

Calif. Water Crisis Threatens Food Supply

by Patrick Ruckert

Sept. 19—There is a severe shortage of water in California, with crippling effects on agriculture from the imposed limitations and rationing. In the San Joaquin Valley so far this year, farmers are receiving only 20% of the water they have requested from the Bureau of Reclamation, which makes such decisions. The same occurred in 2009.

In the Imperial Valley, on the border of Mexico, 40,000 acres of the most productive farmland in the world have been taken out of production, because the water has been diverted to San Diego. This year that amounts to 180,000 acre feet.

And it will get worse, as the drought continues. Last year was the fifth-driest on record, and this year is heading to be the fourth-driest. Without rain, by October Lake Mead at the Hoover Dam could be at less than one-half its capacity. The San Luis Reservoir in the San Joaquin Valley, the main storage facility for both the California Central Valley Project and the California State Water Project, as of early July, was filled to barely 20% of capacity.

The consequences for San Joaquin Valley farmers are that 3.75 million acres of farmland did not get the water needed this Summer. Tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land were idled already in the Spring, since farmers knew, as early as March, that they would not be getting the water.

The shortage in the San Joaquin Valley this Summer is not solely due to the drought. Last December and this January, more than 800,000 acre feet of available water was not pumped into the two main projects' canals because such

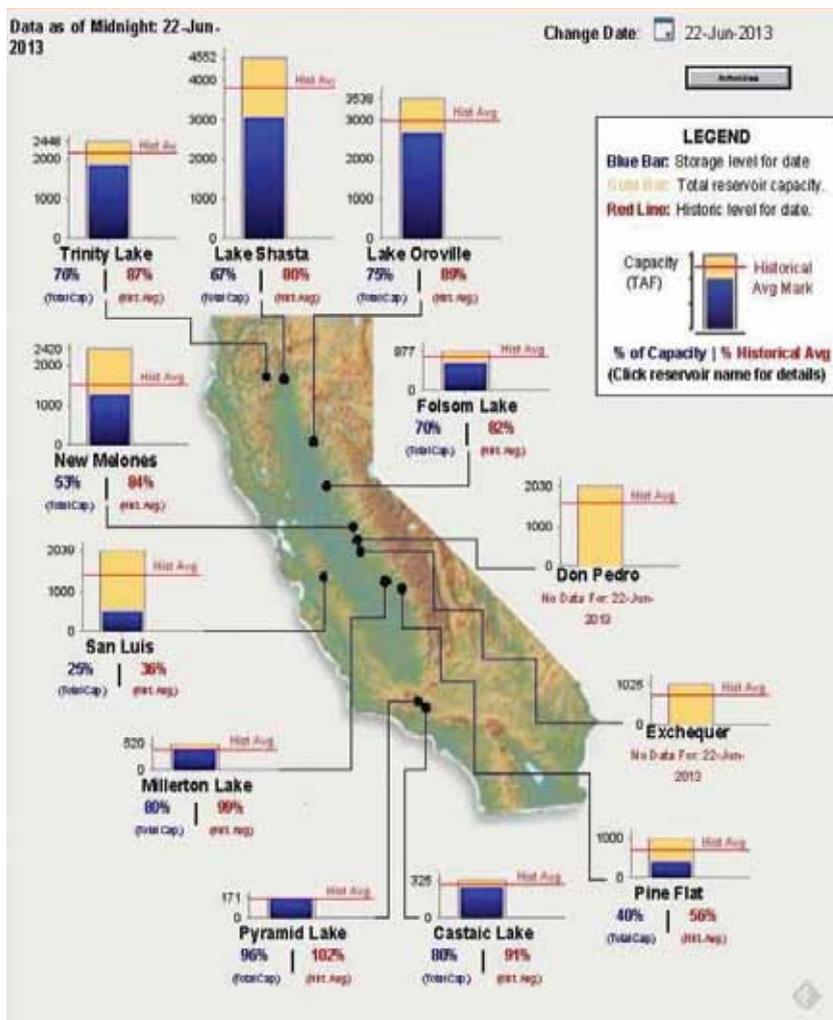
pumping would have killed high numbers of Delta Smelt, an inedible fish that is on the Endangered Species list.

Destruction of Agriculture Capacity

Of California's 100 million acres of land, 43 million are used for agriculture, of which over 9 million are irrigated. Thus, about one-third of California's irrigated acreage did not get enough water this Summer. Westlands Water District officials, on the west side of the Valley, forecast that farmers in the district will lose a total of \$350 million as a consequence.

Worse, since tree crops die if they don't get water in the Summer, the long-term damage would be in the billions of dollars. The state's almond crop could be devastated for years, and it is big—780,000 acres of producing almond trees.

FIGURE 1
Conditions for Major California Reservoirs, June 2013



This impacts the entire nation, since California produces a huge portion of the nation's food. The Central Valley, which includes the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Valley, is the largest semi-continuous expanse of irrigated farmland in the world, and provides one-third of all produce grown in the United States. The Valley produces more than 200 crops. The Valley grows more than 50% of world production of some of them.

Twenty percent of U.S. milk production comes from California, and the state is losing dairy herds at a rapid pace due to the lack of water, skyrocketing costs of production, the burning of corn for fuel, and the lack of a parity policy for agriculture due to the cartelized global free-trade policy.

If the state is to recover from the ongoing destruction of this capability, and build that which future generations will require, then the state and the nation must return to the policy outlook that built the system in the first place. Otherwise, everyone will



The trees in this orchard in the San Joaquin Valley have died due to lack of water.

EIRNS

fight everyone else for a share of an inadequate and shrinking supply of water.

Conflict over Peripheral Canal

The insanity of “each against all” can already be seen in the intense debate now raging, over building the Peripheral Canal in the Delta area. Farmers in the Delta and southwest of Sacramento oppose the Peripheral Canal, while those in the San Joaquin Valley favor it. It's Northern California vs. Southern California.

The particulars are simple. The Delta is an area encompassing 738,000 acres of waterways—where the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers come together, involving levees, islands, and farms in the northeast corner of San Francisco Bay. The proposal, now being promoted by Gov. Jerry Brown, to build the Peripheral Canal (originally proposed in 1965, even before his first term as governor), will route water under the Delta instead of through it, supplying the canals for the Central Valley and State Water Projects.

The Peripheral Canal would begin north of the Delta on the Sacramento River, tunnel under the Delta, and end at the pumps for the Central Valley and State Water Projects. Had the tunnel been in place when the water cutbacks occurred last December and January, that volume of 800,000 acre feet of water would have been pumped into the projects' canals, and the short water supply in the San Joaquin Valley over the Summer would have been somewhat alleviated.

NAWAPA 1964

PUEBLO, COLORADO
AUGUST 14, 1963

Released on Thanksgiving 2011, the LPAC-TV documentary “NAWAPA 1964” is the true story of the fight for the North American Water and Power Alliance. Spanning the 1960s and early '70s, it is told through the words of Utah Senator Frank Moss. The 56-minute video, using extensive original film footage and documents, presents the astonishing mobilization for NAWAPA, which came near to being realized, until the assassination of President Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and the 1968 Jacobin reaction, killed it

... until now.

<http://larouchepac.com/nawapa1964>