

Who Will Solve the Water Crisis?

On both sides of the Pacific Ocean, certain areas are so now severely dry that some communities are out of water completely. In parts of northern China and California, many households are relying on drinking water being trucked in as a contingency. Food production is being slashed, as is the very basis for life.

The big difference is, that China has a commitment to solutions. In the United States, this is forbidden under the Wall Street/Obama outlook. What is required of Americans, is to oust President Obama, break the doomsday grip on how to think about resources, and get busy collaborating with China on emergency and long-term actions on water.

In northern China, villagers in Kanzhuang and other localities are getting drinking water trucked in twice a day. Crops have withered. This is a crisis that could be foreseen, given the scant and highly variable precipitation patterns there, and the impact of persistent drought. But the hardship will be temporary, because soon, in 2015, water will arrive from the south, through the now-completed Middle Route Project of the South-North Water Diversion Project.

In California's Tulare County, 1,000 people of this farm community's total population of 7,300 are affected by 400 wells running dry. In East Porterville, 300 homes have no water. On Sept. 19, Gov. Jerry Brown ordered state agencies to provide water to these people. Individuals are hauling water, making trips elsewhere to shower, and otherwise scrounging to make do. Through state grants, bottled water is trucked in for distribution.

But, unlike in China, there is no water "on the way" from such necessary programs as nuclear desalination or NAWAPA (the proposed North Amer-

ican Water and Power Alliance, obstructed since the 1960s).

This month in China, water quality testing began on the Middle Route Project (MRP) of China's South-to-North Water Diversion Project (SNWD), preparatory to opening the flow of the newly completed 1,400-km MRP system, to bring water from the monsoonal Yangtze Valley to the dry North. By 2015, the water will be coursing northward.

China's grand inter-basin SNWD project now stands as the nearly solitary, exemplary, world model of modern, large-scale surface water management. First proposed in the 1950s, designs were debated for decades; then in late 2002, construction began, and since 2009, progress has been accelerated.

The Eastern Route Project (ERP) was the first to become operational, in December 2013, delivering water to the eastern provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Shandong. By 2015, water in the Middle Route will flow to Beijing, Tianjin, and environs. The Western Route, which will capture and divert water from three tributaries of the upper Yangtze River, is still in the planning stages.

The SNWD dimensions are significant. The Eastern Route uses upgrades on the 1,500-year-old Grand Canal, a waterway linking the south to the north. Today, the ERP transports some 14.8 billion cubic meters of water a year. The Middle Route will carry up to 13.0 billion m³ when fully operational. This channel required 1,400 km of new construction, with its starting point at the Danjiangkou Reservoir, in Hubei Province.

Thus the Chinese look to the future with hope, while the U.S. faces death. The situation can easily be changed—if Americans make it happen.