NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

US drought reaches record low as rain reigns

USA TODAY
Ventura County Star 4/28/2017

Drought in the U.S. fell to a record low this week, with just 6.1 percent of the lower 4 8 states experiencing abnormally dry conditions, federal officials said Thursday.

That's the lowest percentage in the 1 7-year history of the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor report. The previous record low occurred in July 2 010, when 7.7 percent of the contiguous U.S. was in a drought.

"Drought has certainly been disappearing at a rapid rate this spring," said meteorologist Brad Rippey of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The fiveyear drought in California is practically over, with only about 8 percent of the state currently in drought.

The strong El Nino weather pattern of 2015-16 might have caused the initial decrease last year, he said.

A persistent low-pressure area sitting along the West Coast this year helped fuel the ongoing wet weather, USDA meteorologist Eric Luebehusen said. Low pressure causes air to rise, which allows clouds and precipitation to form. Those storms and wet weather typically meander east-northeast across the central U.S., he said.

2017-04-27 / The Acorn Editorials

So the long drought is over, right?

GUEST OPINION

California's unusually wet winter was welcome news for water agencies and their customers alike. The governor has declared an end to the drought emergency and there are adequate supplies for the foreseeable future. But history shows us that when previous droughts ended, water use gradually returns to pre-drought levels.

This time, we are asking our customers to retain the good practices they've adopted as their water suppliers work to implement projects to mitigate the effects of future shortages.

Over the last five years, most Californians have become more water-efficient. Across the state, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on drought-related messaging, turf removal, water-wise landscapes, and low water use appliances like washing machines, toilets and dishwashers.

If maintained, these changes will have a lasting, beneficial effect. For most, the best way to control water use is to choose "California Friendly" landscaping. As we enter the spring planting season, now is the time to landscape with attractive drought-tolerant varieties that complement a home's curb appeal.

To see real-world examples of beautiful—yet water-stingy— plant types that will thrive in your area, we encourage residents to visit local water-wise demonstration gardens. Information on many can be found at bewaterwise.com.

While increased water-use efficiency is essential, this alone will not ensure water reliability for future generations. As customers improve efficiency, water suppliers are doing their part to improve supplies.

Regionally, several brackish groundwater desalination facilities and "pure water" projects that process recycled water into drinking water are being built to increase local water sustainability.

At the state level, momentum is building for construction of California WaterFix, also known as the Delta tunnels, which will provide more reliable supplies for two-thirds of the state's population while protecting threatened species in the sensitive Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Our agencies, along with many others throughout the state, believe it is imperative that this project moves forward . . . now.

The tunnels will capture large quantities of stormwater that now flow out to the sea under the Golden Gate Bridge every winter. With less snowpack predicted in the years

to come, capturing this stormwater is essential to the social and economic well-being of our state.

The uncertainties of climate change and the looming reality of another drought remind us that water-efficient practices are here to stay.

We thank our customers for their water-wise practices in recent years; clearly they made a difference. Remaining efficient—rain or shine—is the smart and sustainable path forward.

This guest opinion was submitted by Susan Mulligan, general manager of Calleguas Municipal Water District, and David Pedersen, general manager of Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

2017-04-27 / The Acorn Letters

Water rates not based on supply and demand

Eric Bergh of the Calleguas Municipal Water District made a great presentation at the Calvary Church in Newbury Park and explained in detail what is going on with water supply rates. He explained the hundreds of billions of gallons of wasted runoff water up north going directly into the ocean with no collection, no storage tanks, nothing. This is performed (my position) to intentionally raise rates for these monopolies with additional unnecessary regulations.

Water, gas and electricity rising prices have nothing to do with supply and demand. It has to do with the agreement of the governor, state legislators, CPUC, ORA and boards to redistribute our wealth to this monopoly, with the benefits going to government.

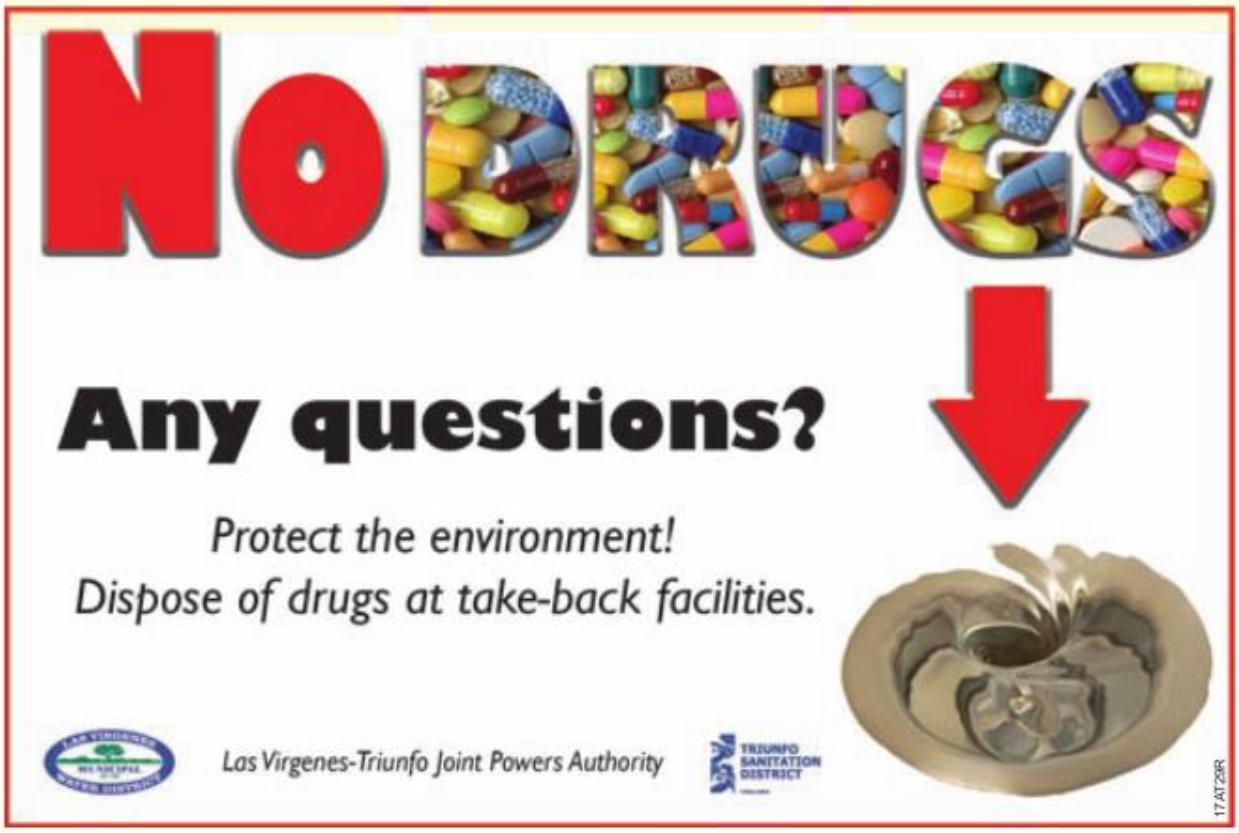
Remember, the government guarantees profits (9 to 10 percent) and revenue to its partner, this monopoly. If it rained 100 inches this year (average is 15 inches), residents would not be watering their lawns, filling their pools. Parks and schools would need no water, golf courses, cities, counties, businesses, etc. Demand would decrease by 40 to 50 percent.

Since this government guaranteed their projected revenue, they would authorize rate increases 40 to 50 percent to cover the cost of lost revenue of this monopoly, so rates would go up, with 100 inches or 1,000 inches of rain total.

Rates always go up, never down, for any reason. In other words, this made-up drought is a political issue—it has nothing to do with the actual truth—to benefit a monopoly bottom line and its partner, the government, in higher tax revenue.

The more they waste, the higher profits and revenue they make.

Barry Gabrielson
Newbury Park


No DRUGS
Any questions?
Protect the environment!
Dispose of drugs at take-back facilities.
Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority
TRIUNFO SANITATION DISTRICT
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Remain water-efficient

Ventura County Star April 24, 2017

Stock photo(Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

California’s wet winter was welcome news for water agencies and their customers. The governor declared an end to the drought, and there are adequate supplies for the foreseeable future.

However, when previous droughts ended, water use gradually returned to pre-drought levels. This time, we ask customers to retain the good practices they’ve adopted as water suppliers work to mitigate the effects of future shortages.

Over the last five years, most Californians became more water-efficient. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent statewide on conservation messaging, turf removal, water-wise landscapes and efficient washing machines, toilets and dishwashers. If maintained, these changes will have a lasting effect.

For most, the key to controlling water use is to install “California friendly” landscaping with attractive, drought-tolerant varieties that complement a home. We encourage residents to visit local water-wise demonstration gardens or go to bewaterwise.com.

While increased water efficiency is essential, this alone will not ensure reliability for future generations. Water agencies are doing their part to improve supplies.

Regionally, several brackish groundwater desalination facilities and "pure water" projects that process recycled water into drinking water will increase local sustainability.

At the state level, there's momentum for building the California WaterFix, (the Delta tunnels,) which will provide water for two-thirds of the state's population while protecting the Delta's threatened species. Our agencies and many others believe it is imperative that this project move forward. The tunnels will capture large quantities of stormwater that now flow out to the sea every winter.

Climate change and the realities of another drought remind us that water-efficiency is here to stay. We thank our customers for their water-wise practices in recent years; they made a difference. Remaining efficient is the smart and sustainable path forward.

Editor: The authors are general managers, respectively, of the Calleguas and Las Virgenes municipal water districts.

Susan B. Mulligan and David W. Pedersen

ENVIRONMENT

State faces a race on spillway fix

Water officials update lawmakers on repairs at Oroville Dam, discuss hill's erosion.

WATER FLOWS down the Oroville Dam's damaged main spillway Feb. 21. The earthen emergency spillway, seen to the left, also failed due to erosion. The spillways will require $275 million in repairs before Nov. 1. (Marcus Yam Los Angeles Times) ASSEMBLYMAN James Gallagher, left, confers with Sen. Jim Nielsen in a briefing on the dam. Gallagher called the earthen spillway's failure "a design flaw." (Rich Pedroncelli Associated Press)

CHRIS MEGERIAN
LA Times 4/27/2017

SACRAMENTO — California will be racing to finish $275 million in repairs to the Oroville Dam spillways to prepare for the next rainy season, top water officials told lawmakers on Tuesday.

Bill Croyle, acting director of the Department of Water Resources, said the deadline is Nov. 1.

Damage to the spillways in February forced thousands to evacuate downstream from the country's tallest earthen dam.

Croyle surprised some lawmakers by saying the emergency spillway, a hillside adjacent to the dam, worked as intended by releasing water from the reservoir when it overflowed after heavy rains.

Erosion in the hillside could have caused a concrete wall along the rim of the reservoir to collapse, sending torrents of water into the rivers and towns below.

“Erosion was expected,” Croyle said. “The erosion of the rock,” which helped fortify the hillside and the concrete wall, “was not expected.”

The emergency spillway, which had never been used before, handled far less water than expected before failing.

“That’s a design flaw. Right?” said Assemblyman James Gallagher (R-Yuba City), whose district’s border runs along the dam.

The crisis was averted when officials decided to risk more damage to the concrete spillway, which had also suffered from erosion as tens of thousands of cubic feet of water per second were being released.

Ventura worries on water remain an issue

City gets annual report on managing its resources

ARLENE MARTINEZ
Ventura County Star 4/27/2017

For several years running, the city of Ventura's water supply has been tight, with demand projected to outpace the supply because of the drought. Water officials responded by implementing water-saving restrictions, with residents heeding calls for conservation, cutting usage by 22 percent in 2016 compared to 2013.

But supply remains an issue for the city, which has moved to tap into state water and implement a large-scale potable reuse water project.

A brief look at the state of water in the city was discussed Monday night, when the City Council received the 2017 Comprehensive Water Resources Report. The report is released annually to give the city information on how to best manage its supplies, how it can integrate new water and how to plan for development.

The report looks at its water sources, which include Lake Casitas, groundwater, the Ventura River and a small amount of recycled water. It factors 350 additional units of development annually joining the ranks of water users.

City Council member Cheryl Heitmann didn't feel the report went far enough in detailing the impact of more years with little rain.

"You're really giving us the bestcase scenario,"

she said. "But we're not seeing what would happen if the drought continues" past 2018.

The report projects a shortfall of 605 acre-feet to 2,464 acre-feet in 2018 if the drought continues. That's assuming the city's demand is 17,429 acre-feet. An acre-foot is roughly 326,000 gallons of water.

Joe McDermott, acting manager of Ventura Water, said Heitmann's question came up during the Water Commission meeting. The advisory group reviews water rates and other related issues.

"Their take on that was we already know we have water supply issues, so it really doesn't change the answer," he said.

The city is in the process of exploring the cost of hooking up to state water and developing a water- reuse program, McDermott said. Water officials are also recommending that the city remain in a Stage 3 Water Shortage Event, which requires households to cut water by 20 percent. Part of that is based on Lake Casitas' water level, which is at 44 percent and dropping — the lake was at 48 percent when the rates were adopted — and groundwater supplies remain depleted, McDermott said.

The Water Commission, an advisory body to the council, approved staying at the Stage 3 level at its Tuesday night meeting. The council is expected to take final action on the issue in May.

Resident Dan Cormode, who studies water issues in the city, said the supply is overly optimistic and “fails to address the potential impact of several issues adversely impacting the availability of various resources.”

All of the city’s water resources are threatened, he said — the lake, river and groundwater basins.

Resident Kioren Moss, a property appraiser, said the city is understating supply and overstating demand, noting that the Santa Paula Water Basin was back to 100 percent. He said using a 10-year average for water usage and supply made no sense (previous reports used a five-year average). He said all the report did was move numbers around, and “not very artfully.”

St. Francis Dam memorial bill reintroduced

BARTHOLOMEW SULLIVAN USA TODAY
Ventura County Star 4/27/2017

WASHINGTON - A bill was reintroduced Wednesday in the House to create a 440-acre national monument at the site of the St. Francis Dam as a way to commemorate the 1928 collapse that killed at least 530 people. An identical measure passed the House on a voice vote last July but was never taken up by the Senate. The disaster at the dam on the St. Francisquito Creek north of Santa Clarita sent a 180-feet wall of water into the Santa Clara River and inundated Fillmore, Bardsdale and Santa Paula on its 54-mile race to the sea. The dam's collapse was an engineering disaster and ended the career of Water Los Angeles Works Superintendent William Mulholland. U.S. Reps. Steve Knight, R-Lancaster, and Julia Brownley, D-Westlake Village, co-sponsored the bill to honor the victims and remind the country of California's second-worst disaster after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. The memorial would be financed through private donations and administered by the U.S. Forest Service with a visitor center and museum where the names of the known victims would be displayed.

Alan Pollack, presi- dent of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society, testified in favor of the bill at a hearing of the House Natural Resources

Committee in May of last year. In an interview, he described the dam's failure as "basically an inland tsunami."

This photo was taken in 1928, days after the St. Francis Dam collapsed east of Santa Clarita. STAR FILE PHOTO

Scientists: Man-made extreme weather hits all over the world

SETH BORENSTEIN ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ventura County Star 4/25/2017

WASHINGTON - Most people on Earth have already felt extreme and record heat, drought or downpours goosed by man-made global warming, new research finds.

In a first-of-its-kind study, scientists analyzed weather stations worldwide and calculated that in 85 percent of the cases, the record for hottest day of the year had the fingerprints of climate change. Heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas made those records more likely or more intense.

“The world is not quite at the point where every hot temperature record has a human fingerprint, but it’s getting close to that,” said lead author and Stanford University climate scientist Noah Diffenbaugh.

Climate change’s influence was spotted 57 percent of the time in records for lowest rainfall in a year and 41 percent of the time in records for most rain in a 5-day period, according to the study in Monday’s Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

For the last several years, researchers have come up with a generally accepted scientific technique to determine whether an individual weather extreme event was made more likely or stronger because of climate change.

It usually involves past weather data and extensive computer models. Outside scientists said what makes Diffenbaugh’s study different and useful is that he doesn’t look at an individual event such as California’s five-year drought. Instead, he applies the technique to weather stations as a whole across

the world, said Columbia University climate scientist Adam Sobel, who wasn’t part of new work. “This is a step forward in that it allows general statements about what fraction of events of the given types selected have a statistically significant” human influence, Sobel said in an email.

Drought ends for beach showers

State parks officials restore the flow to outdoor fixtures, but not all are working.

By Ruben Vives
LA Times 4/22/2017

Sand- and salt-caked beachgoers, rejoice: The California Department of Parks and Recreation is lifting its two-year ban on outdoor shower use at many state beaches.

In the face of a statewide drought, officials ordered that outdoor showers be shut off indefinitely at 38 California beaches — many of them in Southern California.

That long, sticky spell ended Friday, a week after Gov. Jerry Brown signed an executive order to lift the state's drought emergency. Once again, beach lovers were allowed to rinse after a long day at the shore.

"Since we've turned them on, we've gotten positive responses," said Kevin Pearsall, the park superintendent for the Orange Coast District of California State Parks, which includes Huntington Beach and Bolsa Chica. "We were pleasantly surprised how enthusiastic the public has been with the showers being turned back on.

"We're happy to be making people that happy," he said, chuckling.

Pearsall said showers that were in good condition have been returned to service, but it might be awhile before some are turned back on, because of disrepair.

"Some have rusted out and need to be replaced. Some need low-flow nozzles so we can still conserve water," he said. "We're hoping to have them back up before summer begins."

Craig Sap, superintendent of the Angeles District, which includes Malibu Lagoon and Point Mugu, said the agency hasn't been able to turn on any of the showers in his region because some need to be replaced.

"Some of the heads are missing or have been vandalized. Some have mechanical problems, like the valves," he said. "We hope to have some of them working before Memorial Day weekend or in the next two weeks."

Even during the drought emergency, some beaches kept their showers flowing, including Santa Monica State Beach, Will Rogers State Beach near Pacific Palisades and Dockweiler State Beach near El Segundo.

Sap said those beaches had instituted other water-saving measures, such as replacing the shower heads with low-flow nozzles.

Outdoor shower facilities were shut off at many of the state’s other beaches in July 2015 , at the height of the drought. State officials said the move would save up to 18 million gallons annually. The restrictions applied only to outdoor showers, not to indoor campground facilities.

The drought, which lasted from 2012 to 2016 , included the lowest four-year statewide precipitation total and the smallest Sierra-Cascades snowpack on record. Additionally, high temperatures plagued the state from 2014 to 2016, leading to massive, unpredictable wildfires.