



People fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The State Water Resources Control Board is fast-tracking public hearings on a 45-mile tunnel project to draw and transport river water. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli, File) Story on page 7.

California Water and Infrastructure Report For September 5, 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 heavily focuses on the *Delta Conveyance Project*, promoted and sponsored by the *State Water Resources Control Board*. Advocated for decades, since the first term of Governor Jerry Brown more than 40 years ago, the project now has a price tag of \$20 billion, and would, if actually built, be a 20 year project.

So, what is the project?

In an article from the *San Jose Mercury News*, which is linked below, it is a “*plan to build a 36-foot-diameter, 45-mile tunnel through the Delta that would pump as much as 7,500 cubic feet of water per second from the Sacramento River — enough to cover 11,000 football fields with a foot of water daily.*”

The “Delta” is the *San Francisco Bay Delta* where both the Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River enter the Bay, creating the largest estuary on the West Coast of the U.S.

The purpose of the plan is to protect fish, while being able to pump water to the agricultural land of the

Central Valley and to Southern California through the federal Central Valley Project and the State Water Project aqueducts.

Several major water districts are supporting the tunnel, while most environmentalist organizations oppose it. Farmers in the Delta area are strongly opposed, while construction interests look forward to the contracts and jobs. But, I think, the most rational approach is that put forward by Edward Ring, who has presented the alternative generally to the “conservation only” policy of the entire political class that runs the state. Ring has written both lengthy studies and many articles on how the state can create “water abundance,” as an alternative to the “conservation only” approach of the state's political class. He has demonstrated that the tunnel project is both a waste of money, won't do what it is claimed it will do, and has presented an array of policies and projects that will actually create “water abundance.”

There are three articles in this section of this week's report that illustrate some of the present battles that are a part of the ongoing “water wars” that have plagued the state forever.

The Rest of This Week's Report

The *U.S. Drought Monitor* for California continues to show the growing drought now taking hold in the state.

The Pacific Northwest, on the other hand, is in a more intense drought than California is presently. An article on that follows the *Drought Monitor* for California.

Then an agriculture sector gets some coverage this week with an article from Wisconsin: “*The Truth Behind Wisconsin Losing 455 Dairy Farms.*”

The **Feature** this week is titled, “*What Will Be the Economic Policy of the Nation If Trump Wins the Election?*” The media has highlighted the smorgasbord of policies that Kamala Harris has presented over the past few weeks, but has had little, if any, coverage of Trump's actual policies. Instead, there has been a concerted attempt to falsely claim that the *Heritage Foundation's* “*Project 2025*” is Trump's policy, despite his repeated denunciation of their project.

On September 6, President Trump gave a remarkable presentation to the *Business Council of New York City*. In the presentation, and his response to questions, he echoed past presidents, including William McKinley, Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy. There is much more to that presentation, and a summary of it is provided in the introduction to the article: “*Trump's Platform vs Project 2025—What's the Deal?*”

The U.S. Drought Monitor

The West

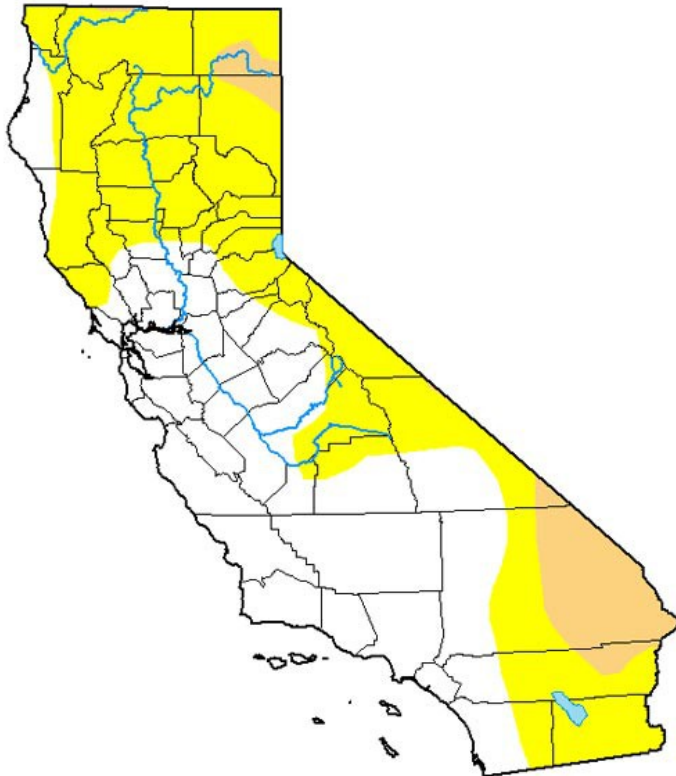
The West was a mixture of improvements in the northwest and Four Corners areas and degradations in the desert areas of Nevada, Arizona, and California, plus isolated areas of the northern Rockies. South and central New Mexico received moisture, allowing some of the longer-term impacts to improve slightly. Utah saw some improvements on the eastern border with Colorado but did see abnormally dry conditions expand in Juab County and Millard County.

In the Southwest, along with southern Nevada, western Arizona and southern California, abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions expanded. Moisture deficits continued in these areas, with not enough precipitation to aid in current dry conditions. Conditions from northwestern Washington southward along the Pacific Coast into northern California have seen improvements in short-term

dryness, with streamflows and soil moistures improving. In central and northern Washington, there is still some lingering long-term drought but these, similarly to areas of short-term drought, are showing improvement.

U.S. Drought Monitor California

September 3, 2024
(Released Thursday, Sep. 5, 2024)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	45.59	54.41	8.36	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 08-27-2024	58.11	41.89	6.91	0.10	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 06-04-2024	98.78	1.22	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 09-05-2023	93.53	6.47	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

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

Lindsay Johnson
National Drought Mitigation Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

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

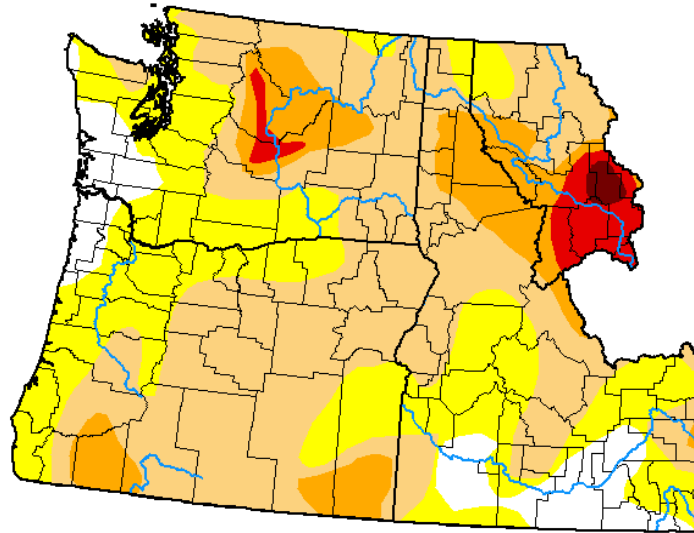
- According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, 61% of the Pacific Northwest Drought Early Warning System region is experiencing Moderate to Exceptional Drought conditions (D1–D4). Drought is most severe in central Washington (Extreme Drought, D3) and western Montana (Exceptional Drought, D4).
- The Pacific 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.

U.S. Drought Monitor

The Northwestern states



The Bay Delta Conflict

Opinion: Delta tunnel plan is a risky, destructive and unnecessary gamble

\$20 billion project would devastate a huge, vital estuary and block more sustainable solutions to state's water challenges



(AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli, File)

People fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The State Water Resources Control Board is fast-tracking public hearings on a 45-mile tunnel project to draw and transport river water.

By [Malissa Tayaba](#), [Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla](#) and [Scott Artis](#)

UPDATED: September 3, 2024 at 5:32 a.m.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/08/31/opinion-delta-tunnel-plan-is-a-risky-destructive-and-unnecessary-gamble/?share=katee2no2aepnlc0ywye>

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is more than just a water source. It is a vibrant, living estuary — the largest on the West Coast of the Americas — with over 1,100 miles of waterways that support diverse wildlife, including declining salmon runs that have led to fishery closures two years in a row. Saving the estuary is of national importance.

Yet state officials continue to push forward with a plan to build a 36-foot-diameter, 45-mile tunnel through the Delta that would pump as much as 7,500 cubic feet of water per second from the Sacramento River — enough to cover 11,000 football fields with a foot of water daily.

The State Water Resources Control Board is fast-tracking public hearings for the so-called Delta Conveyance Project, limiting meaningful and fair public participation.

This Delta tunnel risks devastating the West Coast's largest estuary, harming salmon fisheries, causing fish extinctions, degrading water quality and damaging cultural sites vital to tribal communities. But supporters of the tunnel downplay these threats, pushing misleading economic benefits and questionable claims about water security.

California's Water & Energy Future with Edward Ring

<https://mailchi.mp/calpolicycenter/whats-current-issue-7859061?e=0a4ba10676>

More Water Supply Requires Industry Unity

Probably the most consequential and controversial water policy decisions in California involve how much water to pump out of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and into southbound aqueducts, and we're in the middle of another one right now.

For the last several years, as summer turns to fall, state and federal regulators reduce the amount of water that gets pumped south in order to help the Delta smelt, an endangered fish. This year is no exception. In what is referred to as the "Fall X2 Action," the pumps are about to be throttled down again. Water agencies at the receiving end claim the reduction, set to last about two months, will cost them up to 400,000 acre feet.

The reason the state wants to let this much water escape into the San Francisco Bay is to improve habitat for the endangered smelt, but critics of this strategy claim that smelt haven't been found in the area, making the action fruitless. They also claim that regulators have the authority to restore higher rates of pumping without requiring a protracted bureaucratic process.

To learn more details, refer to an excellent recent report by Don Wright, "[Fall X2 Line](#)." It not only explains the immediate situation, it provides background information for anyone unfamiliar with the agencies and regulations involved.

Meanwhile, this situation invites some strategic questions that ought to dominate water policy dialogue in California, but don't.

- 1. Why does state water policy continue to assume more flow through the delta will cause endangered and threatened species to rebound, when despite 20 years of continually escalating restrictions on water withdrawals, they can point to almost no positive results?*
- 2. When will the state recognize the role of introduced predators that feed on salmon and smelt, and either remove limits on fishing these predators, or abandon efforts to save the weaker native species?*
- 3. How can the legislature justify the [estimated \\$7 billion cost](#) to impose strict water rationing on every urban resident in the state in order to save 400,000 acre feet per year, when simply allowing the delta pumps to operate normally in September and October would supply an equivalent amount?*
- 4. Why is the state unwilling to invest in practical water supply infrastructure that could eliminate water scarcity forever?*

LETTER: GOP Reps say preferred alternative for Delta water project operations inappropriately prioritizes environmental goals at expense of water supplies

September 4, 2024

<https://mavensnotebook.com/2024/09/04/letter-gop-reps-say-preferred-alternative-for-delta-water-project-operations-inappropriately-prioritizes-environmental-goals-at-expense-of-water-supplies/>

In July 2024, the Bureau of Reclamation released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the long-term operation of the [Central Valley Project](#) (CVP) and the [State Water Project](#) (SWP) for public comment. The draft document considers revised operations of dams, power plants, and related facilities of the Central Valley Project and Delta facilities of the State Water Project. ([More on these documents here](#).)

Twelve California GOP representatives have written the Bureau of Reclamation, NOAA Fisheries, and US Fish & Wildlife Service, expressing concerns that the preferred alternative analyzed in the documents inappropriately prioritizes environmental goals unrelated to Endangered Species Act compliance at the expense of municipal and agricultural water supplies. They point out that the water projects were constructed for multiple purposes such as irrigation and drinking water, and neither state nor federal law makes the delivery of water for consumptive uses subordinate to environmental uses.

The letter states,

“[T]he current proposed operational approach makes delivering water for consumptive uses, including irrigation, subordinate to the use of water for the protection, restoration, and

enhancement of protected fish species in the Delta. We believe the preferred operations (Alternative 2b) evaluated in the Draft EIS LTO on the CVP and SWP are structured to protect native fish species with limited balance to the impacts on the delivery capability of either the CVP or SWP and the associated water supply shortages that will be imposed on the communities reliant on water provided by the Projects. The preferred alternative ignores the equal statutory priority of water use for consumptive purposes and the contractual obligations to optimize deliveries and guard against conditions of shortage.

California Water Wars – The Fish-killing Delta Tunnel boondoggle that wouldn't die

- *Published on September 5th, 2024*

<http://redgreenandblue.org/2024/09/05/california-water-wars-fish-killing-delta-tunnel-boondoggle-wouldnt-die/>

The struggle against the fish-killing Delta Tunnel, the zombie water boondoggle that keeps getting resurrected by state officials and the state and federal water contractors, continues. In the latest battle in the California water wars, the Environmental Justice Law and Advocacy Clinic at Yale Law School, on behalf of the Delta Tribal Environmental Coalition (DTEC), [submitted a formal letter](#) to the State Water Resources Control Board concerning the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) latest attempt to modify expired water permits for the controversial Delta Conveyance Project (DCP).

Agriculture-- From Wisconsin

The Truth Behind Wisconsin Losing 455 Dairy Farms



At the start of the New Year, Wisconsin had 5,895 dairies. (Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin)

By [Karen Bohnert](#) January 16, 2024

<https://www.dairyherd.com/news/business/truth-behind-wisconsin-losing-455-dairy-farms>

Ask any dairy farmer how they feel about today's markets and they will say that the economics don't add up. Simply put, \$15 milk is not cutting it. This is true in any state, but certainly being highlighted in Wisconsin. The state's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reported that last year America's Dairyland experienced a decline of 455 dairy farms.

To put that in perspective, in 2005, Wisconsin had 15,100 licensed herds, with an average herd size of 82 cows. A decade later it had 9,900 herds, with an average herd size of 129 cows. In 2022, the state had 6,350 dairy farms with an average herd size of 200 cows. The total number of cows in Wisconsin has held steady over the past decade at around 1.2 million cows.

Chad Vincent, CEO of Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin shared that they work closely with the Department of Agriculture, and in March of 2020, they sent out a farm survey asking how long dairy producers are planning to stay in business and if they have a succession plan in place.

“At that point in time, 17% of all dairy farms in the state said that within five years they would not be milking,” Vincent said, adding that none of the numbers he sees on a monthly basis is a surprise.

The 2020 survey also indicated that 22% of all the dairies under 100 head had plans to exit in the next 5 years.

Feature: What Will Be the Economic Policy of the Nation if Donald Trump Wins the Election?

President Trump gave a remarkable presentation today to the Business Council of New York City. In the presentation, and his response to questions, he echoed past presidents, including William McKinley, Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy.

His focus was the economic policy he will enact when he is once again in the White House. In summary it is a policy that is designed to make the U.S. once again a manufacturing superpower.

From William McKinley, whom he referenced, tariffs both to protect domestic industry and as a revenue stream would be a central part of his policy. From Franklin Roosevelt he cited the great infrastructure projects that electrified the nation and created the powerful production capability that made it possible to win World War II. From John Kennedy he cited the tax credits given to industries that are conditional on all production will occur inside the U.S.

In addition, Trump proposed the creation of a “Sovereign Wealth Fund” that would provide the credit for both private investments and public investments for infrastructure building and advanced manufacturing.

What follows is an article from Promethean Action by my associate Susan Kokinda that covers Trump's speech on September 29 to the Business Council of New York City, and more:

Trump’s Platform vs Project 2025—What’s the Deal?

The Democrats have made Project 2025 a household word. Donald Trump has said, in no uncertain terms, that it is not his policy. But most Trump supporters don't understand what the underlying problem with Project 2025 is. We do.

[Susan Kokinda](#)

September 06 2024

<https://www.prometheanaction.com/trumps-platform-vs-project-2025-whats-the-deal/>





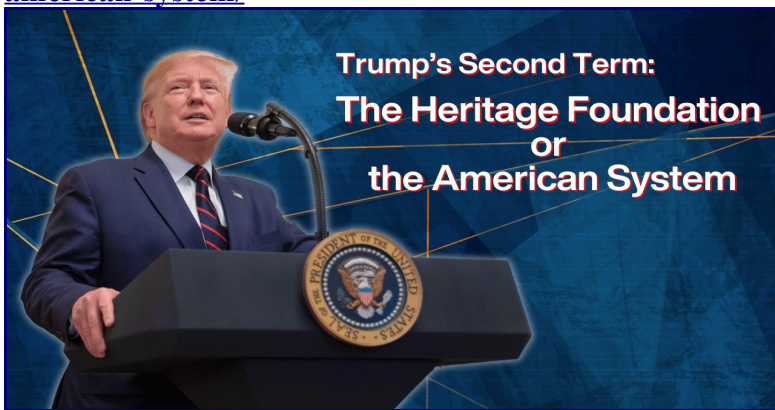
Kamala's website is devoid of policy, but has a whole section devoted to beating up on Donald Trump and Project 2025.

In February of this year, my colleague Brian Lantz and I produced a video entitled, "*Trump's Second Term: The Heritage Foundation or the American System?*," which took up the issue of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. Not a whole lot of people paid attention to it. After all, the Heritage Foundation has been a favored institution among conservatives and patriots for decades.

In brief, they mostly suck. Trump has long favored the unique American System of Hamilton and Lincoln to create massive economic progress. Heritage favors the antagonistic British system which will trap him.

Trump's Second Term: The Heritage Foundation or the American System

<https://www.prometheanaction.com/trumps-second-term-the-heritage-foundation-or-the-american-system/>



Fast forward to the August Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where an oversized prop version of Project 2025 was brandished by what seemed at least half of the speakers. Look at the Harris website which is devoid of any of her policy content (her webmaster probably can't keep up with her changing positions anyway), but [has a whole section devoted to beating up on Donald Trump and Project 2025](#). The theme of much of this is the hard-wired narrative about the "threat to Democracy."

In between our February discussion and the current Democratic Party obsession with Project 2025, Donald Trump came out and forcefully distanced himself from Project 2025. While commenting that there were a few good people and good ideas in it, he made the point that it included some "crazy" ideas and some extreme right-wing ideas. **But most importantly, he made clear that HIS POLICY IS THE 2024 REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM.**

So, what's the deal?

The deal is that Donald Trump has reintroduced the forgotten and long-suppressed system of American

economics. Listen to his September 5 speech to the Economic Club of New York. Pay attention to his use of the term “economic nationalism,” and his praise of President William McKinley and McKinley’s enormously successful tariff policies. Think about the implications of his proposals for R&D tax credits, support for expensing new manufacturing investments, and a national (ie, the federal government) crash program to develop energy production. **These are all elements of the American System, by which the federal government actively creates the conditions for producers to produce.** You haven’t heard a President talk like this since John F. Kennedy (or before that, Dwight Eisenhower with his Atoms for Peace or Franklin Roosevelt with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation or the Defense Production Board.)

Pay attention to Trump's use of the term “economic nationalism,” and his praise of President William McKinley and McKinley’s enormously successful tariff policies.

Instead, since the assassination of John F. Kennedy, economic discussion in this country has been limited to a debate between two versions of British liberal economics:

1. The left-wing version (John Maynard Keynes), which says the Federal government throws money at everything;
2. The right-wing version (the Austrian School), which says that private interests (including especially the privately owned Federal Reserve System) get to deploy money for the purpose of making more money for the favored few who control the flows of that money.

What is missing in this world of British monetarism is **production**, that is, the process which creates new physical wealth by increasing the productive powers of labor. The new Republican Party Platform, written under the direct supervision of Donald Trump, pledges to return to its roots as the party of “industry, manufacturing, infrastructure and workers,” ie, producers.

From its inception, the Heritage Foundation was created to propagandize for the right-wing version of British monetarism. (There is an interesting backstory in the history of the Heritage Foundation—about one of its founder’s affinity for British Fabian socialism, but that is a tale for another time.) This author recently heard the current Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts on a local Detroit radio station, putting it in simple terms: his approach is libertarian. Adam Smith, in his “Theory of Moral Sentiments,” summed up libertarianism this way: make your decisions from the standpoint of the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, i.e. profit and loss, and let the invisible hand sort out the consequences.

That is not an American policy, nor is it moral, nor is it Donald Trump’s policy. Donald Trump recognizes that the federal government must intervene on behalf of producers. The simplest example of this is tariffs, which protect domestic industries. His September 5, 2024, is filled with other proposals for the government to **foster** production, not leave it to the mercy of some magical marketplace.

What Trump has done, [first with Agenda 47, and now, much more forcefully with the platform and his recent economic speech](#), is to completely outflank the elites. The 2024 fight was supposed to be between the Democratic Party and the old Republican Party of free traders, Wall Street, and war hawks, with Project 2025 as the script. If you pick through that 900 page script, you will find some proposals that Donald Trump agrees with, like using Schedule F to reign in the politicized federal bureaucracy, or eliminating idiotic regulations (because they are idiotic). You will also see that a couple of his anti-free-trade advisors managed to get a few of their proposals included.

But Project 2025 is primarily a product of an old Republican Party which is going the way of the Whigs and other now-forgotten parties of the 1850s. The leaders of those parties failed in their understanding of what this nation was up against, and of the solutions. Those parties disappeared, *as would have our nation*, if Abraham Lincoln had not emerged with a singular dedication to return to the

American System and the principles of our Founding Fathers.



Ads are being spammed all over the internet.

Like Lincoln, Donald Trump is leaving the failed policies of both wings of the Uniparty behind, and like Lincoln, he is reviving the American System. That is what the Democrats cannot fight against.

Let them have their tantrums about Project 2025. Let them throw it on the floor as Saturday Night Live comedian Keenan Thompson did at the Convention. A better use for the 900 pages is to use it to prop open a door or a window and let some fresh air in, while you take the time to learn about the American economics of Hamilton, Lincoln, McKinley and now Donald Trump.