
California Long-Term Provisions for Water Supply and Short-Term Provisions for Emergency Drought Relief Act

Effects of the drought

There's no question that California is in the midst of a historic drought. While El Niño storms will likely mean more rain and snow, it won't be enough to pull California out of drought conditions. Experts say California needs at least three consecutive years of above-average rain to get us out of drought conditions.

Below are some of the most direct effects the drought has had on California.

Drinking water

- Many communities are facing problems with their drinking water supplies, particularly in the Southern San Joaquin Valley where 69 communities have reported significant water supply and quality issues.
- The number of dry wells in California continues to increase. Approximately 2,591 wells have been identified as critical or dry, which affects an estimated 12,955 residents. The vast majority of those dry wells are in the Central Valley.

Economy

- The unemployment rate in the Central Valley is 10.9 percent, nearly double the statewide average of 5.7 percent.
- The drought is estimated to cost California's economy \$2.7 billion in the last year.
- \$900 million lost in crop revenue, another \$350 million lost in dairy and livestock value. \$590 million has been spent in groundwater pumping costs.
- More than 21,000 seasonal and part-time agricultural jobs were lost.
- More than 1 million acres of farmland in California's Central Valley were fallowed in 2015, more than double the amount fallowed in 2011.

Effects on wildlife

- Figures from long-term monitoring surveys of Delta smelt are at historic lows. And the last remaining population of wild Sacramento River winter run Chinook salmon continue to face steep declines.
- Only one-third of the usual number of acres of rice fields were flooded in 2015. This leads to a significant decline in habitat for migratory birds as well as increased risk of disease because of overcrowding.

Wildfires

- Dry conditions led to 6,227 fires this year, scorching more than 300,000 acres, one of the worst fire seasons on record.

Effects on the land

- Satellite imagery shows significant sinking of land in the San Joaquin Valley from excessive groundwater pumping. Some areas sank as much as two inches per month. This endangers roads, bridges, aqueducts, well and other infrastructure.

