



“Rural America--Great Hope For America.”

See this week's Feature for how to create a great future for all Americans. (On page 9).

California Water and Infrastructure Report For August 29, 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

The **Feature** this week is another article by my friend and associate Brian Lantz. The article is from his *Substack* page, and a link to that page is included. His title is “**Rural America--Great Hope For America.**” And his thesis is that a new Trump/Vance administration, beginning in January next year, offers the opportunity for the rural areas of the nation to be an important part of making the U.S. An industrial superpower once again.

Here are a couple of paragraphs from his article:

“The need to rebuild the U.S. as a manufacturing powerhouse is on the table, and a doubling or tripling manufacturing and heavy industry is no longer thought of as a wild idea. A trillion dollar

physical goods annual trade deficit is one reason why, along with the national debt. In rural America today, there is the “grit” and the skills to play a critical role in securing the future of our nation, as we must do much more than simply reverse course.

“In the 1980’s and 1990’s, for much of rural American, including many parts of what are now termed blue states, “the tide went out.” Many parts of the nation that were home to agro-industrial employment found themselves “de-industrialized,” as was said about the entire Midwest (“Rust-Bucket”), and which applied to those in blue collar/trade union jobs generally.

*“Here the discussion turns to Rural America. **America needs now to recognize the cultural and economic contributions of our fellow citizens in rural America, and the communities & towns that they compose.** Their role, in our larger cultural and social discourse, now so impoverished -- and in American economic life itself -- is required.*

“For the incoming Trump administration and American patriots, a pressing question to be answered is apparent: What economic drivers will propel the movement of industries, commerce, and prosperity back into our rural communities and reinvigorate their growth?

*“This is not a give-away. The return to the American System and real prosperity for our nation puts a premium on the cultural development of a creative and productive citizenry. **We have, and will have, a national shortage of resourceful, creative human minds, of productive labor.** Rural America only awaits an infusion of productive, high wage jobs and the opportunity to advance. Young generations and new families, everywhere, need these good-paying, “breadwinner” jobs and secure communities.*

In the rest of this week's report

The report begins with maps from the U.S. Drought Monitor. Two maps are included: California, what the Monitor names the Oregon Range (Oregon, Washington and Idaho and a part of Montana), in addition to a photo of the shrublands of Oregon.

The report on the Presidential campaign this week has only one item: A guest column in the *Wall Street Journal* from Vice-Presidential candidate JD Vance : “*JD Vance: Harris Wages War on U.S. Energy.*”

A report from Michael Carr, “Physical Economy and Technology Report for August 29, 2024,” is a regular part of these weekly reports. In this report, Mike covers, among other developments, “the fight for baseload electrical power, the Polaris Dawn flight, and the Starliner test flight. We take a tour with Jeff Bezos of his New Glenn rocket factory, and we present an interview with the people who brought RFK and President Trump together.”

There are two articles on Colorado River developments. Both are summarized in the first, but there are more details in the second one. In summary, farmers are being paid millions of dollars to not plant crops in the Imperial Valley of California.

The report concludes with the **Feature**, discussed above.

U.S. Drought Monitor

California

**U.S. Drought Monitor
California**

August 27, 2024
(Released Thursday, Aug. 29, 2024)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	58.11	41.89	6.91	0.10	0.00	0.00
Last Week 08-20-2024	66.59	33.41	6.91	0.10	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 05-28-2024	98.77	1.23	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 08-29-2023	93.35	6.65	1.35	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
 None (white) D2 Severe Drought (red)
 D0 Abnormally Dry (yellow) D3 Extreme Drought (dark red)
 D1 Moderate Drought (orange) D4 Exceptional Drought (dark red)

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:
Richard Heim
NCEI/NOAA



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Summary: The West

Most of the West region was cooler than normal, with temperatures more than 10 degrees below normal across interior portions, especially in Nevada; eastern areas were warmer than normal, up to 6 or more degrees above normal in eastern Montana and eastern New Mexico. More than 2 inches of rain fell over coastal parts of northern California, southern Oregon, and northern Washington, with 0.5 to 2 inches over large parts of the Four Corners states. The rain that fell was not enough to make up for deficits that have accumulated over several months to more than a year, so no improvement to the depiction was made. Abnormal dryness expanded in Nevada and southern California, where little to no rain fell this week, and moderate to extreme drought expanded in Montana. According to USDA statistics, half or more of the topsoil moisture was short or very short in Montana (82%), Oregon (77%), Idaho (68%), Washington (64%), New Mexico (62%), and Nevada (55%), and half or more of the subsoil moisture was short or very short in Montana (82%), Oregon (72%), Nevada (70%), Idaho (64%), Washington (63%), and New Mexico (63%). Half or more of the pasture and rangeland was rated in poor or very poor condition in Oregon (64%), Washington (60%), and Arizona (52%).

From the U.S. Drought Monitor

Drought Status Update for the Pacific Northwest

Drought—and Its Impacts—Intensified, But Relief May Arrive This Fall.

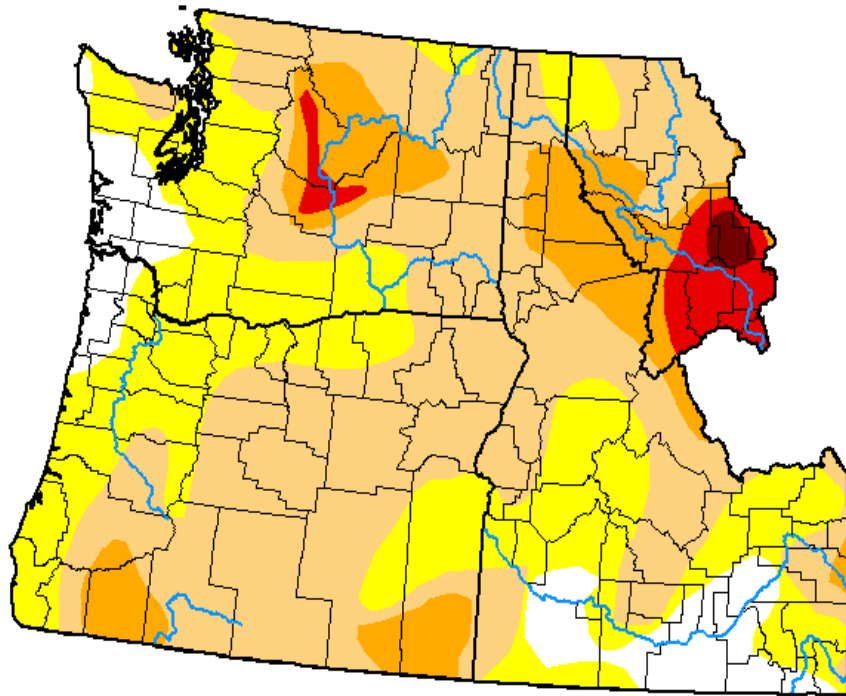
August 29, 2024

<https://www.drought.gov/drought-status-updates/drought-status-update-pacific-northwest-2024-08-29>

Key Points

- According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, 61% of the Pacific Northwest Drought Early Warning System region is experiencing Moderate to Exceptional Drought conditions (D1–D4). Drought is most severe in central Washington (Extreme Drought, D3) and western Montana (Exceptional Drought, D4).
- The Pacific Northwest’s aggressive wildfire season persists.
 - As of August 25, Oregon preliminarily reported over [1,500,000](#) acres burned so far in 2024, which is far above the annual average over the past 10 years and is now greater than the previous high in 2012. The largest of the 2024 wildfires are the [Durkee and Cow Valley Fire](#) and [Battle Mountain Complex Fire](#).
 - The Paddock Fire in Idaho burned more than 180,000 acres, making it the third largest wildfire in state history.
- **Persistent warmer-than-normal summer temperatures and below-normal precipitation across Washington continue to limit water supply. Reservoir elevations in parts of Washington dropped to near-record lows, and streamflows continue to decline.**

Figure 5: Drought Impacts in the Oregon Range



Key Takeaway: Below-normal precipitation, above-average temperatures, and high evaporative demand contributed to drying soil moisture and deteriorating conditions throughout shrublands in central and eastern Oregon.



A photograph submitted to the Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) shows poor range conditions, with dust blowing on livestock, in Malheur County, Oregon, July 27, 2024. Photograph submitted to the [National Drought Mitigation Center](#).

The Presidential Campaign

JD Vance: Harris Wages War on U.S. Energy

In the name of fighting climate change, she pushes net-zero policies that would enervate America.

By JD Vance

Aug. 19, 2024 1:38 pm ET

<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/jd-vance-harris-wages-war-on-us-energy-inflation-net-zero-2024-presidential-election-aaf19e44>

Growing up in Ohio, I learned the hard way that poverty breaks families. To break the cycle of dependency, families need to be able to rely on a growing and dynamic economy that generates wealth and opportunity. But an economy that works for working Americans is possible only when we have reliable, abundant, low-cost energy.

Tragically, under the “net zero” energy policies advanced by [Kamala Harris](#), the Biden administration and the entire Democratic Party, families are being denied the hopeful and abundant future that comes with low-cost energy. Electricity already costs 30% more than it did when Ms. Harris took office, with projections of another 30% increase in many parts of the country next year. Gasoline prices are up 42%. The net-zero project is already stifling investment in the coal, natural gas, and nuclear plants that Americans rely on for reliable, affordable “base load” electricity.

Don't let anyone fool you that net-zero energy is some far-off idea for the year 2050. Net zero is here. Net zero is now. If Ms. Harris and the Democrats have their way, net zero will destroy the American dream for countless millions.

A Harris administration would be worse than the Biden administration. President Biden at least claimed not to support the Green New Deal. Ms. Harris was an original co-sponsor of the bill and even said she would abolish the Senate's filibuster to pass it. Ms. Harris's running mate, Minnesota

Gov. Tim Walz, is yet more extreme. Mr. Walz actually signed a bill that would end all sources of electricity other than wind and solar in his state by 2040.

President Trump has made it crystal clear we will end the net-zero energy policies shutting down investment in electricity capacity. Instead, we will pave the way for a massive energy expansion. We will streamline permitting, end the distorting effects of federal subsidies, unleash private investment, and lay the groundwork for a historic expansion in American energy capacity.

Physical Economy and Technology Report for August 29, 2024

My friend Michael Carr has a new report this week, highlighting some of the new and important developments in physical economy and technologies. As the title of my weekly reports makes clear, without the building of new infrastructure and the development of new sources of water infrastructure, the continuous shortages of water in California not only threatens the general population, but threatens the agricultural production of this largest producer of food and fiber for the entire nation.

I include below just the summary of all that is included in his report. I urge you to go to the link for the entire report.

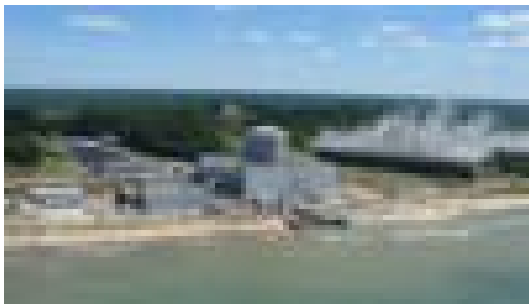
Physical Economy and Technology Report for August 29, 2024

In today's report, we highlight the fight for baseload electrical power, the Polaris Dawn flight, and the Starliner test flight. We take a tour with Jeff Bezos of his New Glenn rocket factory, and we present an interview with the people who brought RFK and President Trump together.



By [Michael James Carr](#)
August 29, 2024

https://www.prometheanaction.com/physical-economy-and-technology-report-for-august-29-2024/?fbclid=IwY2xjawE9ei1leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHYHBjB7PdnzQLC35TE9gt7rYSG68fDYRG5ZCFw_99KkHOPQqd_jKORP6TQ_aem_crMg2WdYcFdKkHSUp7OohQ



The Palisades nuclear power plant in Michigan during its first lifetime. It is now closed, but will

reopen in October of 2025. Photo: NRC

Posts in today's report:

- *Bootlegger Turn on Nuclear Power: Closed Plants to Reopen*
- *TVA Approves More Funding for Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Project*
- *Biden Administration's Rules on Carbon Capture for Coal Plants Threaten the Grid*
- *Polaris Dawn Mission to Launch*
- *NASA Decides to Bring the Starliner Back Uncrewed*
- *Jeff Bezos Gives a Tour of His New Glenn Rocket Factory*
- *The Pharma/Food/Insurance Blob That Brought RFK and Trump Together*
- ***American Birthrate Has Fallen by Nearly 23% Since 2007***

The Colorado River

We bought time to fix the Colorado River. What happens when the money runs out?

The Colorado River is in better shape now than it has been in years, thanks to extra water in Lake Mead. But how do we keep it there after 2026?

[Joanna Allhands](#)

Arizona Republic

August 26, 2024

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/joannaallhands/2024/08/26/lake-mead-colorado-river-2026-water-savings/74925833007/>

We have a good story to tell about the Colorado River (I know. Since when have I typed those words?)

Consider where we are:

Lake Mead and Lake Powell — the nation's two largest water reservoirs — remain relatively stable, despite only average runoff this year.

That's largely because Arizona, California and Nevada — the Lower Basin states that rely on Lake Mead — have put their water use on a heavy diet, consuming 5.8 million acre-feet of water in 2023.

That's the lowest in 40 years and well below the 7.5 million acre-feet of water to which they are entitled.

Lake Mead is stable, which helps Lake Powell

Meanwhile, the three states are well on their way to leaving an additional 3 million acre-feet feet of water in Lake Mead by 2026, a commitment they made to the federal Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the lakes.

California's Imperial Irrigation District, which is entitled to more Colorado River water than all of Arizona, inked the latest and largest deal, agreeing to leave 700,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead through 2026

These savings are critical because they essentially eliminate the “structural deficit” that has caused

Lake Mead to steadily decline, even when we've had decent runoff.

This deficit is largely driven by evaporation and other losses that aren't accounted for in the Lower Basin's water allocations.

And because Lake Mead survives only because of releases from Lake Powell, those losses also have drained the upstream reservoir.

Eliminating the structural deficit won't build back the water we've lost. But it has stopped the decline for now, and that's good news, indeed.

We're spending billions to temporarily save water

Except ... (you knew that word was coming, didn't you?)

We're achieving these savings largely because billions of dollars in federal money are funding them.

Most of that cash is simply paying people to temporarily not use water. Proposals to find more permanent water savings are still being vetted.

AG ALERT: Imperial Valley goes dry as farmers act to protect river

August 28, 2024

<https://mavensnotebook.com/2024/08/28/ag-alert-imperial-valley-goes-dry-as-farmers-act-to-protect-river/>

By Caleb Hampton, Ag Alert



Irrigators cut off water to a huge portion of the Imperial Valley's half-million acres of farmland earlier this month after the federal government approved a long-awaited program designed to bolster water levels on the Colorado River.

The conservation agreement, authorized Aug. 12 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Imperial Irrigation District, pays farmers to stop irrigating forage crops such as alfalfa for a period during the summer. Farmers participating in the "deficit irrigation" program will be compensated to sacrifice one or two hay cuttings without—they hope—killing the perennial crops.

"Our staff has been super busy locking a large number of (irrigation) gates," IID Water Manager Tina Shields said last week at a district board meeting. About 150,000 acres have been enrolled in the program, close to a third of the valley's farmland and by some estimates around half the ground that is farmed in the summertime.

The landmark agreement, which capped years of negotiations and reviews, is part of a short-term effort by water users in California, Arizona and Nevada, the three states in the Colorado River's Lower Basin, to conserve 3 million acre-feet of water through the end of 2026. The plan relies on farmers in the Imperial Valley, whose senior water rights entitle them to the largest share of the river, to come up with about a quarter of that conservation.

The agreement also uses federal funds to increase the compensation rate for IID's "on-farm"

conservation program, which pays farmers to install water-saving irrigation systems. Officials are aiming to incentivize more participation in that program by upping rates from \$330 to \$430 per acre foot of water saved. Farmers participating in the deficit irrigation program will be paid \$300 per acre foot. IID will also be paid to administer the programs.

In total, the irrigation district and farmers in the valley could receive close to \$700 million in federal funds over the next 30 months to leave some 700,000 acre-feet of water in the Colorado River. The monetary commitment and scale of conservation are unprecedented for the drought-ravaged river system that supplies water to 40 million people in the West.

Farmers in the region have long resisted fallowing as a means of water conservation because of the far-reaching impact agricultural production has in a county where one in six jobs depend on farming. But farmers said the objectives of the short-term conservation effort cannot be met solely by installing better irrigation systems.

“This is a big unknown,” Cox said, the biggest uncertainty being how well the crops will hold up over six weeks without water during the valley’s scorching summer. “Those plants are going to be extremely stressed. When we water them back, we don’t know whether they’re going to come back or they’re going to die.”

Having to reseed and reestablish the crops could make the initiative, despite the payments, prohibitively costly for farmers.

Feature: Rural America

Great Hope For America



[Brian Lantz](#)

Aug 13, 2024

<https://brianlantz.substack.com/p/rural-america>

This is an appropriate time and place to return to the important topic of Rural America and its role in

America's future.

Discussing his impoverished rural upbringing and hardship, J.D. Vance has said he had a "guardian angel" by his side: His grandmother, "Mamaw," who raised him while his own mother struggled with addiction. Speaking more broadly of these parts of our country, J.D. stated, there is "so much talent and grit ... but for these places to thrive, my friends, we need a leader who fights for the people who built this country."

Vance did make a vow in the close of his speech to the National Republican Convention. "To the people in Middletown, Ohio and all the Forgotten communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Ohio and every corner of our nation, I promise you this: I will be a vice president who never forgets where he came from."

The need to rebuild the U.S. as a manufacturing powerhouse is on the table, and a doubling or tripling manufacturing and heavy industry is no longer thought of as a wild idea. A trillion dollar physical goods annual trade deficit is one reason why, along with the national debt. In rural America today, there is the "grit" and the skills to play a critical role in securing the future of our nation, as we must do much more than simply reverse course.

Did the 'Tide Go Out'?

In the 1980's and 1990's, for much of rural American, including many parts of what are now termed blue states, "the tide went out." Many parts of the nation that were home to agro-industrial employment found themselves "de-industrialized," as was said about the entire Midwest ("Rust-Bucket"), and which applied to those in blue collar/trade union jobs generally.

This was never an act of nature; instead it was the Council of Foreign Relation's "1980's Project," and their stated intention to de-industrialize and 'green' the United States as part of a globalist "collective management" of "limited" resources and finite markets. To this end the financial oligarchy had to get rid of people that *produced* and built-up and improved our nation independently, including those who grew the crops and husbanded the livestock. The intent was to cut our nation off at the knees; to convince actual citizens of their purported littleness, and accept their new "global order."

Can-Do

Well, we now need our producers, and many more, as never before! We need muster the spirited productive capacities of all Americans.

Here the discussion turns to Rural America. **America needs now to recognize the cultural and economic contributions of our fellow citizens in rural America, and the communities & towns that they compose.** Their role, in our larger cultural and social discourse, now so impoverished -- and in American economic life itself -- is required.

For the incoming Trump administration and American patriots, a pressing question to be answered is apparent: What economic drivers will propel the movement of industries, commerce, and prosperity back into our rural communities and reinvigorate their growth?

This is not a give-away. The return to the *American System* and real prosperity for our nation puts a premium on the cultural development of a creative and productive citizenry. **We have, and will have, a national shortage of resourceful, creative human minds, of productive labor.** Rural America only

awaits an infusion of productive, high wage jobs and the opportunity to advance. Young generations and new families, everywhere, need these good-paying, “breadwinner” jobs and secure communities.

Skilled Labor in Rural America

Modern day factors related to local and regional economic growth in rural areas or the fringe of metro areas, are said to be attractiveness to retirees, right-to-work laws, excellent high school completion rates, good public education expenditures, and access to transportation networks. There are other important factors to consider.

The skill set in the modern U.S. military is significantly drawn from rural America. That rich skill set & potential exists in our small towns, cities, and farms, where construction in the broadest sense is done locally in the garage, the barn, and just down the street. Mechanical skills, an aptitude of constructing things, problem solving, is inherent.

Agriculture

Much of the development of Rural America’s character is shaped through life on and around farms and ranches. Related industries - farm implements, farm inputs, and meatpacking and food processing, have sustained rural communities, and must again play a growing role. This includes a return to relatively smaller, more traditional, diversified family farms and ranches. Such is not the configuration of American agriculture today. This writer has written at some length on this very important set of issues elsewhere [1](#) . Here are key requirements, that dove-tail with the intentions of President Donald Trump and the American people:

- A priority is to increase the value, to the farmer and his family, of his farm's cash crops! That means a “parity” floor supporting the price of produce and livestock.
- A further priority is therefore to bust up the financialized structure of agriculture marketing today, a creature of Wall Street and its modern day cartels. These cartels control rail, meat packing, seed, fertilizer and other inputs. Antitrust action is critical and long overdue.

Skeptical that low prices could ever be harmful, the federal courts set the bar for proving *predatory* pricing so high as to effectively legalize it across the U.S. economy. There are now growing efforts, dating from the first Trump administration, to finally reverse this systematic perversion of federal antitrust laws.

- End those "green" policies dating back to the formation of the EPA, that support modern day agricultural trusts and mega-farm plantations. In agriculture, these policies have been cynically used to support the cost of farm inputs. This includes mandates promoting ethanol in motor fuels! The same unconstitutional rule-making now seek to impose zero-carbon, negative-growth policies on farmers and ranchers.
- Finally, bankrupt the predatory Wall Street-financed "Walmart" and "Amazon" model! That model has turned rural main streets, in particular, into deserts. Here again, anti-trust actions are long overdue, taking on the intentional, selective and monopolistic Wall Street funding of vertical integration schemes, with their brutal "throw-away" labor policies, price fixing, and supplier issues.

The “Rural Transition”

There has been a so-called “rural transition” underway for more than a generation. This was, again, really a consequence of taking down the agro-industrial productive potential of the United States, and had begun even pre-dating the removal of the U.S. dollar from the gold standard in 1971. But here is a two-decade-old retelling of the ‘rural transition’ tale:

"Farming no longer anchors the rural economy as it did through the mid-20th century. Today, seven out of eight rural counties are dominated by manufacturing, services, and other employment not related to farming. Despite these changes, rural and farm communities are becoming increasingly interdependent. Job growth in agricultural areas is now more likely to come from rural industries related to farming than from farming itself. Industries involving agricultural inputs, processing and marketing of agricultural goods, wholesale and retail trade of agricultural products, and agribusiness have increased their presence in rural communities.

"Farm households themselves rely more on the local economy. Farm business income has played an increasingly smaller role in determining the well-being of farm households [2](#)

As many Americans now know, that rural transition to, “manufacturing, services and other employment,” did not broadly materialize in any positive way.

Lessons of the Transcontinental Railroad

Instead recall President Abraham Lincoln's Transcontinental Railroad! The Transcontinental Railroad opened up the American West, connecting new areas of agricultural, mining & forestry development with the populous East (and West) Coasts.

Here is a history lesson that underscores how American rural development participates in the development of the nation as a whole. With the coming of the railroad, farmers and ranchers open up new land, and ship their product to, and import from, urban markets; mines produce and process for a demand that may be from thousands of miles away. Then, in turn, industries develop close-in, taking advantage of local skilled labor, new resources, and the demand that comes as towns and cities grow.

Such a real rural build-out of towns, cities, factories and homes today will require transformative infrastructure, in terms of major new water systems and energy, as well as a rebuilding our shriveled-up (since 1970 de-regulation) of our nation’s freight rail and passenger networks, to insure efficient supply chains and access to markets. Again, this is a necessity, as thinking turns again to the United States as-a-whole, to America as “a City on a Hill,” as an energetic and productive "manufacturing superpower."

Building out modern infrastructure (energy, water & rail) along with housing would themselves be important and jobs creating, but just part of the picture. These significant investments of human and material resources, to last and grow, must serve a set of over-arching, and ever-developing requirements. Those needs are found in our various, growing regional economies and needs essential to our overall national economy.

Rural Electrification Served Our Nation

It is then important to bear in mind the successful **rural electrification** of our nation, to gain both historical insight and inspiration. It was an integral part of the rebuilding of the U.S. out of the era of predatory robber barons and predatory holding companies — and the 1929 financial collapse they triggered. Rural electrification immeasurably improve the conditions of life across America. It also vastly contributed to that increased productivity aiding our WWII mobilization, both in terms of provisions (food & cotton) and manpower.

Today's vital rural electric cooperatives, operating under the federal umbrella, **provide the electricity to over 50% of America's landscape**. This will be a surprising fact to many readers. These co-ops today power over **22 million** businesses, homes, schools and farms in 48 states. These 832 distribution cooperatives were built by, and serve, co-op members in their communities by delivering electricity and other services. Few today could argue but that the entire nation benefited — and still benefits — from the 1930's and 40's — Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC)-backed — U.S. rural electrification effort.

Rural Development Today

The development of the mining potentials today of the Colorado Plateau is one example of the potentials of the American West. New, expansive networks of mining, heavy industry, and manufacture are examples of 'drivers' of new development that will knit our nation together — the Transcontinental Railroad Projects of today.

Predating but confirming President Donald Trump's important proposal to build new cities in the West on federal land, are the proposals for what originally were spoken of as NAFTA (now the USMCA) super corridors or Mid-Continental Trade and Transportation Corridors. They underscore the potential for development of the High Plains region. These projects have been promoted by coalitions such as the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, NASCO, and state governments. Particularly when we combine these concepts with existing East-West freight rail corridors that require expansion, and other relevant land and air freight routes. Likewise the potentials of the Interstate 14 “Forts-to-Ports” Corridor across Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia.



At the same time the United States is facing a national housing shortage, particularly "starter homes" for young families -- and family formation is now recognized pressing national issue. This can be an opportunity, if we don't fool one another into promoting a rural version of "bedroom communities." Currently, large numbers of reasonably-priced 'starter homes' are not being built anywhere, especially in already high-priced urban areas. We also don't need more (expensive) suburban sprawl. Why not grow struggling small rural cities and towns into new vital economic and cultural centers, complete with beautiful, classically-inspired architecture and great educational and cultural institutions?

Today, the leaders of our rural electric cooperatives are already civic boosters, interested in the development of energy and water projects (and more) that will nourish our cities, towns, farms and ranches. For example, Utah and other western municipal electric utilities, including cooperatives, were prepared to join with NuScale and the DOE's Idaho National Laboratory in the joint development of the first 12-module, 720-megawatt Small Modular Reactor (SMR) commercial plant — if the price was right. That project, or similar ones, can still come to fruition. A similar spirit is reflected elsewhere, as with a SMR project in Kemmerer, Wyoming with Terrapower, and the construction of a Molten-Salt nuclear research reactor on the campus of Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas.³

The Failure of “Small is Beautiful”

Formally, in the last decade or two, a simple *entrepreneurial orientation* to so-called *rural development* has been hyped from on-high. It was never a serious effort, as its promoters willingly promoted a broader national context of de-industrialization, CO2 “mitigation” and the continued outsourcing of U.S. productivity as a whole. It was clear that promoting entrepreneurship in such a vacuum, suggested as some “new, local” force for rural economic growth, could only land on fallow ground.

Consider this sober assessment of even the D.C. Beltway's Brookings Institution:

In rural America, employment and labor force participation rates in rural areas have still not recovered to pre-Great Recession levels. From most indications, rural America's economic fortunes continue to diverge from the rest of the country. Bureaucratic efforts, within the fishbowl of American de-industrialization, fail. For example, the inclusion of rural places in place-based economic programs like the \$1 billion "Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC)," which was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to boost economic recovery from COVID.

As these writers admit, a few communities profited in the short-term; many others certainly did not. There have been some quirky, green "homestead" proposals of sorts, as well as sly proposals selling farmers and ranchers on the mirage of profits in “carbon sequestration.” (Retired farmer and nuclear chemist Noel Cowling and I wrote about those efforts earlier this year.⁵)

To actually insure rural America's much-needed participation in the U.S.A.'s rebirth, profitable farms, ranches, businesses, factories and communities are required. Those come with a broader national economic expansion, to relocate and to open new facilities based on a clear, confident sense of promise. This requires real economic 'drivers,' not the wishful hopes that sprang from the Covid-related flight out of cities and "work-from-anywhere" service jobs.

The spoilage of recent decades must be thrown out, washed away but not-to- be-forgotten. The intention now must be to make America, once again, the industrial and manufacturing superpower of the World. **From sea to shining sea**, all of America — and all Americans from all generations — have profound roles to play in this historic effort.

Notes

1 https://archive.prometheanpac.com/to_feed_the_nation_you_need_a_third_national_bank

2 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2003/february/rural-america>

3 <https://acu.edu/research/next-lab/>

4 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/regional-clusters-and-rural-development-to-what-extent-does-edas-build-back-better-regional-challenge-include-rural-areas/>

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