

“There are tons and tons or ramifications,’” he said.

Tulare, Madera and Kings counties have each declared a drought emergency. Fresno County will vote to ratify its emergency declaration during a special meeting Tuesday.

A statewide drought emergency would remove the regulatory, administrative and environmental barriers keeping needed water out of the Valley. It would allow agencies more flexibility to initiate water transfers and modify reservoir release standards to get needed water to farms in the Valley.

“This is not a symbolic event, but a legal one,” said Sen. Andreas Borgeas, R-Fresno, who represents the state’s 8th district.

So far, the governor has shied away from declaring a statewide emergency, though he did declare a regional emergency last week for the Russian River watershed in the northern part of the state, which would allow more water to be stored in reservoirs serving Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

Borgeas said he hopes Friday’s request sends a message to the governor that the Valley is in need, too.

“Their metrics are reasonable,” Borgeas said.

“But so are ours.”

# # #

South Bay Water Officials Draw On Distant Reserves, Weigh Options As Drought Deepens

KPIX | April 29, 2021 | Len Ramirez

SANTA CLARA COUNTY (KPIX) – While drought conditions are upon the Bay Area, water officials in Santa Clara County plan to draw from distant reserves for now and seek to increase storage and expand water recycling in the future.

Half of the water in Santa Clara County comes from somewhere else, sometimes hundreds of miles away.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District's own above ground reservoirs are only about a third of capacity.

To make matters worse, the district recently had to drain Anderson Reservoir east of Morgan Hill, its largest reservoir, for earthquake retrofitting.

Meanwhile, underground aquifer levels, where most of the water is stored, is healthy. To keep it that way as we head into drought, the water district is planning to import more and dip into reserves stored in Kern County.

"We're going outside and buying water from our partners, and we are taking water out of our groundwater storage bank in the Central Valley and bringing that here into Santa Clara County

to make sure that we can still meet demand here in Santa Clara County," said Matt Keller, spokesperson for the water district.

Long-term plans to increase storage include expanding Pacheco reservoir near Highway 152, which would be as big as all current reservoirs combined.

The expansion plan is still under review.

"If our storage runs out, our aqueducts run dry, we've got nothing," said Pat Ferraro, a retired water board member and water policy professor at San Jose State.

Ferraro says the keys to sustainable water supplies in California are conservation and water recycling at plants that can purify wastewater for irrigation and potable use.

"We're doing a little bit of water recycling, I wish we were doing more. That's been my hue and cry for 50 years. Reclaim, the end is near you know?" he said

The Santa Clara Valley Water District does have plans to expand water recycling to supply 10 percent of its total water demands by 2025. That would mean 24,000 acre feet of recycled, purified water, enough to fill the Lexington Reservoir in Los Gatos to overflowing every year.

# # #

From dust bowl to California drought: a climate scientist on the lessons we still haven't learned

The Guardian | April 29, 2021| Maanvi Singh

The Enterprise Bridge crosses over a section of Lake Oroville in Oroville, California. Water levels at the lake have dropped to 42% of its capacity. Photograph: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Peter Gleick argues there's an urgent need to reshape our relationship to water: 'There is enormous untapped potential for conservation'

California is once again in a drought, just four years after the last dry spell decimated ecosystems, fueled megafires and left many rural communities without well water.

Droughts are a natural part of the landscape in the American west, and the region has in many ways been shaped by its history of drought. But the climate scientist Peter Gleick argues that the droughts California is facing now are different than the ones that have historically cycled through the Golden State.

California is on the brink of drought – again. Is it ready?
Read more

"These are not accidental, strange dry periods," said Gleick, the co-founder of the Pacific Institute, a global thinktank that has become a leading voice on water issues in California and around the world. "They're increasingly the norm."

Gleick this week spoke with the Guardian about the history of drought in the west, and the urgency of reshaping our relationship to water. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

The California governor has declared a drought emergency in two counties, a few years after the state faced its last major drought from 2011-2017. Are more frequent dry periods part of a new normal?

The last drought was a wake up call to the effects of climate change. For the first time, the public began to make the connection that humans were impacting the climate and the water cycle – affecting the intensity and severity of our droughts.

Since that drought, we have learned some lessons about improving water efficiency, and reducing waste. We had serious conversations about things like getting rid of grass lawns for example. But we still haven't learned the fundamental message: that these are not accidental, strange dry periods. They're increasingly the norm.

We better start to assume that the sooner we put in place policies to save water, the better off we are. We don't seem to have learned that there still is enormous untapped potential for conservation and efficiency despite our past improvements.

If the last drought helped people wake up to a worsening climate crisis, how did other defining droughts reshape our understanding of water in the region?

There were the dust bowl years of the 1930s, when thousands and thousands of people were dislocated from their homes in the western US because of severe drought that decimated agriculture and triggered deadly dust storms.

After drought in the 50s, we started building big water infrastructure like dams and aqueducts in California, in part because we knew that populations were growing in the coastal areas very rapidly and that we had to expand access to water supply. That infrastructure brought enormous benefits, but it came with massive costs that we didn't appreciate at the time. In particular, it really started to disrupt our ecology.

Following the dust bowl, probably the worst drought we experienced in California was the 1976-1977 drought, which is considered the state's worst two-year drought on record. That drought really, really showed us, OK, we're vulnerable to extreme dry weather, despite having built these dams and the aqueducts to help store, conserve and distribute water. It showed us that massive population and economic growth has put new pressures on our water resources. I'd say that was our first real wake up call.

Of course, climate change wasn't a contributor to the dust bowl in the 1930s. But it seems there are some major lessons we could learn from that period about how badly designed policies can really intensify natural disaster. Back then, it was farmers' decision to plow up millions of acres

of native grassland, and plant water-intensive crops that caused the soil to erode and stirred up the deadly, devastating dust storms that we associate with that drought.

The way we've decided to use water in the west has a long, complicated history. Going back to the dust bowl era, until now – at least on paper – agriculture and other industries have far greater rights than anyone else. And that has put an enormous stress on our system.

Sure, during the dust bowl, settlers didn't really understand some crucial things about soil management that we now understand. And we have learned how to make more food with less water. But we never had a rethink of our system of water rights, and how much of our limited water we should be spending on agriculture versus leaving in the natural ecosystem.

Those were lessons we should have learned during the dust bowl, and, frankly we are still having to learn.

During the last drought, we saw the death of about 163m trees, and that dead vegetation helped fuel some of the worst fires in the state's history. Even though research has found that conditions during the last drought were actually worse than the dust bowl – a lot of people in the west who lived through it wouldn't describe it as being so bad.

Good infrastructure has insulated a lot of Californians from really feeling the impacts of drought. In the US, most of us don't directly experience the consequences of drought the way people in other parts of the world do.

How do you measure 100m dead trees and the risk to forest fires that could be attributed to that drought? How do you measure the death of 95% of the Chinook salmon? How do you measure the impact on poor communities who were left without water? We don't put dollar values on these things, and so we don't directly see or feel the impact.

I don't want to minimize the impact of the last drought on particular farmers. But the systems that we've built mean that even if some fields have to fallow, we can still keep growing during drought years. Even during a severe drought I can turn the water on my tap and, you know, incredibly cheap, pure water comes out.

But that's not the case for many disadvantaged communities in the Central Valley, who couldn't turn on the tap and get water. They're the ones suffering most directly from the impacts of extreme drought, but they're largely invisible to many other Californians. And that's not the case for our ecosystems and fisheries and forests, which are dying out.

# # #

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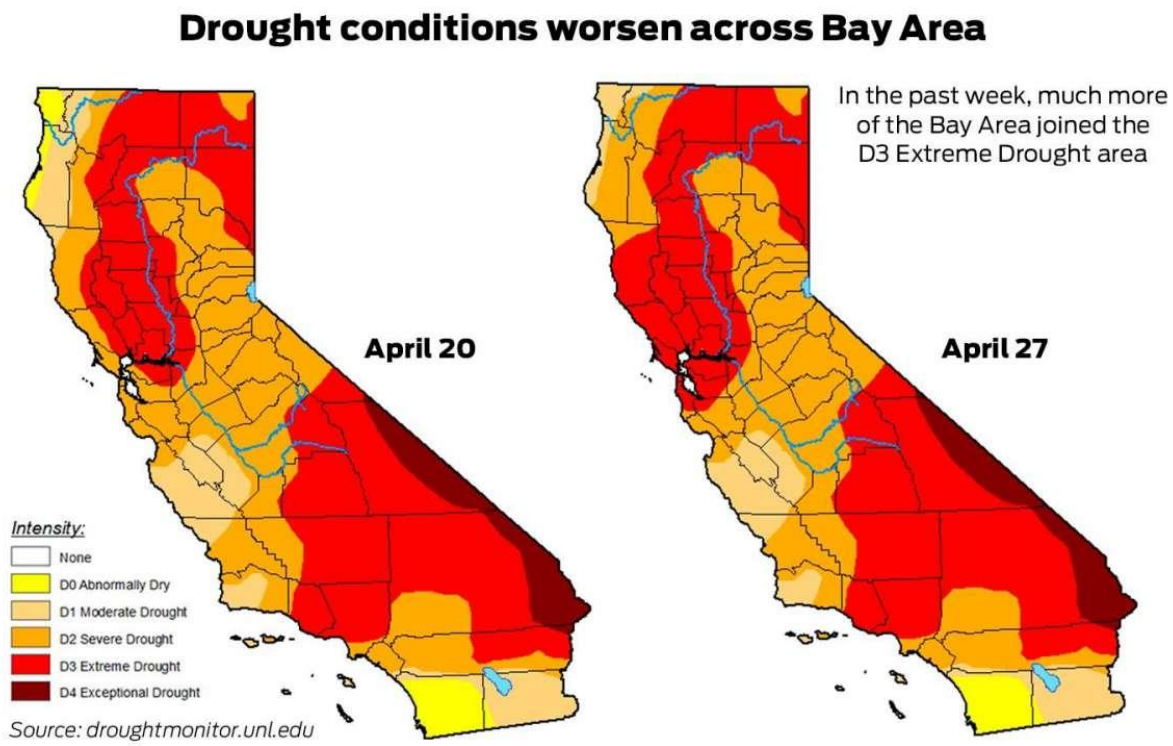
The Bay Area has turned red on this map showing drought conditions
San Francisco Chronicle | April 29, 2021 | Jessica Flores



Much of the Bay Area is now enduring “extreme” drought weather, according to recent meteorological data.

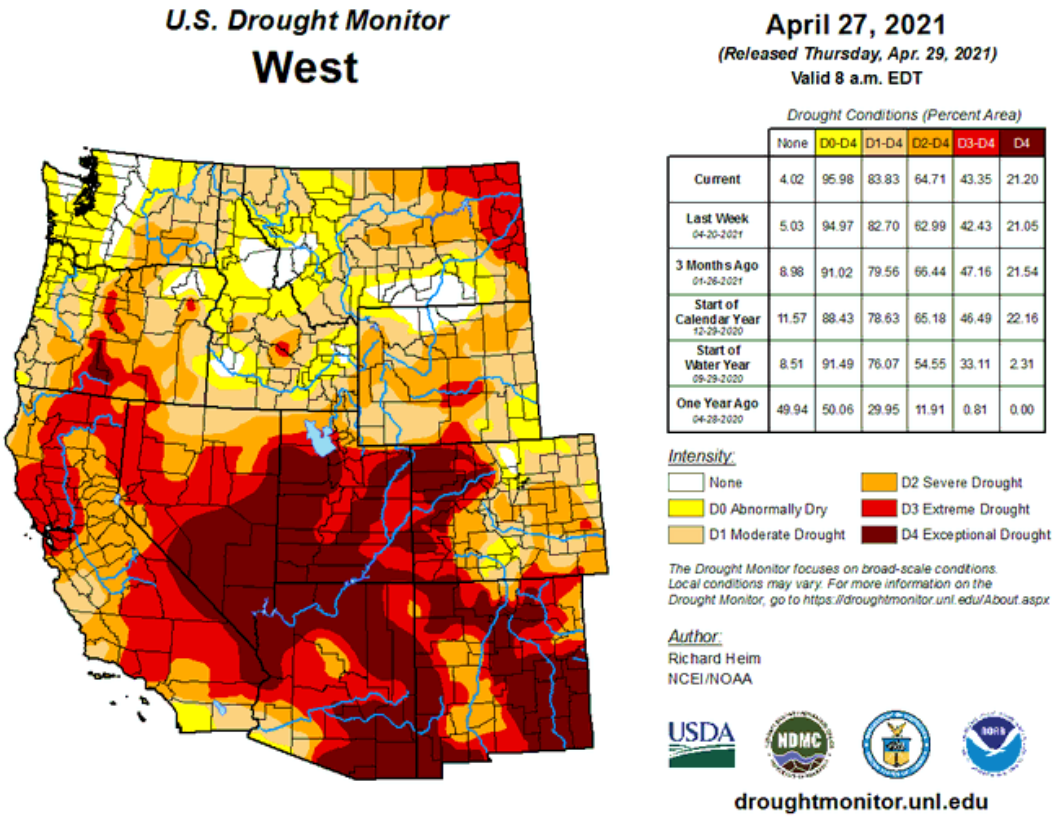
And with little chance of any substantial rainfall in the coming months, conditions are unlikely to improve anytime soon.

The U.S. Drought Monitor this week showed that the Bay Area had slipped into the “extreme drought” category following two consecutive dry winters.

Last week, much of the region was in the slightly less dire “severe” drought classification.

“We’re going on two winter seasons of below-average rainfall, and that’s beginning to create hydrological drought conditions across much of the state,” said National Weather Service meteorologist Roger Gass.

“We’re not going to see any kind of rainfall that’s going to be significant enough to help out these (extreme drought) conditions,” Gass added.



According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, extreme drought conditions can cause a “major” loss in crops and pastures and widespread water shortages or restrictions.

In the Bay Area, some counties have already been forced to respond to the parched conditions.

On Tuesday, the board of directors of the East Bay Municipal Utility District declared a stage one drought, and now residents are being urged to conserve water. Sonoma County’s Board of Supervisors also declared a local drought emergency this week.

Last week, the Marin Municipal Water District was the Bay Area’s first water agency to impose some restrictions, which prohibit some customers from washing their cars and power-washing their homes and driveways.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has yet to issue a statewide proclamation, but last week he declared a drought emergency for Sonoma and Mendocino counties. The order mainly affects the cities of Santa Rosa, Ukiah and Sebastopol.

# # #

Bay Area Democrats want to pass climate change laws. Can they deliver?
San Francisco Chronicle | May 3, 2021 | Tal Kopan

Now that Democrats have full control of Washington for the first time in a decade, Bay Area lawmakers want to make sure they don't walk away empty-handed. For many of them, that means seeing green.

After several years of historically severe wildfires, heat waves and recurring drought conditions, bills related to climate change are at the top of the agenda for many lawmakers with local ties.

Some of the legislative proposals focus on energy issues, such as investing in electric vehicle charging stations and planning job transitions for fossil fuel workers. Others would address the threats of extreme weather by allocating more money to reduce wildfire risks, strengthen water infrastructure and upgrade the electric grid.

The political calculus is fraught. On one hand, Bay Area lawmakers want to deliver tangible policy victories to their progressive-tilting base, which has been clamoring for a dramatic plan to stem climate change. But Democratic majorities in both chambers of Congress are narrow, and they contain centrists who are hesitant to go as far as many on the left want — the prime example being West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, who is friendlier to fossil fuels than most in his party.

"I do expect that we are going to do something big. The only question is, will it be big enough?" said San Rafael Rep. Jared Huffman, a strong progressive on climate issues who is working to transition the country away from fossil fuels. "That's what we're going to figure out here in the next few months, but I'm optimistic."

The process is ramping up as legislators consider a $2 trillion infrastructure package outlined by President Biden that includes a heavy emphasis on energy and climate initiatives. But the infrastructure bill isn't the only opportunity for major legislation to pass — annual items like appropriations and defense authorization bills could include environmental aspects as well.

Here are three areas where the Bay Area lawmakers are considering changes that could have an impact locally.

Transitioning fossil fuel workers

Despite its strict environmental regulations and climate goals, California is still the nation's seventh-largest producer of crude oil. Even in the deeply liberal Bay Area, thousands of people work in fossil fuel jobs, including at refineries in Contra Costa and Solano counties.

Many of those workers are represented by Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, who is trying to advance both the interests of the environment and his district's economy. One of his new bills, HR 1817, would provide financial support for communities to develop plans to transition oil and

gas workers into new jobs. Labor groups, oil and gas industry leaders and environmental justice advocates would all have seats at the table.

“It’s about having a more serious conversation,” DeSaulnier said. “We’re not going to do what we did in West Virginia, and presume a coal miner can change jobs easily. ... We want to be respectful of how difficult it is, and also to make sure that they have good-paying jobs.”

The California Legislature just saw how climate policies can collide with the interests of organized labor when a bill that would have banned fracking and other oil extraction methods died in committee, partly because of intense opposition from fossil fuel workers.

Gov. Gavin Newsom responded with his own directive to stop issuing fracking permits by 2024 and plan for a phase-out of all oil production by 2045. As with the bill, Newsom’s announcement was met with swift opposition from petroleum groups, labor leaders and some politicians from communities dependent on oil-related businesses.

“Particularly here in the Bay Area, we really need to get labor and the environmental movement on the same page,” DeSaulnier said.

Expanding climate resiliency and renewable energy

Biden’s plan calls for a lot of funding for climate resiliency, which could mean big money for Bay Area projects like fighting sea level rise at the airports in San Francisco and Oakland and rethinking troubled infrastructure like Highway 37, a crucial thoroughfare for North Bay motorists that often floods in the raining season.

Democrats are also angling for new spending to support cars that don’t run on gasoline. DeSaulnier is carrying a bill that would allocate $3 billion for electric car charging stations and refueling stations for hydrogen-powered vehicles. That’s another priority for Biden, whose infrastructure plan calls for massive investments to move the country away from gas-powered cars. It’s also a top priority for California, which is planning to end the sale of gasoline-powered cars in 2035.

“The investments in this bill, in charging infrastructure, are going to help California reach those goals, and help people who live in areas burdened by a lot of traffic pollution — people who live near ports or warehouses or just highways — breathe cleaner air,” said Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund.

Sen. Alex Padilla, months after his appointment to the Senate seat vacated by Vice President Kamala Harris, is trying to deliver an early policy victory by getting Congress to back a massive investment in carbon-free school buses. In tandem with newly elected Sen. Raphael Warnock of Georgia, Padilla recently introduced a bill that would spend $25 billion over 10 years to replace hundreds of thousands of diesel-powered school buses with electric ones.

Preparing for wildfires and droughts

Sen. Dianne Feinstein said when she agreed last year not to seek the chairmanship of the Senate Judiciary Committee that she would focus her efforts instead on addressing California's worsening wildfire and drought problems. Her office is working on legislation that would provide more money for fire prevention projects, revising a bill that failed to advance last year. She has already introduced a measure that would provide hundreds of millions of dollars to restore three Central Valley canals, and her office is working on legislation to fund desalination projects and water storage infrastructure.

Those legislative efforts come as most of California is in some level of drought, with state-declared emergencies in two counties and water restrictions already imposed in Marin County. Last year's wildfire season saw more acres burn than in any other year on record, and this year's dry conditions are setting the stage for more severe blazes in the coming months.

"There are two issues that pose dire threats to California: drought and wildfires, and climate change is making both far more dangerous," Feinstein said in a statement.

Huffman noted that major investments in the electric grid could have a big impact on fire prevention, as sparking power lines have been responsible for several devastating blazes in recent years.

The infrastructure opportunity

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco will be key to the infrastructure bill's development. Widely regarded as a master tactician and vote-counter, Pelosi can lose only two Democrats in the House to get a bill passed with her narrow majority and will have to craft the bill carefully to build the biggest coalition possible.

"She's in her element with this, and every indication I get from Speaker Pelosi is that she understands this is a once-in-a-generation, maybe once-in-a-lifetime moment for going big," Huffman said.

Rep. John Garamendi, a Walnut Grove Democrat who is one of the lawmakers leading the development of the bill, compared the impact of the bill to Americans' pandemic-era appetite for jigsaw puzzles.

"None of these pieces are new," Garamendi said. "Each of these things are programs, policies that have been known and discussed, and many of them implemented over the last 50 years. ... This legislation puts all of those pieces together and creates a future in which we transition the 1900s infrastructure toward 21st century infrastructure."

# # #

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Q&A with Stanford experts: Why is climate change at the center of a $2.3 trillion federal plan?

In his address to Congress tonight, President Joe Biden is expected to pitch a wide-ranging initiative called the American Jobs Plan. Stanford researchers discuss how and why climate change resilience is central to the initiative.

Stanford News | April 28, 2021 | Rob Jordan

A road washed away by floodwater. (Image credit: Getty Images)

When President Joe Biden addresses a joint session of Congress tonight a common thread will likely run through much of his narrative: resilience. Beyond touting his administration's accomplishments, Biden is expected to use the spotlight to pitch his $2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan, a wide-ranging infrastructure initiative that promises "every dollar" spent on rebuilding highways, airports, water systems and more will be used to "prevent, reduce and withstand the impacts of the climate crisis."

Below, Stanford engineering, climate and geophysics experts discuss why climate change resiliency is at the center of federal infrastructure plans, how it could affect underserved communities and where to target investment for maximum impact. The researchers include Jack Baker, a professor of civil and environmental engineering who leads the Stanford Urban Resilience Initiative; Sarah Billington a professor of civil and environmental engineering who studies building design and materials and their impact on human wellbeing; Noah Diffenbaugh, the Kara J Foundation Professor in the School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences and an appointee to the California Climate-Safe Infrastructure Working Group; Sarah Fletcher, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering who studies water resources and

climate change adaptation from a socio-technical systems perspective; Jenny Suckale, an assistant professor of geophysics who leads the Stanford Future Bay Initiative and has worked as a scientific consultant for international organizations aiming to reduce the impact of natural and environmental disasters in vulnerable communities.

How could climate change-resilient infrastructure affect the lives of average people?

Suckale: Infrastructure already affects the lives of average people in numerous ways. The main issue with not considering climate change in infrastructure planning is that infrastructure can mitigate but also create risk. A floodwall, for example, keeps water out but also keeps water in if the wall is overrun or if there are other sources of flooding such as rainfall. If we do not consider climate change in infrastructure planning, we will inevitably see more adverse effects or risks that stem from the fact that existing infrastructure is designed for the past, not the future.

Diffenbaugh: Infrastructure is at the nexus of greenhouse gas mitigation, climate change adaptation and environmental justice. Specifically, investments in climate-safe energy, transportation, water and communications systems and technologies offer “win-win-win” opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase resilience to climate stresses and ensure access to energy, food, and clean air and water.

How should we quantify the impacts of the investments outlined in President Biden’s infrastructure plan? How can we best ensure that our infrastructure stays resilient in the future?

Baker: We can no longer look at past performance of our infrastructure and say, “we want more of that.” Society increasingly has higher expectations for resilience, and systems that worked in the past will not work in the future. We need science and engineering models to help us understand future demands on our infrastructure, help us design for increased demands, including adaptive features and help us quantify benefits relative to a status quo path.

Fletcher: Our infrastructure must be prepared to handle a wider range of climate conditions than ever before. In order to make our scarce resources for resilience go farther, we need to identify which infrastructure systems need to be hardened today vs. where we can take a wait-and-see approach to adapt our infrastructure as the climate changes. We must also consider how infrastructure systems interact with our society, and build community resilience as well. If electricity systems fail during a storm, we need to make sure backup plans are in place so that people still have access to water, heat, and medical care. These plans should start with our most vulnerable communities.

What are some potential downsides of investing in resilient infrastructure?

Suckale: It ultimately depends on what is considered “infrastructure.” It is easy to associate “infrastructure” only with “grey” solutions, such as drains, dams or roads, but there are compelling alternatives in working with nature rather than against it. These “green” solutions can

range from restored ecosystems mitigating flood risk to trees in urban areas improving air quality and have the advantage of being naturally adaptive. My hope is that this initiative will adopt a broad definition of infrastructure that goes beyond the “grey” and hopefully includes green and other colors of the rainbow.

How does climate-safe infrastructure relate to under-served communities and racial justice?

Baker: Privileged households are more likely to have resources to navigate disasters by relocating, paying for repairs and using savings to compensate for lost income. So, disadvantaged households are often much more affected, even for the same level of physical disruption. They are also often more affected due to living in higher-risk areas. Further, under-served communities often struggle to access recovery funding and advocate for infrastructure repairs.

Billington: Recently, strong linkages have been found between design features of the built environment and historical housing policies that may be directly responsible for disproportionate exposure of underserved populations to current heat events. Addressing urban heat island effects through attention to both built and natural infrastructure in cities can help address these inequities.

How can policymakers at federal, state and municipal levels assess and support decision-making around related issues, such as building codes, resilience planning initiatives and investment decisions?

Baker: Relevant agencies should require infrastructure projects to be designed while considering future risks from climate change. Reinstating the Obama-era Federal Flood Risk Management Standard would be a good step in this direction. Private entities should also be required to assess and report their risk from exposure to climate change impacts – increased transparency about these risks would benefit all decision-makers.

What about the carbon footprint of infrastructure itself – what can we do to reduce it?

Billington: In the U.S., buildings alone account for over 30 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions and 40 percent of total energy consumption. The average building designer has a potentially thousand-fold greater impact on atmospheric carbon dioxide than the behavior of an average citizen over their lifetime. The carbon dioxide avoidance possible through decarbonizing buildings both in terms of materials used and energy for operations is on the order of Gigatons. It’s big.

Billington, Diffenbaugh, Fletcher and Suckale are also fellows at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment.

# # #

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THIS JUST IN … GOVERNOR NEWSOM ANNOUNCES $5.1 BILLION PACKAGE FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND DROUGHT RESPONSE AS PART OF $100 BILLION CALIFORNIA COMEBACK PLAN

Package Includes Billions for Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure, With a Focus on Small and Disadvantaged Communities

Maven | May 10, 2021 | Office of the Governor

Governor Gavin Newsom today proposed a $5.1 billion package of immediate drought response and long-term water resilience investments to address immediate, emergency needs, build regional capacity to endure drought and safeguard water supplies for communities, the economy and the environment. The Governor's proposal comes as part of a week-long tour highlighting the Administration's comprehensive recovery plan tackling the most persistent challenges facing California.

"Shoring up our water resilience, especially in small and disadvantaged communities, is imperative to safeguarding the future of our state in the face of devastating climate change impacts that are intensifying drought conditions and threatening our communities, the economy and the environment," said Governor Newsom. "This package of bold investments will equip the state with the tools we need to tackle the drought emergency head-on while addressing long-standing water challenges and helping to secure vital and limited water supplies to sustain our state into the future."

In addition to the $5.1 billion investment, the Governor is proposing $1 billion to help Californians pay their overdue water bills.

The Governor announced the package today in Merced County while visiting the San Luis Reservoir, which sits at less than half of capacity and just 57 percent of average for this date. Earlier in the day, Governor Newsom significantly expanded his April 21 drought emergency proclamation to include Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Tulare Lake Watershed counties. In total, 41 counties are now under a drought state of emergency, representing 30 percent of the state's population.

Governor Newsom announces $5.1 billion drought and water infrastructure package at San Luis Reservoir.

- The Governor's $5.1 billion proposed investment, over four years, aligns with his July 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio, a roadmap to water security for all Californians in the face of climate change. It is shaped by lessons learned during the 2012-16 drought, such as the need to act early and gather better data about water systems. The package includes:

- $1.3 billion for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, with a focus on small and disadvantaged communities.
- $150 million for groundwater cleanup and water recycling projects.

- $300 million for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implementation to improve water supply security, water quality and water reliability.
- $200 million for water conveyance improvements to repair major water delivery systems damaged by subsidence.
- $500 million for multi-benefit land repurposing to provide long-term, flexible support for water users.
- $230 million for wildlife corridor and fish passage projects to improve the ability of wildlife to migrate safely.
- $200 million for habitat restoration to support tidal wetland, floodplain, and multi-benefit flood-risk reduction projects.
- $91 million for critical data collection to repair and augment the state's water data infrastructure to improve forecasting, monitoring, and assessment of hydrologic conditions.
- $60 million for State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program grants to help farmers reduce irrigation water use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural pumping.
- $33 million for fisheries and wildlife support to protect and conserve California's diverse ecosystems.
- $27 million for emergency and permanent solutions to drinking water drought emergencies.

Learn more about current conditions, the state's response and informational resources available to the public at the state's new drought preparedness website.

# # #

DWR Awards $26 Million in Grants to Support Critically Overdrafted Groundwater Basins
Ca. Department of Water Resources | April 23, 2021

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today awarded $26 million in grant funding for capital project investments to improve water supply security, water quality and the reliability of domestic wells – advancing access to safe, affordable drinking water.

This funding provides important assistance for successful local implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which establishes a framework for managing the state's groundwater resources and will help California be better prepared for longer, more severe droughts.

"California's current drought conditions following a second consecutive dry year speak to the importance of managing our groundwater for long-term reliability," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. "Today's funding awards further the state's support for local leaders as they manage their groundwater supplies, particularly supporting communities at risk of drought impacts."

Groundwater, an important source of water that is stored underground, often serves as a critical buffer against the impacts of drought and climate change. This grant funding supports projects that enhance groundwater quality, help make groundwater wells more reliable and less likely to run dry, reduce the risk of subsidence, increase drought resiliency, reduce flood risks, and create more reliable dry-year water supplies during future droughts.

The six awards include 16 individual construction projects within critically overdrafted groundwater basins in the Central Valley. One of the projects, located in Fresno County, will construct 60 wells that will be used to replenish depleted groundwater aquifers with stormwater..

An additional three projects will create infrastructure to use Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR) on 45,000 acres of agricultural land in Madera County. Flood-MAR is an integrated resource management strategy that harnesses flood water from rainfall or snow melt and redirects it onto agricultural, working landscapes, and managed natural lands to recharge parched aquifers.

All of the awards will partially or solely benefit underrepresented communities that have limited access to safe, affordable drinking water. Funding for these awards was made possible by voter-approved Proposition 68. DWR will begin working with grantees immediately to develop and execute grant agreements. The selection of a second round of grants is expected to begin in spring 2022 and will offer approximately $70 million in competitive grant funding.

For more information, please visit the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program webpage.

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PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN EXPOSES THE VULNERABILITY SOME CALIFORNIANS FACE KEEPING UP WITH WATER BILLS

Western Water In-Depth: Growing mountain of water bills spotlights affordability and hurdles to implementing a statewide assistance program

Western Water | April 30, 2021 | Gary Pitzer

As California slowly emerges from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, one remnant left behind by the statewide lockdown offers a sobering reminder of the economic challenges still ahead for millions of the state's residents and the water agencies that serve them – a mountain of water debt.

Water affordability concerns, long an issue in a state where millions of people struggle to make ends meet, jumped into overdrive last year as the pandemic wrenched the economy. Jobs were lost and household finances were upended. Even with federal stimulus aid and unemployment checks, bills fell by the wayside.

The crisis heightened the financial vulnerability many ratepayers face and spotlighted the larger issue of water affordability. The State Water Resources Control Board, after surveying water agencies about unpaid bills, reported in January that about 12 percent of California households, some 5 million people, are behind on their water bills with an average debt of $500 per household. The figure has grown steadily since then, approaching a collective $1 billion.

Until the State Water Board's survey, "we knew there was crisis, but we didn't have a sense of the order of magnitude," said Laurel Firestone, a State Water Board member. "I think it reinforces how much of a crisis this is and has elevated the urgency around addressing affordability."

Despite the mounting water debt, delinquent ratepayers haven't lost water service thanks to an ongoing statewide moratorium on utility shutoffs during the pandemic. The moratorium was signed by Gov. Newsom on April 2, 2020, to prevent people from losing their water, particularly because of the need to wash hands to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. But the crisis illustrates how unpaid water bills hurt customers and water agencies in different ways.

For water agencies, delinquencies during the pandemic are at a level they have not seen before. "We have this core population that we never had before that would have paid their bills but are not paying," said Jennifer Bryant, director of administrative service with the Helix Water District in eastern San Diego County. Some, she added, are as many as six bills behind.

The Prop. 218 Hurdle

Solving the short-term problem of mounting COVID-19-related water debt and the longer-term issue of water affordability is complicated. A 1996 voter initiative, Proposition 218, essentially bars public water agencies from using ratepayer funds to pay for a rate assistance program. (Investor-owned utilities, regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission, are not constrained by Prop. 218.)

Some public water agencies, like Helix, have tapped into creative finance methods to develop workarounds or temporary programs to offer some kind of aid. However, 56 percent of

Californians have a water service provider that does not offer rate assistance to low-income customers, according to the State Water Board. On top of that, some agencies are reluctant to take on the administrative costs of assessing customer eligibility, with some enlisting outside social service agencies to handle that task.

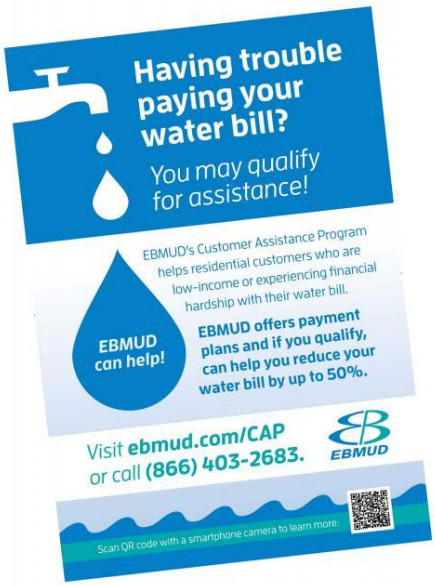
Helix, in February, dedicated $500,000 from surplus land sales to fund its assistance program that started in early April. The program, administered by a local nonprofit, offers a one-time credit of up to $300 for single-family residential customers who are behind on their water bills. Bryant said the district doesn't know how far the money will stretch.

"One question we have is how many people are really in need and how many aren't paying because they just don't have to where before they had the threat of a shutoff," she said. Still, the district's board wanted to find a legally tenable way to help customers in need.

With Prop. 218, she said, "our hands were tied, which was very frustrating."

Devising A Rate Assistance Framework

Public water agencies have tough water quality standards to meet and infrastructure to maintain, and those costs get passed on to customers. Many agencies are facing old conveyance systems that are expensive to replace.



For more than 30 years, East Bay MUD's customer assistance program has provided eligible customers credit on their water bills. (Source: East Bay Municipal Utility District)

There isn't much budget flexibility. When customers can't pay, that crimps the bottom line, especially for small water agencies.

"What I've seen over time is that for small water districts, it's very difficult for them to amortize costs of water treatment over a small rate group," said Sen. Bill Dodd, D-Napa. He is carrying legislation that would create a statewide low-income rate assistance fund. How it would be funded is still to be determined.

"Everybody needs to pay their water bill," Dodd said, but no one should be left without water.

In 2015, Dodd authored legislation that required the State Water Board to recommend a framework for a low-income rate assistance program. That report, finalized just before the pandemic hit in 2020, outlined the structure of low-income rate assistance, with possible funding coming from taxes on high personal income earners, bottled water taxes, surcharges on non-eligible households' water bills or a soda tax.

As it stands, water bill assistance funded by ratepayers only exists for eligible customers of larger investor-owned water utilities, serving 1.4 million California customers but does not exist at public water agencies serving millions more in the state because of Prop. 218. The reaction by California's public water agency community to a proposal for a low-income rate assistance

program depends on how the program is written and funded, said Cindy Tuck, deputy executive director of government relations with the Association of California Water Agencies.

“We think there could be an effective statewide low-income rate assistance program for water, but it needs to be efficient and formulaic so that high administrative costs do not reduce the benefit to low-income households,” she said.

Details of a rate assistance program matter, Tuck said. “We think it should rely on a state agency that has experience implementing a low-income assistance program,” she said. “Another key piece is that it needs a good funding source that is progressive, not regressive.”

Furthermore, the idea of a public water agency creating a special fund to help low-income or senior ratepayers could raise questions of fairness among other ratepayers, said Bryant, with Helix Water District.

“We can only charge a customer what it costs to provide service to their parcel,” Bryant said. “A low-income program paid with water bill revenue says you have to pay part of your neighbor’s bill if they don’t pay it. That feels a little uncomfortable for some customers.”

Finding Creative Ways to Help

Water bills vary widely in California, based on the source of the water and the extent of water treatment. In some cases, a bill includes charges for electricity, wastewater, stormwater, taxes and fees. Rates are often structured as tiers or blocks. It also depends on the customer. Condominium dwellers with no outside irrigation might pay $20 each month while a 2-acre mansion in the hills of Santa Barbara with lush green grass might pay hundreds of dollars a month.

Customers in the Helix service area typically pay $77.56 per month for their water. In Northern California, ratepayers served by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) pay about $63 per month.

East Bay Municipal Utility District’s Andrew Lee said there’s been a noticeable increase in demand for customer assistance.

Some public agencies are better positioned to help with water rates. In San Francisco, the city started an emergency assistance program at the beginning of the pandemic. Paid for in part through the city’s general fund, the program offers reduced rates for water and sewer services to qualified applicants. The program, which launched in May 2020, was set to expire at the end of last year but will now be expanded through the end of June 2021 and could be extended again.

“We hope to take some of the lessons learned from this emergency program – how to make the application process easier, how to reach more customers – and improve our existing discount program so that households still struggling can apply for it,” said Will Reisman with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

In Alameda County, the pandemic has spurred increased participation in East Bay Municipal Utility District's long-standing customer assistance program.

"We saw a 20 percent growth in participation in 12 months," said Andrew Lee, the district's manager of customer and community services. "Typically, we would see a 4 to 5 percent increase."

For more than 30 years, East Bay MUD's customer assistance program has provided eligible customers credit on their water bills, at a maximum of 1,050 gallons per person per month. The program is largely funded from the proceeds of real estate leases the district has with telecommunications providers.

"Fortunately, we do have a pretty good program to create non-rate revenue to fund the customer assistance program," Lee said.

In Riverside County, Eastern Municipal Water District's Help2Others program pays $100 of a low-income customer's water bill, one time in a 12-month period. The program is funded with non-rate revenues, such as income from land leases.

"EMWD partnered with United Way to assist our customers in the most efficient and sustainable way possible," said Amanda Fine, Eastern's spokeswoman. "United Way administers the program, so we do not have to possess sensitive customer information like income data."

The district offers other programs to help customers in need, such as budget-based water rates where low-use customers pay an extremely low water rate.

Fine said the district notifies customers via phone, email and the postal service to help inform them of payment assistance options. More than 4,000 overdue customers have been called, she said, adding that the district is working to connect customers to Riverside County to apply for funding through the federal 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. The county has paid off $52,800 in customer water bills through the federal program.


emwd

Payment Assistance Programs

EMWD is here to help!

We understand the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant financial challenges for many of our customers. EMWD has been working with customers to bring accounts current by waiving late fees and offering payment plans or extensions.

Below are additional payment options and resources available to our customers:

Payment Extensions: Schedule a payment extension by using EMWD's My Account portal at www.myaccount.emwd.org.

Payment Arrangements: You can request short-term or longer-term payment arrangements based on specified criteria.

Level Payment Program: This enables qualified customers to pay EMWD bills in equal monthly payments.

Help2Others Program: In partnership with United Way of Inland Valley, EMWD provides financial assistance to qualified, low-income customers. For more information, visit www.emwd.org/help2others.

Water Budget Based Rate Structure: EMWD's rate structure is designed to provide the lowest rates to customers who stay within their water budget. If you need assistance in lowering your water use, please contact our Water Use Efficiency staff at conservation@emwd.org or 951.928.3777 ext. 3322.

For more information call our Customer Service Department at 800.426.3693 or visit www.emwd.org/payment-assistance-programs

January 2021

Eastern Municipal Water District's Help2Others program pays $100 of a low-income customer's water bill, one time in a 12-month period. (Source: Eastern Municipal Water District)

For now, financing a low-income rate assistance program means getting creative to find money.

"Whether its excess land lease revenues, cell tower lease revenues or donations, these are not ongoing, sustainable, significant funding sources, but they are the only option available to public systems because they are subject to Prop. 218," said Max Gomberg, the State Water Board's water conservation manager who contributed to the 2020 rate assistance report.

More federal relief is on the way, but the $1.1 billion allocated thus far by Congress for water and wastewater assistance is spread across all 50 states and Indian tribes, which means California will have more need than it can respond to. Gomberg said California expects to get about $90 million to help water systems catch up. The state has yet to determine the specifics of the how the funds will be distributed.

One-time state funding is needed quickly to help with the level of water debt that has accrued because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tuck said. ACWA and other statewide associations are urging lawmakers and the governor to dedicate at least $1 billion from the state's budget surplus to public water agencies and publicly owned electric utilities for that purpose.

Rising Cost of Water

California's Human Right to Water Law in 2012 sparked a greater recognition that a lot of Californians face challenges in accessing safe and affordable water. Advocates say addressing part of that equation means providing a safety net for low-income residents statewide.

"In many cases the human right to water hasn't meant enough," Michael Claiborne with the Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability said on the March 11 Then There's California podcast. "Progress has been made but there are still far too many Californians that lack access to safe and affordable water."

According to the State Water Board, adjusting for inflation, the average California household paid about 45 percent more per month for drinking water service in 2015 than in 2007. The burden of that increase "falls disproportionately on the 13 million Californians living in low-income households, many of whom have seen their incomes stagnate during the same period," the State Water Board's affordability report said. "The high and rising costs of other basic needs for California residents, including housing, food, and other utility services, mean that cost increases for any single need, such as water, can force families to make difficult and risky tradeoffs which could harm their health and welfare."

Kurt Schwabe, professor of environmental economics and policy at the University of California, Riverside, said while the 45 percent figure sounds large, it does not convey the complete picture if a rate increase leads to more reliable and/or higher quality water.

That, he said, could be thought of as a bargain over time, though he acknowledged "a bargain to one household may still be a barrier to another household."

Schwabe's research, which includes surveying about 130,000 households in Eastern Municipal Water District, has shown that while water and sewer service bills are significantly lower than expenditures on other essential goods like housing, transportation and health care, they are, as a fraction of income, much higher for lower income households.

On the water delivery side, public water agencies, particularly small ones, are challenged in keeping water rates affordable when they must comply with ever-tightening water quality standards as well as system upkeep.

“It is a struggle,” said Jim Maciel, board member with the Armona Community Services District in Kings County, south of Fresno. The district has weathered the storm from the pandemic by tapping reserves, and none of Armona’s 1,200 customers have had water service cut off, he said. Fourteen customers owe more than $700 as of March 1, and seven owe more than $1,000. But neighboring water providers are in worse shape. “We’ve got enough of a critical mass that we are able to cover it but not forever.”

Part of the problem, Maciel said, is the requirements for small systems to meet drinking water standards. Many times, the treatment solutions are expensive, even with grant funding. “It’s just very hard for us to cover our costs,” Maciel said.

Water policy experts say a low-income rate assistance program is one of the most intuitive ways to make water affordable. Greg Pierce, a researcher at UCLA and contributing author to the State Water Board report, said even with rate reform that could offer breaks for low-volume customers, direct assistance is needed because “there will still be low-income customers who even the most progressive rates can’t fully help.”

The State Water Board report said the biggest obstacle faced by existing programs is their limited funding and inability to support households that are most in need. Complicating the issue is that many low-income households live in apartments and don’t pay a water bill directly. In addition, many assistance programs have low enrollment levels and provide insufficient support, the State Water Board’s report said.

Firestone, the State Water Board member, regularly encountered the affordability issue in her prior work with the Community Water Center, the Visalia-based nonprofit she co-founded. “When you are a tiny system,” she said, “it’s just not feasible to have a low-income ratepayer assistance program if all of your 50 customers are low-income.”

Finding A Solution

While the COVID-19 pandemic will eventually recede, paying water bills on time will remains an issue for many Californians.

Pierce, the UCLA researcher, said a robust rate assistance program could have alleviated much of the water debt associated with the pandemic as well as largely avoiding the discussion of halting water shutoffs. He said officials should concentrate in the future on promoting system consolidation, rate reform, low-income assistance and shutoff prevention.

In the meantime, he said, the outstanding water debt will probably be taken care of by making sure higher income customers pay the full amount they owe, increased and extended debt management and partial repayment plans, absorption of lost revenue by utilities and some level of shutoffs due to non-payment.

Uriel Saldivar, senior policy advocate with Community Water Center, said a low-income rate assistance program should be available for all who need it, not just those served by investor-owned utilities. “We don’t want to have a disparity, we want something universal,” he said.

Saldivar said he believes the opportunity exists to get a bill through the Legislature and signed by the governor. “This really does go across all sectors, all demographics and across the aisle,” he said.

Dodd, the state senator from Napa, said he believes the political will exists to get something done and he’s willing to do what it takes to get his bill through. “I’m an incrementalist,” he said. “Let’s get started, let’s get a fund built up. I’m not asking for any big allocation out of the state budget.”

Firestone said she is optimistic a solution can be reached.

“Doing nothing is not an option,” she said. “Whether we get to a perfect outcome or a clear, long-term outcome, I think we will be establishing programs that haven’t existed before because of the scale and magnitude of the crisis.”

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Mayor Breed taps City Attorney Herrera to lead agency roiled by S.F. City Hall corruption scandal

San Francisco Chronicle | April 27, 2021 | Trisha Thadani

Gabrielle Lurie / The Chronicle

Mayor London Breed nominated City Attorney Dennis Herrera on Monday to be general manager of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, a significant decision that will allow her to appoint someone to fill his position until the next election.

Whoever Breed appoints to the city attorney job would oversee an ongoing probe into a sweeping City Hall corruption scandal, a local investigation that Herrera launched in January 2020. That puts pressure on Breed to tap someone who's seen as independent from her and others at City Hall.

Herrera has been a longtime fixture in San Francisco politics, winning the city attorney position six times since he was first elected in 2001. News of his potential departure shocked many in City Hall, and some members of the Board of Supervisors criticized the decision and questioned the optics of the mayor appointing the next leader of the corruption investigation.

Monday's announcement also made it increasingly likely that the board would call for a local election this year, which they can do due to the likely statewide recall election of Gov. Gavin Newsom. That means Breed's appointment may have to immediately run to keep the seat — but only if they're appointed more than 120 days before the election.

Such is the latest twist in the ongoing City Hall corruption scandal, which has led to the arrest and resignation of several city contractors and department heads and the shuffling of several public officials into new positions. Herrera launched his public corruption probe shortly before the U.S. Attorney's Office publicly announced it had charged former Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru with fraud and lying to the FBI.

Among the city officials indicted in a separate federal probe: former SFPUC general manager Harlan Kelly, who resigned Nov. 30 after the FBI charged him with accepting bribes from a city contractor and permit consultant. If the commission approves Herrera's appointment, he would take over that department, which has been roiled by the scandal.

If he's shot down by the commission, Herrera would remain city attorney. But he told the Chronicle on Sunday that it's "unlikely" he would run for re-election in 2023.

"It's time for a new challenge for me," Herrera said. "After several discussions (with the mayor), the prospect of putting the city's top watchdog at the head of the PUC was appealing to both of us."

Herrera would manage a big department — about 2,300 employees and an annual operating budget of about $700 million. He would oversee an agency with massive reach in the everyday lives of San Franciscans, managing contracts for water, power and sewer systems.

Supervisor Rafael Mandelman said Herrera is an institution in San Francisco politics, and he's confident the mayor will appoint someone in his place that the public has "complete confidence" in. He would not comment on whether he was interested in the city attorney position.

Other supervisors — and frequent critics of the mayor — were more skeptical.

"It feels wrong," said Supervisor Hillary Ronen. "This is the type of backdoor dealing that got us into the corruption probe in the first place, and it should be the last thing that we're doing going forward."

Supervisor Matt Haney said the independence of the City Attorney's Office is "so essential, especially in the midst of an active corruption investigation."

Breed said she nominated Herrera because of his "work ethic, guidance and support of the city." The mayor also said recruiting someone to lead the PUC has been challenging amid the investigation, and she's grateful that Herrera is willing to take on the role.

When asked about the optics of appointing the next person to lead the local investigation in the City Attorney's Office, Breed said, "It is offensive to imply that someone like Dennis would take on a position like this, and not be confident in my ability to make the right decision for what is one of the most respected city attorney offices in the country."

While the city attorney does not lead the investigation's day-to-day operations, Herrera has been the face of the local probe. His office, along with the city controller's, has issued 24 subpoenas to various companies and nonprofits as part of the investigation.

Herrera said he's "absolutely" confident that his successor will uphold the integrity of the investigation, and will also remain independent.

David Anderson, the former U.S. attorney for the Northern District of California who led the federal investigation into the corruption scandal, said he wouldn't expect any leadership change to influence the investigation.

"The line attorneys who actually drive the work of the office like the City Attorney's Office don't roll over just because there's a change in leadership," he said. "Big investigations have deep roots inside these offices."

It will still likely be several weeks before Breed can appoint anyone. The five-member commission that oversees the SFPUC must interview Herrera, then decide whether to formally recommend him to the mayor.

While the city is not legally required to hold a local election at the same time as the statewide recall election, a majority of the Board of Supervisors can vote to call for one. On Monday, at least four supervisors said they'd be interested in doing so, particularly so that voters decide on Breed's appointment.

Assemblymember David Chiu — whose name, along with Mandelman's, was one of several City Hall insiders discussed as a potential city attorney pick — said he didn't have the time Monday to give the news "the consideration it deserves."

"I love representing San Francisco in the legislature," he said. "Throughout my career I've always considered where I can best serve the city I love, and will continue to do that."

Meanwhile, David Campos, chief of staff for the District Attorney and a former progressive supervisor, said he would "certainly consider" running for the position this year if he's able to.

If the city does not hold a local election this year, whoever is appointed to replace Herrera would have to run during the June 2022 midterm election.

The next city attorney will step into an office that has gained national attention for its work on cases related to climate change, gun control, same-sex marriage and sanctuary cities under

Herrera's leadership. Most recently, the city attorney grabbed headlines for suing the city's school board over what he said was a sluggish reopening plan.

Herrera would take over the Public Utilities Commission at a particularly challenging time. But he said it's "more important than ever" for the SFPUC to have a general manager who can bring "ethical, responsible and decisive" leadership to that role.

He would take over from acting general manager Michael Carlin.

It's unclear how much money Herrera would make in the new position. His compensation would be part of a contract negotiation if the commission confirms him. As city attorney, he made about $342,459 in 2019 in salary and benefits, according to Transparent California. Kelly made about $469,593 in salary and benefits.

Herrera said the decision to step aside from the City Attorney's Office was incredibly difficult, and it has been an "honor and a privilege" to lead the office for nearly 20 years.

"I recognize that this is going to be a shock to some people," he said, his voice catching. "But everybody has their time. And I think, for me, this is the right time for this move."

# # #

Mayor nominates City Attorney Herrera to lead SFPUC
KTVU Fox 2 News | April 26, 2021| Daniel Montes

SAN FRANCISCO - Mayor London Breed on Monday said she has nominated City Attorney Dennis Herrera to lead the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission as general manager.

Next, the five-member commission that oversees the commission is expected to interview Herrera, and if he is selected, will forward a recommendation to the mayor, who would then formally appoint him.

The move would mark a major milestone for Herrera, who has served as city attorney for two decades after first being elected to the position by voters back in 2001.

"Dennis has been a great champion in San Francisco across a wide range of issues from civil rights to protecting our environment, and most importantly he has been someone who always puts the people of this city first," Breed said in a statement.

Herrera said he would cherish the work done by the City Attorney's Office over the past two decades.

"We advanced equality for all, pushed affordable housing at every turn, gave our children better opportunities to grow and thrive, and took innovative steps to protect the environment," Herrera said. "We never shied from the hard fights. Above all, our approach to government has had an unwavering focus on equity, ethics and integrity."

Herrera added, "I am ready to take the lead in ensuring that all San Franciscans have sustainable and affordable public power, clean and reliable water, and, overall, a public utility that once again makes them proud. I want to thank Mayor Breed for this unique opportunity to stand up for ratepayers and usher in a new era of clean leadership at the top of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission."

The SFPUC has been seeking a new general manager since former general manager Harlan Kelly resigned in November 2020. Federal prosecutors charged Kelly with wire fraud, accusing him of accepting gifts including cash and vacations from a construction company executive seeking to secure a multi-million-dollar contract with the city.

The SFPUC oversees the generation of clean power for the city's buildings, residents and businesses through programs like CleanPowerSF, and also oversees the delivery of drinking water and the treatment of wastewater. The commission is tasked with providing oversight for the SFPUC's rates and charges, services, approval of contracts and organization policies.

The commission's process to select a new SFPUC general manager could take several weeks, according to the mayor's office.

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