

PROPOSED DESALINATION PLANT

Silicon Valley's largest water district is studying a plan to build the first seawater desalination plant along the shores of San Francisco Bay.



Source: Santa Clara Valley Water District

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Desalination plant proposed for San Francisco Bay: Santa Clara Valley Water District studying San Jose, Palo Alto, Mountain View as possible locations

California Water and Infrastructure Report For July 25, 2024

(With expanded coverage of all the Western States)
by Patrick Ruckert

Published weekly since July, 2014

An archive of all these weekly reports can be found at both links below:

<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaDroughtUpdate>

A Note to Readers

This week's report begins with the U.S. Drought Monitor's current map of California and its national drought summary.

Next, are a series of articles on water policy for the state. As opposed to the California Water Board's fixation on conservation, not only are their policy recommendations irresponsible and destructive of California agriculture, but will result in as much as 600,000 acres of the best agricultural land in the world being permanently fallowed.

That section below begins on page 2, "***Water Policy: Build More Water Infrastructure, or Conserve Ourselves to Death,***" includes four articles:

As I have proposed for many years, finally, an official proposal and study to build desalination plants in San Francisco Bay has been undertaken to do so. Desalination plant proposed for San Francisco Bay. While my proposal has always been much more ambitious than the proposal by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, it is a start.

The article by Edward Ring, who also promotes building more desalination plants as one of three areas to deal with the California perpetual water problems, and as an alternative to the State Water Board fixation on more and more "conservation" and rationing, also in his article preceding the report on the Santa Clara Valley Water District proposal. His article is titled, "***California's Water Economy: The Three Biggest Choices.***"

And a further article on the insane "only conservation" policy of the Water Board follows the article by Edward Ring. That article is titled, "***CA's New Mandatory Water Conservation Rules Punish Inland Cities and Agriculture.***"

And finally, in this section a personal statement by a Central Valley farmer provides the reader with the consequences of the "conservation only" policy of the State Water Board.

Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Western Montana and California Are Burning Up: A report on Western U.S. Wildfires is the next section.

The fire season is off to a destructive and dangerous start. Oregon has the largest fire in the country now. The Durkee Fire in eastern Oregon has burned around a quarter of million acres after lighting started the blaze around July 17. Two major freeways have been closed off and on the last few days due to this out of control fire.

More articles on the fires in the West are included in this section.

Finally, the report concludes with this: "***Silicon Valley billionaires get a kick in the teeth in Solano County.***"

U.S. Drought Monitor

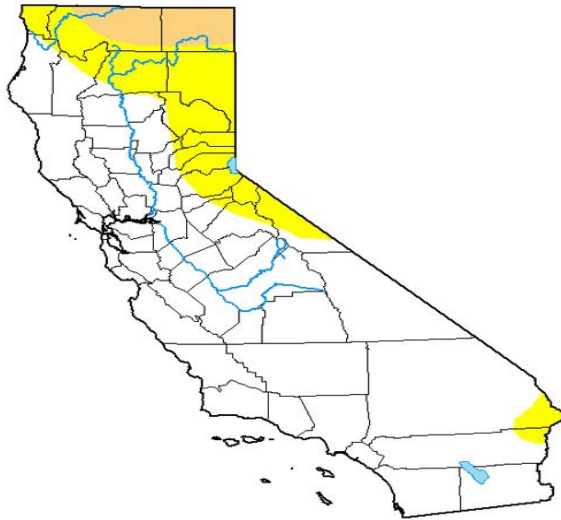
California

July 23, 2024

California is returning to drought conditions. Last week was the first time in nine months that any drought level was reported in the state. Compare last week in the chart to this week, and it clearly shows a growing intensity and spread of drought conditions in the state.

**U.S. Drought Monitor
California**

July 23, 2024
(Released Thursday, Jul. 25, 2024)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	78.80	21.20	4.44	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 07-16-2024	78.80	21.20	1.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 04-23-2024	97.32	2.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-02-2024	96.65	3.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-26-2023	94.01	5.99	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 07-25-2023	74.43	25.57	6.29	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
 None
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:
Rocky Bilotta
NCEI/NOAA



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

National Summary

July 25, 2024 - Over the past week, a major heatwave brought warmer-than-normal temperatures to much of the West, with departures ranging between 3 to 12 degrees F above normal across much of the region.

Near-normal to cooler-than-normal temperatures were observed from the central Rockies to the Great Lakes, with departures ranging between 3 to 9 degrees F below normal.

Precipitation varied across the contiguous U.S. this week. Monsoonal moisture brought heavy precipitation and flash flooding to parts of the Southwest, while a lingering frontal boundary brought daily thunderstorms, heavy rainfall and flash flooding across much of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic.

The most widespread improvements were made in the Southeast, as well as eastern portions of the Southwest and across much of western Texas, where above-normal precipitation amounts were observed this past week.

Conversely, dry conditions resulted in degradations across much of Hawaii and the Pacific Northwest, as well as southern portions of the Northeast and in parts of the central Plains, and other parts of the West.

Drought and abnormal dryness also expanded or intensified in the Ohio Valley, western High Plains, and in New England. In Hawaii, dry conditions coupled with warmer temperatures resulted in the expansion and intensification of drought across the state this week.

Water Policy: Build More Water Infrastructure, or Conserve Ourselves to Death

All four articles in this section are recommended to be read in full. Go to the links.

California's Water Economy: The Three Biggest Choices

By Edward Ring

Director, Water and Energy Policy

[Californians for Energy and Water Abundance](#)

July 18, 2024

<https://californiapolicycenter.org/californias-water-economy-the-three-biggest-choices/>

If water strategy in California had to be distilled down to just three projects with the greatest impact, the answers might vary a great deal depending on who was asked. But in terms of quality of life impact, the ongoing implementation of State Water Resources Control Board to “Make Conservation a Way of Life” is the clear winner. In terms of financial impact, it’s the proposed “Delta Conveyance.” And in terms of potential to actually increase California’s water supply by a significant, game-changing quantity, it’s the San Joaquin County Blueprint’s “Fish Friendly Diversions” proposal.

Let’s consider these one at a time.

The state legislature’s approach to water scarcity has been invariably to mandate additional conservation. As we have seen, urban water use in California has declined even as population has increased. At this point, a prudent way to build resilience might be to develop more sources of water supplies, and consider any “excess” consumption it might enable to constitute a safe surplus that leaves room to further reduce demand if a truly perilous situation develops. A failed levee in the Delta; a cyber attack on the Tehachapi pumps; a crashed power grid. Leaving some fat in the system is common sense.

Desalination plant proposed for San Francisco Bay

Santa Clara Valley Water District studying San Jose, Palo Alto, Mountain View as possible locations

By [Paul Rogers](#) | progers@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

UPDATED: July 23, 2024 at 1:40 p.m.

https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/07/23/desalination-plant-proposed-for-san-francisco-bay/?share=cnnepniondy|pc0aae7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Saying it needs to evaluate all options for new sources of drinking water, Silicon Valley’s largest water district is studying a plan to build the first seawater desalination plant along the shores of San Francisco Bay.

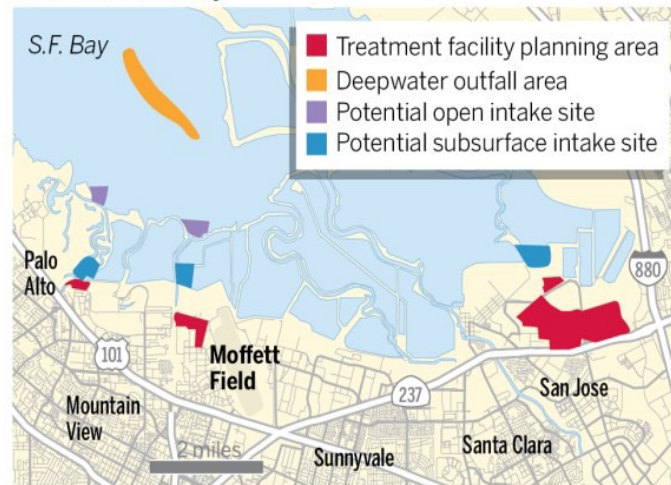
The Santa Clara Valley Water District, a government agency based in San Jose, has approved spending \$1.7 million for Black & Veatch, a Walnut Creek firm, to conduct an engineering feasibility study over the next 12 months for a project near the bay’s shoreline in Palo Alto, Mountain View or San Jose.

Under [the proposal](#), which is still in the early stages, the plant would take between 20 million to 80 million gallons of water a day from the bay, run it through filters to strip the salt out and serve from 10 million to 40 million gallons a day of freshwater to South Bay homes and businesses. That would provide about 11,000 to 44,000 acre-feet of water per year, enough for between 100,000 and 500,000

households.

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Source: Santa Clara Valley Water District

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CA's New Mandatory Water Conservation Rules Punish Inland Cities and Agriculture

'Conservation as a way of life:' Demanding additional conservation from urban water users is a non-starter

By [Katy Grimes](#), July 20, 2024 10:22 am

<https://californiaglobe.com/fr/cas-new-mandatory-water-conservation-rules-punish-inland-cities-and-agriculture/>

California's drought conditions are actually historically normal. So are our occasional heavy wet winters – Despite Gavin Newsom's moldy talking point that there is a climate crisis in California and the state is facing "a more extreme future."

It's not hard to plan for droughts and wet years – if politicians were honest. But Newsom's goal isn't to deliver more water to the people – it's to thrust the state into a permanent water crisis.

Remember these figures: 50% of California's water supply goes to environmental uses right off the top. Of the remaining 50%, urban use is only 10% and agriculture uses 40%.

State water officials and legislators are once again talking about water conservation-only priorities while water storage projects are perpetually delayed.

Two weeks ago the California State Water Resources Control Board [issued](#) statewide water restrictions. The title of their document even says this:

Standardized Regulatory Impact Assessment of Proposed Making Conservation a California Way of Life Regulation

"The measures are substantially weaker than a previous proposal after an onslaught of criticism. But

they will still save enough water through 2050 to supply the state's entire population for a year, at a cost of \$4.7 billion," [CalMatters reported](#).

That may be accurate but constant conservation seems to only hurt agriculture and cities and towns in inland California. Even CalMatters acknowledged the truth in the title of an article Friday:

Hot, inland California cities face the steepest water cuts with new conservation mandate

And the CalMatters summary says the quiet part aloud: "Urban water agencies serving a third of Californians won't need to cut use, while Central Valley and desert cities face the most cuts."

Here's where they unfortunately abdicate reporting, spreading propaganda:

"Facing a future of shortages, California is entering a new phase of water conservation: Cities and towns must meet new mandates ramping down use over the next 15 years — and some will be hit harder than others."

The future of Central Valley farming depends on more reliable water supplies

The Central Valley Project's water supply allocations have come up short and are decided too late for farmers to adequately plan to grow the food that feeds the nation, writes farmer Rebecca Kaser.

[by Rebecca Kaser](#)

July 18, 2024

<https://sjvsun.com/ag/the-future-of-central-valley-farming-depends-on-more-reliable-water-supplies/>



As a fourth-generation grower, I am familiar with the challenges associated with managing my water supply. However, this year's low water allocation from the Central Valley Project (CVP) has pushed our resilience and resourcefulness to the brink.

As a grower in Westlands Water District, we receive our water annually through the CVP. This year, our initial allocation was 15 percent. Then, after some mid to late February storms, our allocation increased to 40 percent. More storms came and our hydrology continued to improve. Finally in June, our allocation increased to 50 percent. Although 50 percent is much better than 15 percent, this final allocation is not sufficient for our agricultural needs. Furthermore, the lateness in this allocation made it exceedingly difficult to plan for the rest of our crop year.

The frustration is evident across the agricultural community. We diligently plan our crops and make

investments in sustainable practices. Not only do we grow food and fiber for our nation and community, but also, we maintain the delicate balance of our ecosystems. Land stewardship is paramount in our values as evidenced by our groundwater recharge efforts. But when water allocations are erratic and insufficient year over year, it compromises our crops and our ability to plan effectively for the future.

This past year, we created three Flood MARs (Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge) on our farm. Due to the previous winter's heavy rainfall, we mobilized our efforts into replenishing the underground aquifer. We were able to bank over 3,400 acre-feet of water in just one year. In light of this past winter's rainfall, we had planned to continue recharge, but unfortunately were unable to do so with the low allocation.

Despite our groundwater recharge acting as a savings account for future dry years, we made a conscious decision to purchase Supplemental Waters in lieu of pumping groundwater. Purchasing additional water outside of our current allocation is expensive; however, the long-term sustainability of our groundwater and farming operation is well-worth this investment. Yet, not all farmers can afford this expenditure.

There is a critical flaw in our water management system. Without equitable and reliable water supply, all of us—not just farmers—are left vulnerable to the whims of unpredictable climate and an inflexible regulatory framework. California's water policies must evolve to address these challenges. We need a system that not only accounts for the annual variability in water availability, but also provides a stable and predictable supply. This requires a multi-faceted approach, including improved infrastructure for water storage and delivery, more effective use of available water resources, and policies that encourage sustainable practices without penalizing those who are already doing their part.

Moreover, our agricultural sector is a critical component of California's economy and food security. Ensuring a reliable water supply should be a top priority for policymakers. We need to address the mismanagement of our water resources that exacerbates these issues. The Central Valley is often prohibited from adequate water supplies due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and conflicting priorities.

It is time for a comprehensive overhaul of our water policies to ensure that we can continue to grow the crops that feed and clothe our nation. Our future depends on it.

And the Consequences of Such State Policies Include a Drop in Farmland Valuations

Kern County farmland values continue downward slide

July 23, 2024

• by Lois Henry

<https://sjvwater.org/kern-county-farmland-values-continue-downward-slide/>

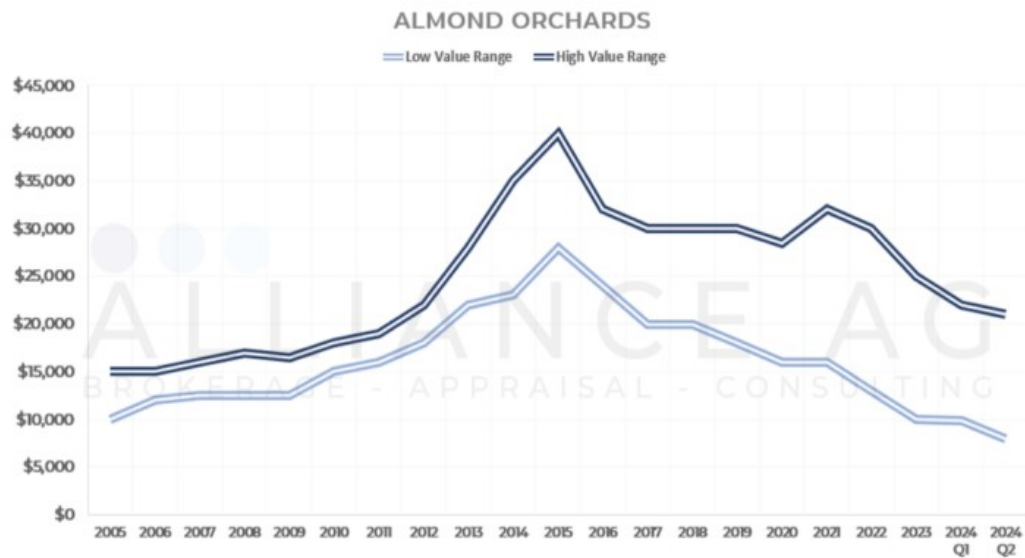
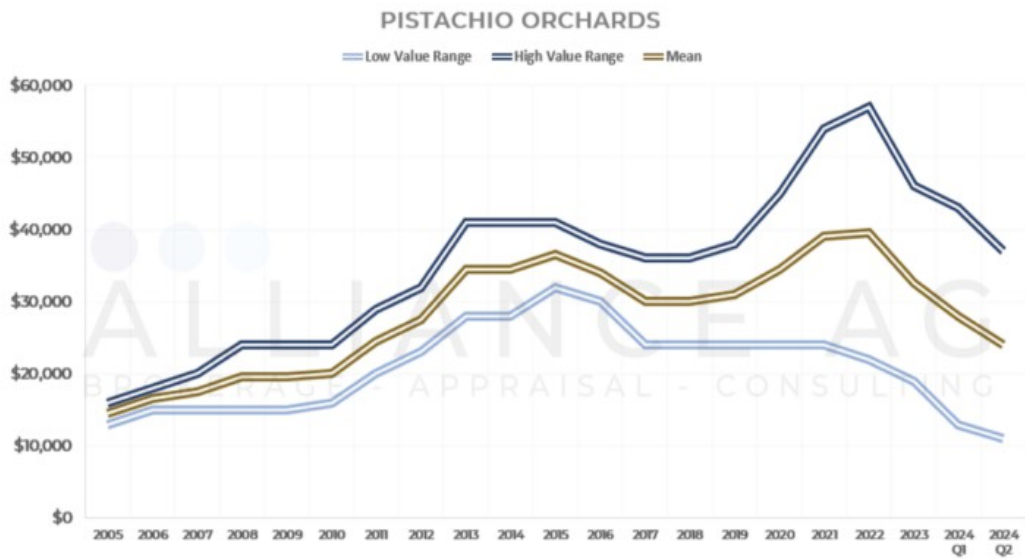
Farmland valuations continued their downward trajectory in Kern County, in some cases dropping a whopping 47.6% over the first six months of 2024, according to the [second quarter Kern County Ag Land Values report](#) put out by brokerage firm Alliance Ag Services LLC.

Some farmland has dropped back to, or even below, 2005 prices.



A field in Shafter is irrigated in this 2021 photo. Lois Henry / SJV Water

“I don’t think we’re at the bottom yet, but it feels like it’s getting closer,” said Ag Alliance broker Michael Ming. Alliance Ag has been tracking the value of farmland in Kern County by water source for nearly two decades. Since the crippling 2012-2016 drought and passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the numbers have been mostly dismal.



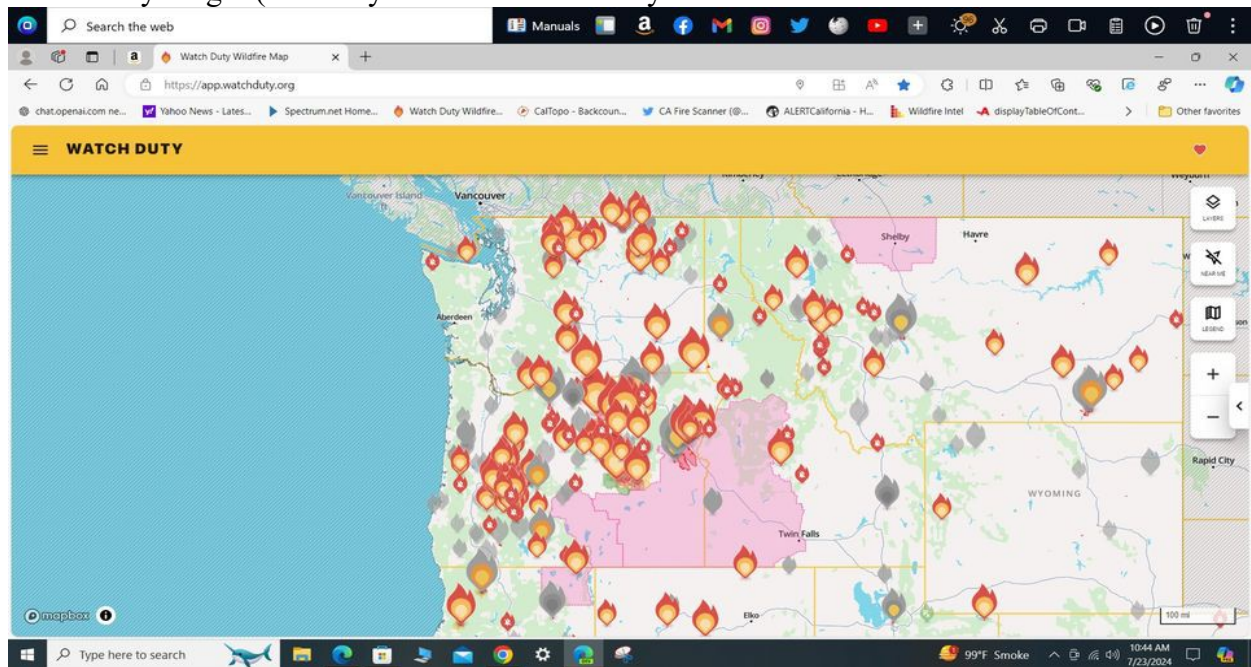
SOURCE: Alliance Ag 2024 2nd quarter report on Kern County ag land values

Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Western Montana and California Are Burning Up

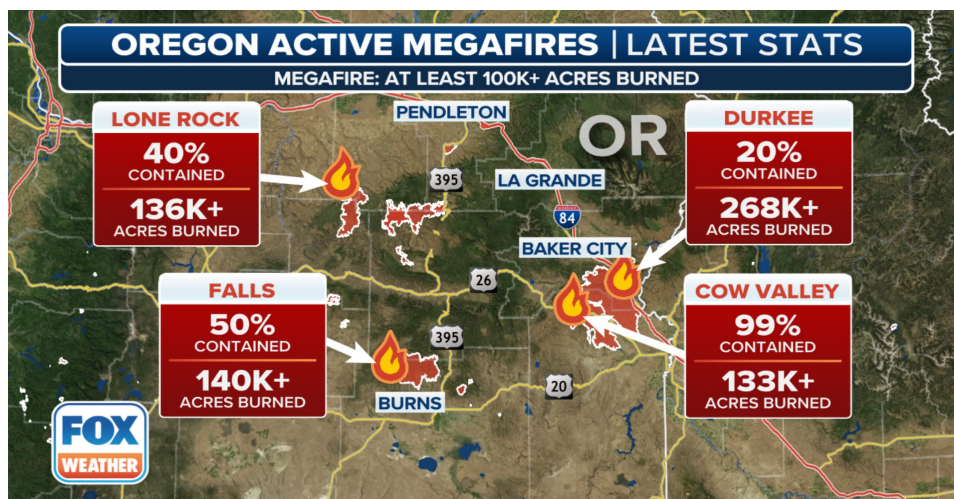
The fire season is off to a destructive and dangerous start. Oregon has the largest fire in the country now. The Durkee Fire in eastern Oregon has burned around a quarter of million acres after lighting started the blaze around July 17. Two major freeways have been closed off and on over the last few days due to this out of control fire.

Many of the fires have been caused by lightning.

“The U.S. Forest Service is on Planning Level 5, which is as high as the scale goes. It means mobilize everything!” (From my face book friend Royal Burnett.



Firefighters battle dozens of wildfires in the western U.S.



By [Andrew Wulfeck](#) Source [FOX Weather](#)

<https://www.foxweather.com/extreme-weather/tracking-durkee-fire-smoke-acres-burned-oregon>

PORTLAND, Ore. – A wildfire raging in eastern [Oregon](#) has doubled in size, making the blaze the largest wildfire in the country firefighters have worked to contain so far this year.

According to the latest report from the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Durkee Fire has scorched nearly a quarter of a million acres since it was ignited by a lightning strike on July 17.

The blaze is one of at least five across the western U.S. that have burned more than 100,000 acres and is known as a "megafire."

Large fires burning in Oregon (FOX Weather)

Other large fires include the McDonald Fire in [Alaska](#), the Falls and the Lone Rock fires in Central Oregon and the Cow Valley Fire in the eastern region of the state. The McDonald Fire burning outside [Fairbanks](#), Alaska, was the nation's largest fire, holding the status for the most acres burned for a majority of the summer.

At the last report, more than 172,000 acres were believed to have burned, but damage to structures has been limited to the blaze's rural nature.

Winds and lightning strikes stoke Oregon fire, now the largest in the U.S.

July 25, 2024 2:37 AM ET

By The Associated Press

<https://www.npr.org/2024/07/25/g-s1-13253/wind-lightning-oregon-idaho-fire>



BOISE, Idaho — Powerful winds and hundreds of lightning strikes from thunderstorms rattled eastern Oregon and Idaho Wednesday afternoon, cutting power and stoking fires, including one in Oregon that is already the largest active blaze in the nation.

The Durkee Fire, burning near the Oregon-Idaho border about 130 miles west of Boise, Idaho, caused the closure of a stretch of Interstate 84 again Wednesday. Amid rapidly forming storms in the afternoon, the blaze crossed the interstate near the town of Huntington, home to about 500 people. It also merged with the Cow Valley Fire, another large blaze that had been burning nearby, Gov. Tina Kotek said.

California fire maps show where wildfires are burning across the state

By [Emily Mae Czachor](#)

Updated on: June 21, 2024 / 2:54 PM EDT / CBS News

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/post-point-fire-maps-california/?intcid=CNI-00-10aaa3a>

Firefighters across California are working to extinguish multiple wildfires — including several [blazes that broke out](#) over the weekend and others that flared up early this week — as the state contends with a mix of hot, dry weather and powerful, gusty winds.

More than 90,000 acres have burned so far this year, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, also known as [Cal Fire](#). More than half that toll came from [three major fires in June](#). Officials have released a series of wildfire maps plotting the fires' expansion.

The largest is now the [Sites Fire](#), in Colusa County, which was first reported Monday and quickly grew, reaching over 19,000 acres by early Thursday. The [Post Fire](#), burning near Gorman, northwest of Los Angeles, spread to 15,690 acres, while the [Point Fire](#), in Sonoma, covered about 1,200 acres. Another blaze, known as the [Aero Fire](#), in Calaveras County, scorched 5,350 acres, fanned by winds that gusted up to 60 mph.

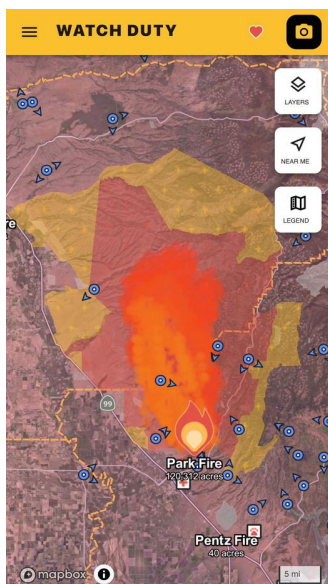
Park Fire map: Wildfire near Chico explodes overnight to season's biggest

By [Bay Area News Group](#)

UPDATED: July 25, 2024 at 6:52 a.m.

[https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2024/07/25/park-fire-map-wildfire-near-chico-explodes-overnight-to-seasons-biggest/?](https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2024/07/25/park-fire-map-wildfire-near-chico-explodes-overnight-to-seasons-biggest/?campaign=ebtbreakingalert&utm_email=452034416564659205A55473A5&active=no&lctg=452034416564659205A55473A5&utm_source=listrak&utm_medium=email&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fwww.eastbaytimes.com%2f2024%2f07%2f25%2fpark-fire-map-wildfire-near-chico-explodes-overnight-to-seasons-biggest%2f&utm_campaign=bang-ebt-nl-breaking-news-alerts-nl&utm_content=alert)

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A wildfire that started Wednesday afternoon on the edge of Chico grew in barely 12 hours to the largest fire of California's season.

The Park Fire was reported shortly before 3 p.m. in Upper Bidwell Park, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. Early Thursday, its size was estimated at 45,549 acres (71 square miles).

The first evacuation order came before 6 p.m., and by Thursday morning the evacuation zone covered more than 400 square miles in Butte and Tehama counties.

Silicon Valley billionaires get a kick in the teeth in Solano County

Billionaires' utopia company California Forever scraps plan for ballot initiative in wake of damning report

County report cited billions of dollars in costs

https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/07/22/billionaires-utopia-company-california-forever-scraps-plan-for-ballot-initiative-in-wake-of-damning-report/?utm_email=452034416564659205A55473A5&g2i_eui=xb%2bxbZw7R3ZqbcxDzp9NTj5NrKz8QTCY&g2i_source=newsletter&lctg=452034416564659205A55473A5&active=no&utm_source=listrak&utm_medium=email&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fwww.mercurynews.com%2f2024%2f07%2f22%2fbillionaires-utopia-company-california-forever-scraps-plan-for-ballot-initiative-in-wake-of-damning-report%2f&utm_campaign=bang-mult-nl-pm-report-nl&utm_content=curated

By [Ethan Baron](#) | ebaron@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

UPDATED: July 22, 2024 at 5:31 p.m.

Days after a Solano County report slammed a plan backed by Silicon Valley billionaires to build a utopian new city from scratch near Fairfield, the company behind the “California Forever” project has scrapped the ballot initiative it was to put to county voters in November.

The report released late last week by Solano County said the proposed new city of 50,000 — possibly up to 400,000 decades from now — would likely cost the county billions of dollars and create substantial annual financial deficits, while slashing agricultural production, damaging climate-change resilience and potentially threatening local water supplies. The project, according to the report, “may not be financially feasible.”