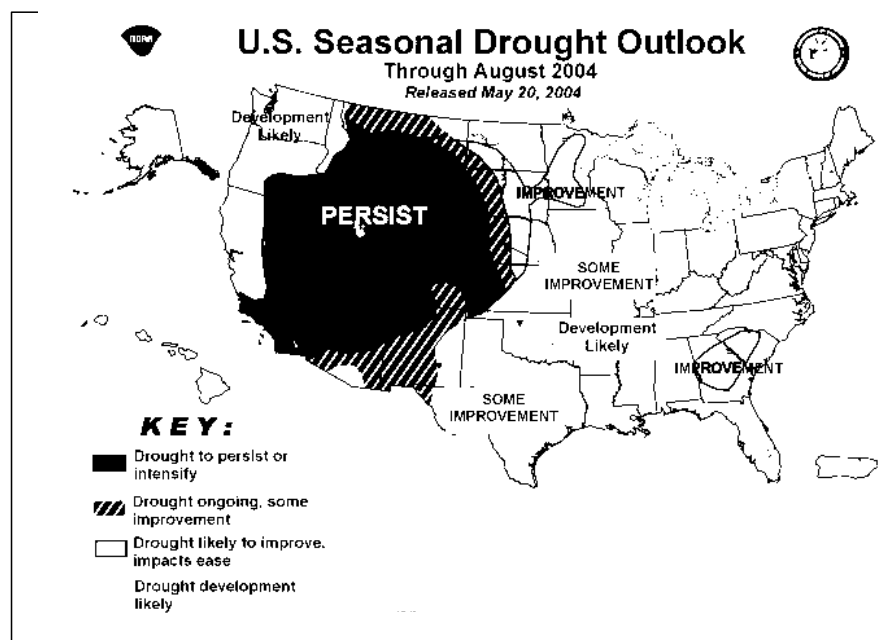


Monthly Briefing

A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News

West's Drought Deepens



(Continued on Page 2)

Drought conditions plaguing much of the West over the past five or six years (depending on location) have not only continued but have worsened.

This year's last straw was a mostly dry, very warm streak of late winter and spring weather that melted virtually all of the West's lower and mid-elevation snowpack earlier than usual.

SOME 25% OF ALL Western snow measurement courses showed record water content decreases between March 1 and April 1.

As a result, reservoir levels are continuing a rapid decline and irrigation and water districts all over the West are having to make do with water supplies that are generally much below average.

Stream flows in both natural and regulated river systems are also much lower than normal, creating environmental problems and

Districts Sue U.S. Over Water Loss

More water agencies are suing the federal government over water supplies that have been largely undelivered for 11 years despite contracts with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

The Stockton East (CALIFORNIA) Water District and Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District along with the San Joaquin County, the City of Stockton and California Water Service Company seek \$500 million in damages and compensation.

At issue is the Bureau's lack of water deliveries from New Melones

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Kennedy ReElected Alliance President

Bill Kennedy (OREGON) was re-elected by board colleagues as the Family Farm Alliance's President.

Along with Pat O'Toole (WYOMING) as First Vice President and Mark Ricks (IDAHO) as Second Vice President, Dan Errotabere (CALIFORNIA) took over as Treasurer from Judy Brown (CALIFORNIA), who had held the post since the Alliance was founded. She continues as Secretary.

Bill Scott (ARIZONA) remains Chairman.

'No Surprises' ESA Policy Is Suspended

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has suspended the issuance of new incidental take permits under the Endangered Species Act that contain "No Surprises" assurances based on habitat conservation plans with landowners.

The action came in response to a federal judge's order in Washington (D.C.) earlier this month. Under a habitat

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DROUGHT CONDITIONS WORSEN ACROSS MUCH OF THE WEST

(Continued from front page)

concerns in many locales. Urban areas throughout the more adversely affected areas are experiencing shortages. Water tables are declining in many.

Las Vegas, which receives 90% of its municipal water from Lake Mead, has implemented a drought plan and is aggressively looking to acquire agricultural water in California and Arizona for short-term use while working on a longer-range plan to acquire water resources elsewhere in Nevada.

'NO SURPRISES'

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conservation plan, a landowner agrees to take actions that conserve a listed species. In return, landowners have received a permit to "incidentally take" individuals of the species in the course of otherwise legal activities.

The "No Surprises" rule was adopted in 1998 to give certainty that the USFWS would not ask for any further mitigation once the permit for the HCP was approved.

Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Craig Manson said, "The inability to give 'No Surprises' assurances to landowners would not only be a breach of faith with those landowners, it would also be a serious impediment to our ability to conserve and enhance habitat for imperiled wildlife." He said Interior stands by the "no surprises" policy.

NOR IS THERE any sign of much wet summer relief to what some scientists are labeling the worst drought in 500 years in the Rocky Mountains and some other parts of the West.

Some of the Northwest is for the most part not in so bad a shape and parts of the upper Midwest have had significant relief but in Idaho and parts of the southern plains, drought remains firmly in control. That is also true in Southern California. Twelve Idaho counties have had drought emergencies declared, enabling changes in water regulation and rights.

CRITICALLY AFFECTED by the Southwestern and Rocky Mountains drought is the Colorado River, upon which portions of seven Western states rely. The Colorado's calculated natural inflow at Hoover Dam is expected to be just 48% of average in the peak April-July period, and levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead are continuing to drop.

Lake Powell is 42% full while Lake Mead has declined from full to 57% of capacity over the past four years.

Assistant Interior Secretary Bennett

Raley met in Las Vegas in mid-May with water leaders.

Raley said computer modeling has been important in attempting to understand what may or may not occur but models cannot guarantee what will happen.

"Absolutely none of them can tell policy makers if the drought will continue on its current trend or not," Raley said. "We don't know if this is the fifth year of a five-year drought or the fifth year of a 15-year drought."

Again this year, drought-worsened fire conditions pose as much threat in many places as the lack of water.

"WE ARE IN THE FIFTH consecutive year of a drought that has had impacts throughout the West," said U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John Keys.

"The foresight of the planners and engineers who designed the dams and reservoirs of Reclamation's water storage system across the West has allowed us to efficiently manage water deliveries in times of drought as well as in times of plenty," Keys said.

NON-DELIVERY OF WATER IS ISSUE IN SUIT

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Reservoir since 1993. The suit was filed in the U.S. Court of Claims. Kevin Kauffman, Stockton East General Manager said, "The district paid \$65 million to construct the Goodwin Tunnel and other facilities to bring this water to our customers, but the system is bone dry most of the time. Nancie G. Marzulla, attorney for the districts, said the government is obligated to deliver 155,000 acre-feet annually. "The government must reimburse those entitled to the water and who constructed the massive facilities to convey the water," she said. Much of the water is used for environmental purposes.

In a similar suit involving the Tulare Lake Water Storage District and Kern County Water Agency, the same court handed down a judgment of \$26 million against the federal government. Marzulla is also counsel in that case.

PEOPLE

Solano Manager Named

Suzanne Butterfield will become Solano (CALIFORNIA) Irrigation District Manager January 1, 2005 upon the retirement of Bob Isaac.

Correction

In the April issue of *Monthly Briefing*, a name was misspelled. The Bureau of Reclamation's Deputy Lower Colorado Regional Director is Lori Gray.

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