

# NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public Outreach**

Organized by date

# Fast-moving storm could dump heavy rain on Southern California

Source: LA Times 1/29/16

Just days before [Punxsutawney Phil](#) is scheduled to emerge from his groundhog home in Pennsylvania and predict the duration of winter, human forecasters say California will get pummeled by rain and up to three feet of snow this weekend, thanks to an atmospheric river.

For Southern California, the heaviest rains are expected to fall on Sunday and could trigger mud and debris flows near recent burn areas, as well as widespread pooling of water on roadways, according to the [National Weather Service](#).

Forecasters say a damp band of air originating in the tropical Pacific Ocean is headed for California. Once it arrives, this river of vapor will slam into Northern California's towering Sierra Nevada, "just dumping and dumping so much moisture," said meteorologist Alex Hoon, of the National Weather Service in Reno.

"We have a pretty healthy looking winter storm coming in the Sierra," he said.

In Southern California, the fast-moving storm will bring three to six hours of moderate to heavy rain on Sunday, as well as high surf, mountain snow and gusty winds.

Heavy snows are possible above 6,000 feet, and snow elevations will drop quickly late Sunday, possibly affecting traffic along Interstate 5 near the Grapevine that evening or early Monday.

At the beaches, surf could reach 20 feet along the central coast and 14 feet near Ventura Harbor. The high surf will likely cause beach erosion with dangerous breaking waves at Morro Bay and Ventura Harbor entrances.

This weekend's storm has a number of unpredictable qualities, say forecasters. If it lingers longer than a day over a region it could cause flooding throughout California, Hoon said.

In the Sierra, snow flurries could begin blanketing high elevations by Friday, with snowfall likely increasing through the weekend. Forecasters say the Sierra will likely see 1 to 2 feet of snow on mountains above 8,000 feet. Up to 3 feet of snow is expected to cover the communities north of Mammoth Mountain and south of Lake Tahoe.

Forecasters warned that the threat of an avalanche will be considerable Friday, because of the combination of wet snow and wind on higher mountain elevations. The falling snow is "classic Sierra concrete," meaning it will be heavy wet snow, Hoon said.

The storm should be more good news for California's snowpack, which this month reached its highest level in five years.

"This storm is going to add to that," Hoon said. But Hoon warned that one season of rain is not enough to get California out of drought.

# Fox Canyon moves toward meter system to track groundwater use

Source: Ventura County Star 1/28/16



It was something of a hallelujah moment Wednesday afternoon for those managing groundwater use on the Oxnard plain and inland areas.

A new approach that will rely on gathering accurate pumping data from mandatory installation of automated meters is likely to replace a system of self-reporting that, officials say, hasn't provided a true picture of what's going on in stressed groundwater basins. The basins are key to Ventura County's agriculture industry and also provide some drinking water for the cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Ventura, Camarillo and Moorpark.

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***"This is a very significant vote we took today," said Steve Bennett, one of five members of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency, which regulates the local basins. Bennett, who is also a Ventura County supervisor, called the spirit of cooperation a "dramatic improvement" over past efforts to regulate supplies. "I'm as encouraged as I've been," he said.***

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In recent years, meetings were sometimes contentious as the drought triggered declining groundwater levels and heavy pumping increased seawater intrusion in some coastal areas.

The agency unanimously approved a move toward the data-centric system, which has been developed in recent months by growers groups. Details must still be worked out and it's not clear whether it will be possible to have the automated meters installed on all wells before an Aug. 1 deadline.

The new approach will allow users to develop water markets and other tactics that, those involved say, will ultimately lead to better management and long-term health of the groundwater basins.

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***"We have finally come to grips with the reality of the situation," agency Chairman Lynn Maulhardt said. Instead of having groups fighting, groups are meeting, he said, and "huge discussions are going on."***

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As is common with water discussions, not everything was harmonious.

A staff report showed municipal and industrial users, called M&I, had overall met a goal to reduce groundwater pumping by 20 percent last year.

Agricultural users had not, but several growers commented the numbers were complicated and did not reflect significant conservation efforts. Pumping was actually reduced during last year's exceptionally dry growing season, they said, even though no surface supplies from the Santa Clara River were delivered.

Currently, four of the automated metering systems have been installed, including on Maulhardt's wells, as part of a two-week trial to prove they can work.

Originally, Fox Canyon staff had hoped a sole-source contract with the company installing the test meters could lead to quick implementation of the plan. But agency staff said several companies are interested in providing the systems so there will be a time-consuming bid process that could make the August goal untenable.



An Important Message for LVMWD Customers

## Irrigation Restrictions Changed Take Charge of Your Water Use

LVMWD's "Water Budget" program is now in place. That means customers have the freedom to manage their monthly water use, including which days and how frequently they water. Here are some important points to remember:

- ✓ **The drought is NOT over – do not waste water**
- ✓ **All other drought restrictions remain in place**
- ✓ **Stay within your water budget to avoid paying more**
- ✓ **Your water budget will change each month**

Find your water budget targets at: [www.LVMWD.com/MyWaterBudget](http://www.LVMWD.com/MyWaterBudget)

Customers who stay within their monthly budgets will pay the lowest rates.

### Is your billing information current?

Your indoor water budget and sewer service charges are now based on the number of persons in your household. If you did not respond to last year's customer survey, you could be paying more than necessary.



For more information on the Water Budget program and current drought conservation measures, visit [www.LVMWD.com](http://www.LVMWD.com)

Source: The Acorn 1/28/16

## **Water rates**

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District notes in their newest release that the drought is not over, but more irrigation and lawn watering is allowed.

Two big concerns we must be aware of are: as this new policy accompanies a new billing system, I can only imagine the fun and ch

icanery that will ensue; and the allowance of more watering means more money for LVMWD, which has felt a financial hit from our necessary conservation.

Again, I just don't feel any of their moves, policies or actions are conservation- or consumeroriented. They simply cannot be trusted even though they're supposed to be the guardian of a pretty important resource, our water.

Here's to the next elections and tossing these clowns out of office.

**Randall Kennedy**  
**Agoura Hills**

# California's snowpack is deepest in five years after recent storms

Source: LA Times 1/27/16

California's current snowpack is the deepest it has been in five years -- a modest, yet encouraging milestone in a period of prolonged drought.

Readings of the Sierra Nevada snowpack on Tuesday showed water content statewide was 18.7 inches, or 115% of the historical average for that date, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

Water officials say the good news is that California's snowpack and reservoirs have benefited from El Niño rainstorms. But they warned that it was too soon to determine whether winter rains were enough to make any major dent on the California's drought.

The snowpack's water content must be significantly greater than the April 1 average of 28 inches to have any considerable effect on [the drought](#), according to the department.

Water levels in the state's reservoirs have increased since Dec. 1, but storage is still far below historical averages.

Water officials will take manual measurements at dozens of snow courses in a 10-day period next month to determine just how much water is in the state's snowpack.

In an average year, melting snowpack provides roughly one third of the water used by California cities and farms.

2015 was a brutal snowpack year, officials said.

Above-average temperatures and below-normal precipitation resulted in a historically meager snowpack, according to the department. The snowpack measured at only 23% of average last February. Snow water content levels dipped further in March 2015, measuring at only 19% of average.

The snowpack reached an all-time low on April 1, when water content readings came in at 5% of average. That milestone prompted Gov. Jerry Brown to order mandatory reductions in urban water use.

"The scant snowpack and subsequent drop in snowmelt runoff were large contributors to confirming California's fourth consecutive year of drought," the department said in a statement.

The last time the snowpack was higher was in 2011 when it reached 129% of average.



Editorial

## Time for reform at the DWP

Source: LA Times 1/27/16

Everyone knows about the problems at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Weighed down by bureaucracy, political meddling and cumbersome rules, the nation's largest municipal utility has had a difficult time meeting the challenges of climate change, drought and an aging infrastructure.

Now, Councilman Felipe Fuentes wants to put a measure before city voters that would dramatically change the way the DWP is governed. Under his proposed amendment to the Los Angeles City Charter, the volunteer Board of Water and Power Commissioners that was created 90 years ago to set policy for the utility would be replaced by a full-time board, whose members would have to meet certain qualifications, such as expertise in utility management, environmental policy, consumer advocacy or finance. Board members would serve set terms, and they could not be removed by the mayor. They would be able to hire legal and analytical staff and would theoretically have the power to decide rate increases, approve contracts and hire general managers without City Hall approval. The goal is to allow the utility to operate with less interference from the City Council and the mayor.

The utility is paralyzed by too many bosses with no real responsibility, overlapping lines of authority and competing political interests.-

This isn't exactly a new proposal. As Fuentes points out, this is how the DWP was originally structured under the 1925 City Charter. The citizen commission hired and oversaw the general manager, and the utility was largely independent of City Hall.

On paper that's still the way it works. But in reality, City Hall keeps the DWP on a tight rein. The mayor picks the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, who serve at his pleasure and who have only as much authority as the he chooses to give them. He hires and fires the utility's general manager, which has led to a succession of them in recent years. The City Council has oversight authority as well.

In theory, all this political oversight is supposed to make the DWP more accountable. In practice, however, the utility is paralyzed by too many bosses with no real responsibility, overlapping lines of authority and competing political interests. The result is an agency that is slow to respond to crisis (like the billing system debacle in 2013), can't raise the money needed to upgrade aging pipes and power lines, and can't hire the workers needed to keep the systems running.

There have been five separate recommendations in the last 16 years to fix the DWP's governance structure, yet until now there has never been the appetite in City Hall for serious change at the DWP. A report released in December urged Mayor Eric Garcetti and the City



Council to appoint a committee to come up with a solution that could be put on the 2017 ballot for voter approval. Fuentes, who said he'd already been studying DWP governance reform for a year, said another committee wasn't necessary. His motion calls for putting a charter amendment on the June or November 2016 ballot.

Fuentes' proposal is good start. The DWP is a department badly in need of reform. But a restructuring like this one is all about the details, and the councilman's initial outline raises some tricky questions that have yet to be answered. For example, the newly empowered board would set water and power rates, but the proposal leaves open the possibility that the City Council could still — and presumably would — assert jurisdiction over major decisions. Is that continuing the problem of political meddling or is it a necessary check on the commissioners and the agency to ensure they remain accountable to ratepayers? Fuentes would eliminate civil service protections for DWP workers and give the DWP, rather than the city's personnel department, responsibility for hiring and firing workers. The DWP would still be represented by a union and hiring would still have to follow union rules, but would that provide enough protection against favoritism, nepotism and politicized hiring? Also, Fuentes would cap the annual transfer of “surplus” utility revenue to City Hall at 2010 levels, which would mean more money for DWP operations but less money for police, fire and other basic city services. Is that a good trade-off?

These are complicated questions that deserve a full discussion. Fuentes and his colleagues should not hold up proposed water and power rate increases until governance reform is settled. There ought to be a robust public debate before any charter proposal gets put on the ballot.

# Surf could reach 20 feet as another round of powerful waves hits Southern California

Source: LA Times 1/27/16



High surf, with waves possibly larger than 20 feet, will pummel Central and Southern California beaches through Saturday night, according to forecasters.

The powerful surf will probably excite surfers looking to catch a large wave, but forecasters warn that ocean conditions could be dangerous for inexperienced swimmers. The high surf could produce rip currents, send breaking waves crashing into harbor entrances and cause beach erosion and flooding.

Surf between 10 and 14 feet is expected to pound the central coast until Thursday night, and become more powerful through Saturday, possibly exceeding 20 feet for west to northwest facing central coast beaches, according to the [National Weather Service](#).

Waves at beaches in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties will be modest by comparison. Surf could reach up to 8 feet through Thursday night and 15 feet near Ventura Harbor by Friday.

The powerful surf comes after strong waves battered the San Francisco Bay Area last week. At least one person has died and four people have gone missing, including two BASE jumpers in Big Sur, in the dangerous surf.

This week's turbulent ocean activity is the result of a strong storm over the Central Pacific, bringing a long-period swell.

The rest of the week will remain mostly cloudy, with rain and snow dropping over the Southern California region by Sunday. The colder system could also produce high surf, leading to beach erosion and property damage due to coastal flooding.

"There will be the potential for a very stormy day on Sunday," said meteorologist Curt Kaplan of the National Weather Service in Oxnard.

# El Niño storms erode Pacifica bluff as homes teeter on the edge

Source: LA Times 1/26/16

Apartment buildings lining a rocky cliff overlooking the ocean in Pacifica, Calif., are in peril after recent El Niño storms severely eroded the crumbling bluff.

Video recorded from a drone [posted](#) on YouTube over the weekend shows several buildings on Esplanade Avenue teetering on the cliff's edge as other portions of the bluff appear to have disintegrated into the crashing waves below.

City Manager Lorie Tinfow declared a local emergency after the storms not only wreaked havoc on the cliffside, but also caused damage to Pacifica Pier and the Milagra Watershed. Rains also triggered the failure of a seawall along Beach Boulevard and Santa Maria Avenue in the coastal Bay Area city, about 15 miles south of San Francisco.

"El Niño is hitting the city's coastline very hard and creating almost daily reports of impacts to both public and private property," Tinfow said in a statement.

The apartment buildings in the 300 block of Esplanade Avenue have been deemed uninhabitable and the property owners were working with the city to demolish them.

Residents had been living in another 20-unit apartment building along the same cliff until Monday, when city officials decided it was no longer inhabitable.

Chief building official Mike Cully said cavities were forming along the bluff, compromising south, west and north sides of the building. Cully anticipated the slopes would become more stable in the next few days as they fall back and settle in.

Tinfow called for state and federal assistance to help with the city's failing infrastructure.

Pacifica Police Chief Dan Steidle said officials reached out to the [American Red Cross](#) and Pacifica Resource Center to assist affected residents.

Last week's rainstorm caused minor flooding throughout the Bay Area and dropped more than an inch of rain on Pacifica. King tides -- unusually high tides that occur near the solstices -- pummeled the coastline for days.



# California has so far gotten a break from the flu, and it might be helped by the weather

Source: LA Times 1/25/16

Two years ago, influenza killed [146 Californians](#) between October and late January. When the flu season ended months later, more than 400 people had died of the infection — an outbreak the state rated "moderately severe."

After a huge improvement last year — the season's death toll plummeted to 78 — the situation looks even better now.

There have been just three flu-related deaths in California since October, and experts say the weather could be part of the reason.

Influenza spreads easiest in cold and dry conditions — and California has experienced a largely warm fall and winter, punctuated by heavy rains, especially in the northern part of the state.

Much of the rest of the country has also recorded unusually warm temperatures — the weekend's massive blizzard notwithstanding — in part because of El Niño.

Last month was, on average, the country's hottest and wettest December on record, according to the [National Centers for Environmental Information](#). In other words, December's weather created conditions least conducive to the spread of the flu.

As of mid-January, flu cases were minimal or low in 47 states, according to [data released Friday](#) by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). At the same time last year, activity was minimal or low in 17 states.

Helen Macfie, who monitors emergency room visits at Southern California's six [MemorialCare Hospitals](#), said few patients are showing up with the flu, even at [Long Beach Memorial Medical Center](#), which runs one of the busiest ERs in Los Angeles County.

"We're really seeing very little uptick so far, so mostly more common colds and those sorts of things," she said. "Definitely slower than in prior years."

Still, public health officials warn that flu outbreaks are unpredictable and that the country could still be hit hard in the coming weeks. The flu season often peaks in February, though the past three seasons did so in December, said Lynnette Brammer, an epidemiologist for the CDC.

"We seem like we're back on a more normal pattern actually," she said. "Because recent ones were unusually early, it feels like this one is abnormal."

[With the annual flu](#)With the annual [flu](#) season approaching, federal officials said Thursday that the flu vaccines available in North America this year are a good match to the influenza viruses that are actually on the loose in the United States.

She pointed to new CDC data that show flu activity going up from the first week of January to the second week. "It may peak in February, it may be a little bit later. I don't know, but we're definitely seeing a true increase in flu activity," Brammer said.

Sadina Reynaldo, an epidemiologist with the [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#), said large numbers of people probably aren't falling sick from the flu because most of the strains circulating are the same as last year's. That means that people who were infected last year still have some immunity against the virus.

In Los Angeles County, [456 people had tested positive for the flu](#) as of two weeks ago, according to county data. By that time during last year's flu season, there had been 1,405 flu diagnoses.

According to the CDC, people have been infected this season by H3N2, H1N1 and some B viruses. Though experts say H3 viruses can cause bad flu seasons, with more hospitalizations and deaths, researchers found that the strains circulating now match those included in the available vaccine — meaning that this year's flu shot is probably providing strong immunity.

Reynaldo emphasized that everyone should be vaccinated against the flu, even if they are healthy and likely to recover quickly. "It's not for you," she said, "you don't want to spread it to someone else who may not be so fortunate if they get sick."

James Tamerius, a professor at the [University of Iowa](#) who studies how the environment affects human health, said this year's mild season could be due to the warmer temperatures seen in December. "I don't think it's the sole reason, but it could be delaying it a bit," he said.

Even as numerous Eastern states dig out from the effects of Winter Storm Jonas, forecasts show that the warmer weather will continue in many parts of the country. According to the [National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center](#), a huge swath of the country — the northern half and the West Coast — will experience [unusually warm temperatures](#) into late April, largely because of El Niño.

Tamerius said that it was once believed that the flu was transmitted more in cold weather because people spent more time indoors in closer proximity, making it easier for germs to jump from person to person. However, there isn't much scientific evidence to back that up, he said.

The accepted theory now is that the virus thrives in low humidity, and therefore is more likely to infect somebody who comes into contact with it, he said. It's also possible that spending time in cold, dry air makes humans more susceptible to catching the virus, he said.

"There definitely seems to be a link," he said.



## **News in Brief**

### **LVMWD Lifts One Day a Week Water Reg**

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District has lifted their one-day-per-week irrigation restriction. Instead, under the “Water Budget” billing structure. LVMWD customers may now select their own watering day(s) and durations, while recognizing the need to continue conservation during the ongoing drought emergency. However, all other drought restrictions remain in place, including prohibitions on runoff and watering between 10 am and 5 pm. General Manager David W. Pedersen said, “This is a significant change. The new Water Budget billing structure gives customers flexibility in managing their water use, but we urge everyone to proceed with caution, because exceeding the monthly water budget can be very costly. This change in policy should not be interpreted as an indication the drought is over, we remain in a drought emergency. A penalty of as much as five dollars per billing unit (100 cubic feet) applies for wasteful water use, in addition to the cost of water.” The new rate structure applies individual monthly water budgets to each customer. Included is an indoor use allocation of 55 gallons per person per day and an allowance for outdoor use based on the amount of irrigated area and local weather, which means less water allocated in the cooler months and more during warmer weather. To familiarize customers with their individual monthly budget allocations, an online calculator is available at [www.LVMWD.com/MyWaterBudget](http://www.LVMWD.com/MyWaterBudget).



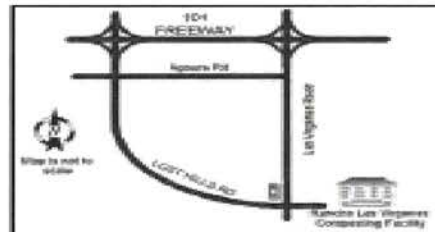
### **Winter Time is Compost Time!**

After the long summer growing season, now's the time to replenish your garden soil with Rancho Las Virgenes Community Compost. Adding compost now allows its nutrients to enrich and blend with your soil through the winter, giving your plants the food they'll need when spring arrives.

Our compost qualifies for the "Class A-Exceptional Quality" rating by the U.S. EPA and is the preferred choice of many local gardeners and landscapers.



**Anyone can pick up FREE compost every Saturday, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at our Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility located at 3700 Las Virgenes Rd in Calabasas.**



For more information, visit [www.LVMWD.com/community-compost](http://www.LVMWD.com/community-compost).



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## ***Learn the Vital Role of Treating Wastewater***

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District is taking reservations now for a February 6 Malibu Creek Watershed tour.

Learn the unique characteristics of this important site and the vital role played by wastewater treatment practices. The tour visits the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility, the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility and the Solar Power Generating Facility. The tour lasts from 8 am to 1 pm.

Breakfast snacks and a light lunch will be provided. For ages 10 and older; under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is a requirement by signing up at [www.LVMWD](http://www.LVMWD).

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## **Calabasas Debuts New Storm Drains**

Calabasas Mayor James Bozajian and the City Council will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Citywide Catch Basin Curb Screen project on Wednesday, January 27, from 4 to 5 pm at Park Granada and Park Sorrento. The City is now in compliance with another requirement of the Clean Water Act; the trash Total Maximum Daily Load for both LA River and Malibu Creek watersheds. The contractor was able to retrofit nearly 1,200 storm drain catch basins throughout the city including gated communities, commercial properties, and educational institutions. The curb screens are made out of stainless steel and are designed to open with heavy rainfall. The curb screens will prevent trash, debris, sediment, and vegetation from entering the storm drain and eventually polluting creeks, rivers, and beaches.

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## **“Water is Life” Artwork on Display at LVMWD**

A traveling display of artworks submitted by students across Southern California interpreting the theme, “Water is Life” will be exhibited at Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) Headquarters, 4232 Las Virgenes Road in Calabasas, from January 26 through February 2 during regular business hours.

The artworks were selected for display from thousands submitted to the 2015 annual student art contest conducted by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, of which LVMWD is a member agency. Free wall calendars featuring some of the artworks will also be available.

LVMWD General Manager David W. Pedersen said, “The public is welcome and encouraged to view how these talented young people interpret the role water plays in our everyday lives. When you consider our changing climate and drought, their messages take on added importance as everyone works to achieve greater water- use efficiency.”

Las Virgenes MWD provides potable water to residents of the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village and adjacent unincorporated areas of Los Angeles county including the Santa Monica Mountains and Chatsworth.

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