

California Drought Update

by Patrick Ruckert

December 3, 2015

<http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org>
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Do Not Miss This Meeting

Erik Wilson, the co-founder of “My Job Depends On Ag” facebook group, now with almost 50,000 members, will join former U.S. **Senator Mike Gravel** on December 12, 2015 in Alameda, for a challenging discussion of the future we must create.

Senator Mike Gravel will speak on, “The Potential for Peace and Economic Development in Southeast Asia”

Erik Wilson will address the California drought, the water crisis, and how, by farming a desert, California agriculture feeds the nation and much of the world.

Saturday, December 12, 2015
2:00- 6:00 PM

2417 Mariner Square Loop, suite 145
Alameda CA 94501

The meeting will be broadcast live on You Tube:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-cFpovozHXi8flNCryi-7w>

Snacks to be provided by California farmers

For Information: 323 210 9483

Sponsored by LaRouche PAC

Why do we farm a desert?

By Erik Wilson

Erik Wilson, our speaker on December 12, presents in two parts, the best argument available against

those silly journalists and others who ask the question he addresses.

Below is just the opening paragraph of his part 2. Links to both parts are here:

Part 1: <http://www.californiadroughtupdate.org/2015/12/03/%EF%BB%BFwhy-farm-a-desert/>

Part 2: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/694281934016818/permalink/772672209511123/>

The whole farming the desert conversation was started by journalists far from the fields. To them it just doesn't make sense. So.....they get on their keyboards and write stories about what we do here in the Central Valley of California. But what it really did was expose the lack of knowledge of the "why" we farm a desert as they claim. Never mind that this Valley had one of the largest freshwater lakes in the South end of the valley; never mind it was full of marshes and swamps; never mind that there was once a profitable Steamboating industry right in the heart of this desert; never mind thousands of elk and antelope roamed the valley; never mind that the native American Indian found the means to survive in a desert. Yes the valley is dry and hot. And statistically parts of it do in fact receive 8 inches a year of rainfall, and that may be one of the qualifiers of being a desert. But it is not true by any means that the central valley was a virtual sand dune and cactus setting. The image from our journalists friends is to paint the picture of a cactus and sand dunes. Let's be honest.....the image one conjures up when you think of a desert, is like that of the Sahara desert. This valley is far far from that. Why is it that they want the reader to have that image of this area? Simple.....a lot of them, but not all, have a bias towards Ag and they feel farming here should end. But I'm going to tell you why that is hypocritical and foolish on their part.

The Drought: Some Facts

The California Office of Emergency Services publishes an official "[drought update](#)" every two weeks, reporting changes in water supply, emergency assistance, fire risk and other factors. Here are some of the numbers from the report of Nov. 25:

2, 455: The number of well failures, leaving 12, 275 people without water in their homes.

\$583,231: Total subsidies paid to 2,899 low-income households by the Department of Community Services to help cover their water bills, as of Nov. 13. Up from \$570,299 issued to 2,837 households as of Oct. 30.

825,720: Acres burned so far this year on U.S. Forest Service and CalFire-responsibility lands, across a total of 8,184 wildfires statewide. Up from 8,069 fires burning 824,499 acres as of Nov. 12. Fire activity remains high, with 155 ongoing wildfires over the past two weeks.

State Water Project Deliveries for 2016-- Half That of 2015

The State Water Project, operated by the *Department of Water Resources*, provides water to millions of Californians and irrigation water for 750,000 acres of farm land, when the water is. Here are excerpts from the agency's announcement of December 1, 2015:

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today announced an initial 2016 allocation of-- 10 percent for customers of the State Water Project. Depending upon the amount of rain and snow that reaches California this winter, the allocation may be increased or decreased. If dry conditions continue into a fifth year of drought, DWR may reallocate State Water Project (SWP) supplies to meet critical human health and safety needs.

The 29 public water agencies that receive SWP water (State Water Project Contractors) requested 4,172,786 acre-feet of water for 2016. Under today's initial allocation, they will receive 422,848 acre-feet. For most agencies, that amounts to 10 percent of the supplies for which they contract with DWR.

This calendar year's (2015) 20 percent allocation is the second lowest since 1991, when agricultural customers of the SWP got a zero allocation and municipal customers received 30 percent. In 2014, SWP deliveries were five percent of requested amounts for all customers.

The last 100-percent SWP allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years because of Delta pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish species – was in 2006. SWP allocations in recent years:

2014-- 5 percent

2013-- 35 percent

2012-- 65 percent

2011-- 80 percent

2010-- 50 percent

2009-- 40 percent

2008-- 35 percent

2007-- 60 percent

The Future Is What We Make It....., Or They Make It

Unless there is the political change that reverses the nearly 50 years of political, financial and cultural degeneration that the nation has subjected itself to, then the future of California agriculture will be that portrayed in a November 26 article in the Sacramento Bee, “More California farmland could vanish as water shortages loom beyond drought-- Groundwater legislation will limit pumping, squeeze farmers San Joaquin Valley to be hardest hit,” by Dale Kasler.

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/state/california/water-and-drought/article46665960.html>

The article presents the decline in agricultural acreage in the state as a foregone conclusion, and then presents turning our food growing land into solar farms. Excerpts follow:

Experts say we'll see farmlands go out of production because of groundwater law in coming years. Because of drainage problems, the Westlands Water District has had tens of thousands of acres retired

in the past few years.

Land retirement is coming to California agriculture. The drought will end someday, maybe even this winter, but farmers will still face long-term shortages of water. The driving force: a new state law regulating the extraction of groundwater.

The relentless groundwater pumping that has kept hundreds of farms going the past four years is coming to an end. California's [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#), set to take effect in 2020, will limit how much groundwater can be extracted over the long haul. While details of what constitutes "sustainable" pumping are still being fleshed out, water policy experts say many farmers will gradually have their water supplies curtailed – and the nation's leading agricultural state will farm fewer acres.

"It's not a question of if – it's a question of how much and where," said Chris Scheuring, a lawyer and water expert at the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Many of the state's farmers are already feeling long-term water problems. Westlands Water District, which serves farmers over a vast swath of land in Fresno and Kings counties, plans to retire tens of thousands of acres as part of a tentative deal with the U.S. government over issues related to drainage problems that have degraded the soil.

The new groundwater law is expected to further shrink agriculture's presence. As many as 300,000 acres could permanently disappear from agriculture, said farm economist Vernon Crowder, a senior vice president at agricultural lender Rabobank.

That's not a huge amount in a state with nearly 9 million irrigated acres of farmland. But it's not trivial, either. It's enough acres to grow the entire \$1.2 billion California tomato crop.

The subject is particularly touchy in the San Joaquin Valley, the heart of California's \$54 billion-a-year agricultural industry. Experts at UC Davis estimated that farmers have been draining the valley's underground water reserves by as much as 5 million acre-feet per year during the drought to help compensate for staggering shortfalls in water deliveries from the State Water Project and the federal government's Central Valley Project.

What's more striking, perhaps: Even before the drought began four years ago, the valley's aquifers were being depleted by 1 million to 2 million acre-feet per year, according to data compiled by the state Department of Water Resources.

Land retirement isn't a new concept. Farmland has been disappearing in California for decades, usually giving way to urban development. An estimated 765,000 acres of irrigated farmland vanished between 2000 and 2012, about half of it in the San Joaquin Valley, according to the state Department of Conservation. That represented about 8 percent of the valley's agricultural base.

Nonetheless, farmers get angry about land going idle, either permanently or temporarily, because of water problems.

They generally accept the idea that groundwater pumping needs to be reined in. But they argue the problem wouldn't be nearly as bad if the Endangered Species Act were relaxed, less water were [set aside for fish](#), and more surface water were delivered to the valley from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

"We are not understood. We grow a lot of the nation's food," said Mark Sorensen, a raisin and blueberry grower in Caruthers and president of the Fresno County Farm Bureau. "I'm not sure those on the coast, in the Bay Area, Los Angeles understand that concept. The surface water is key."

Solar energy farms starting to bloom

What will that look like?

Farmers hope they can keep as many acres in agriculture as possible. They're working on projects to [capture winter stormwater](#) more effectively, and to recycle the water they put on their crops. Some believe they can cope with the groundwater legislation by fallowing more fields in dry years and minimizing the amount of land that gets permanently retired.

Not far from Rajkovich's dying orchards, the Panoche Water and Drainage District is working on pilot projects to desalinate and reuse the water drained off its fields. The goal is to reduce dependence on groundwater.

District general manager Dennis Falaschi envisions a string of desalination plants up and down the valley. The plants might not generate enough water to produce a crop, but they could prevent someone's almond orchards from dying of thirst.

"That can keep 300,000 acres of trees alive," Falaschi said.

It's taken a while, but some of the land is sprouting new uses. More than 2,400 acres of land within Westlands' territory has been converted to solar farms in recent years. Gutierrez said another 2,600 acres will go solar in the next year or two.

Beyond that, a company called Westside Holdings wants to build a 20,000-acre solar energy park, billed as the largest in the country, on retired farmland near the Lemoore Naval Air Station in Kings County. Its financial backers include CIM Group, a glitzy real estate developer from Los Angeles whose credits include the Hollywood theater that hosts the Oscars.

A Combined, Light and Serious Article

Under the title, "New Torquemada-- Jerry Brown's Insufferable Green Piety," posted on *The Daily Beast* on November 25, the unknown author both labels Brown a pain in the ass and an agent of the financial oligarchy. The entire article is here: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/11/25/jerry-brown-s-insufferable-green-piety.html>. And here are the first two paragraphs:

As the UN's climate change conference opens in Paris on Nov. 30, California Gov. Jerry Brown's holier-than-thou pronouncements on climate change will be the gospel of choice.

At the site of real and immediate tragedy, an old man comes, wielding not a sword to protect civilization from ghastly present threats but to preach the sanctity of California's green religion. The Paris Climate Change Conference offers a moment of triumph for the 77-year-old Jerry Brown, the apogee of his odd public odyssey.

Speaking of Governor Brown, he is supposedly in Paris this week, along with former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, for the COP21 climate change conference. As Brown stated last week, he wants the whole world to adopt the California model of low carbon emissions. God help us.

But the real show stealer in Paris was President Obama, who once again stated that climate change was the most dangerous threat the world faces today, not terrorism. That statement and his disjointed, incoherent press conference on Tuesday, has led various media to call for the implementation of the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides the procedure for the removal of the President when he or she is physically or mentally unable to discharge their duties of office. That call echoes that

of Lyndon LaRouche, who first raised the issue years ago. The *Washington Times* titled their article: "Has the president lost his ability to discharge the powers and duties of office?" It can be found here: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/dec/1/charles-hurt-obama-loses-gift-of-speech-in-paris-t/>

Obama did say at the Paris conference: *"I think that as the science around climate change is more accepted, as people start realizing that even today you can put a price on the damage that climate change is doing -- you know, you go down to Miami and when it's flooding at high tide on a sunny day and fish are swimming through the middle of the streets -- you know, that there's a cost to that."* The Miami press responded that the President was seriously exaggerating.

Finally, a serious article by serious scientists refuting the CO2 climate hoax, as published in the *Executive Intelligence Review* of December 4, 2015, and distributed at the COP21 conference: "Norwegian Prof. Ole Humlum and Danish Henrik Svensmark Take on Paris CO2 Agenda, Alleged Causes of Climate Changes." http://www.larouchepub.com/pr/2015/151201_cop21_glob_warm.html

Desalination

With the Carlsbad desalination plant due to begin operations on December 14, the San Diego *Union-Tribune* on November 28 celebrated the upcoming event with an article on Australia's experience in building desal plants during its "millenium drought between 2000-2011. Just as Sydney's plant was completed, as is well known, the drought broke. Since, the opponents of desalination have used that as an argument against the building of more such plants. As the article points out, Australia is now in another drought which will probably necessitate the restarting of the plant. The *Union-Tribune* article, "Australia's desal experience bodes well for California, by Neil Palmer, can be found here:

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/nov/28/water-desalination-australia-palmer/>

And on Catalina Island, 35 miles off the coast from Los Angeles, a new desalination plant began operating a week or so ago. An article from *NBC- Los Angeles*, by Patrick Healy is excerpted below: "Drought-Dry Island Looks to Ocean for More Drinking Water-- New desalination plant will enable Catalina Island to avert pending water cuts."

<http://www.nbclausangeles.com/news/Drought-Dry-Island-Looks-to-Ocean-for-More-Drinking-Water-359274571.html>

At the current level of conservation, households are limited to 30 gallons a day

The new desalination unit is an addition to the facility that first went into operation in response to a previous drought nearly a quarter century ago, when Avalon became one of the first California cities to use desalination to supply a portion of its drinking water.

Catalina has relied on a mix of desalinated water with less expensive wellwater. During the drought of the past four years, the island's main reservoir has dropped to less than a fifth of capacity, according to Greg Ferree, Edison's vice-president for distribution.

The existing desalination plant produces 200,000 gallons per day; the new one adds another 150,000 gallons per day.