

Historical Drought of California

By Jason Zheng

In the Southwest of the United States, especially California, has an ongoing environmental issue of distributing water throughout the region for meaningful uses. Although to examine the current water conditions in California, we would have to take an historical approach, ensuring state and federal environmental organizations have covered all grounds of conserving water. A few examples of [water policies prior the 1950's](#) will be evaluated and then coming to the present day. Then brief will also examine how the current water restrictions in California hinders the quality of life of the United States as whole. Finally we would address extreme current regulations that have been imposed in current day drought infested California. We will start out with the historical approach of the [drought in California](#).

In the mid-20th century, California's primary focus has been on expanding its reach on water and regulating its proper use. California's main attention was the Colorado River, which runs along or through—California, Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Baja California, Sonora, and Colorado. The [Upper Colorado River Basin Compact of 1948](#), granted the Upper and Lower Basin of the Colorado River an equal share of 7.5 million acre ft/year. From the 1950's and on, the state and federal government was continuously evolving and adapting to the needs of the society. Various types of regulations were passed by [Congress](#) and still used today, some are—Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968); Clean Water Act (CWA) (1972); and the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974). Over the course of transitioning from the old century to the new, Congress and the state government of California have revised and implemented regulations, however it can be said that too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.

California has 4.4 million feet acre of resource, the largest in of the Lower Basin, however the state continues to struggle. In 2000's [Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt](#) signed an interim agreement on restraining California's consumption of the Colorado River, however what makes this troublesome is that California does not know how to conserve. Southern Nevada Water Authority General Manager Pat Mulroy agrees to this statement as well. Unlike the Nevada, California has not sought out to find alternative methods of obtaining water nor conservation methods, another word the state lives on the Colorado River like a drug.

The scope of this investigation is to provide an unbiased brief. Thus the following paragraph(s) will examine why it is absolute necessary for California to have water on hands, regardless the situation.

According to the [Public Policy Institute of California \(PPIC\)](#), water is broken down into three sectors: environmental, agricultural and urban. These sector use an average of 50%, 40% and 10% water respectively. However, in the north coast of California, a large percentage of environmental water goes toward the agricultural use. The percentage of water that is being used in the urban district has decline from 232 gallons per day in 1990 to 178 gallons per day in 2010.

It is not surprisingly why this state use a vast amount of water, given the fact that 73% percent of its economy is generated from crops and the rest by livestock. California would rank

in the top ten largest world economies, if it were to be a country itself. California almost nine million acres of farmland which consumes 80% of the all human *water use* ([PPIC](#)). [The institute](#) also states:

“Higher revenue perennial crops—nuts, grapes, and other fruit—have increased as a share of irrigated crop acreage (from 27% in 1998 to 32% in 2010 statewide, and from 33% to 40% in the southern Central Valley). This shift, plus rising crop yields, has increased the value of farm output (from \$16.3 billion of gross state product in 1998 to \$22.3 billion in 2010, in 2010 dollars)” (PPIC).

In addition to this, California exports these crops for all states in the United States, thus ultimately California cannot be solely blame the decline of water. The amount of goods produced has increased to further please the population growth of the United States, and so has the consumption of water.

The current methods of promoting awareness and conserving water in California impedes too much in the private and public lives of the people. Laws and regulations were made to be followed and amend, however considering the fact that the state has been through its four year drought, these regulations only have been “beefed up” and imposed more restrictions. The state water board has the authority to impose a [\\$10,000 fine](#) on cities and water district that do not meet the additional reduction of 8% to 35%, in addition to the current restrictions.

[Felicia Marcus](#), chair of the water board, called the cutbacks "*a collective issue that we all need to rise to in this time of emergency*", however the drought has affected the United States as whole. The [price of produces](#) and vegetables in supermarkets have fluxed, nearly matching the prices of organic crops primarily in Virginia. People can opt to turn to alternative methods of purchasing more local crops or buying from nearby states to avoid driving California further into drought.

California had failed to seek alternative ways of obtaining water because the state heavily relied on the Lower Basin of the Colorado River. As well they have failed to make preparations for water related crisis, living the ideal that the source of water for them would be infinite because living alongside the Pacific Ocean. However, the state California now face consequences which causes the state and federal government impede and restrain the rights of the Californians.