

Crescenta Valley Water District

Weekly News Articles

August 7, 2023



The Hill

August 6, 2023

Newsom signs order to expedite California levee repair ahead of the next wet winter



FILE – California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a news conference on Friday, May 12, 2023, in Sacramento, Calif. Newsom has been in touch with all sides of the strike impacting Hollywood, his office said Wednesday, July 26. But so far, neither the studio executives nor actors and writers have shown formal interest in inviting him to help mediate the dispute. (Hector Amezcua/The Sacramento Bee via AP, File)

In anticipation of potentially record-setting rainfall and snow for the second consecutive winter, California Gov. [Gavin Newsom](#) (D) on Friday signed an executive order to prepare for the next wet season.

The [order](#) serves to [expedite levee repairs and debris removal](#) to help communities that were inundated with precipitation this winter to get ready for what could come, according to the governor's office.

"The State has experienced over 30 atmospheric rivers since December 2022, resulting in compounding and cumulative impacts across California, including record or near record amounts of snow in the Sierra Nevada," the order states.

Damaged levees provide weaker protection from high water levels, while debris and vegetation in river channels decrease capacity to move these flows, the governor's office noted.

"Removal must expeditiously occur before the next rainy season begins in fall 2023 in order to mitigate the risk of additional flooding and allow for continued recovery efforts," the order reads.

Following the signing of the order, public agencies will be able to streamline their emergency repair work — particularly in the San Joaquin River, the Tulare Lake Basin, the Salinas River and the Pajaro River regions.

The order suspends certain laws and regulations that required agencies to comply with specified environmental and resource protection requirements, for the sake of accelerating the repairs and removals.

Among the moratoriums are lake and streambed alteration laws and regulations implemented by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as waste discharge requirements overseen by the California Water Board, per the order.

The executive order also suspends the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) — environmental impact assessments required by section 21000 of the Public Resources Code — as far as the emergency repair and removal work is concerned.

This pause in the application of CEQA to such work comes after Newsom [last month signed into law](#) a package of bills that aim to cut red tape associated with infrastructure projects.

Within that package were measures to address cumbersome elements of CEQA, regardless of opposition from some of his Democratic colleagues and environmental groups to parts of his agenda.

The executive order signed on Friday, however, emphasizes that all the suspensions apply only to the repair or replacement of existing conveyance and flood-control infrastructure, as well as to debris and sediment removal and vegetation management.

<https://thehill.com/policy/equilibrium-sustainability/4138472-newsom-signs-order-to-expedite-california-levee-repair>

August 7, 2023

Big jump in water rates likely in Sonoma



With little discussion, and unanimous approval, city council members in Sonoma started a process to significantly raise water rates in the city.

The action Wednesday sets in motion ten years of annual rate increases, totaling a cumulative 53.4 percent.

The average monthly bill would rise for just shy of \$43 a month to more than \$104. Teresa Jurotich, a consultant from the firm Raftelis, which performed a study and devised the rate plan, said without the increases, the city's water fund would dry up.

"The rates need to keep pace with the cost for the city to operate its water system and provide the level of service that your customers have come to expect," Jurotich said.

According to the study, buying water on behalf of customers accounts for just over a third of the agency's budget. The rest is taken up by major construction projects termed capital spending, salaries, other expenses and debt service.

Increases would be phased in, with five annual 5 percent jumps, followed by five annual 4 percent increases.

If approved, the rate plan would increase monthly service charges, variable charges, and zone charges, along with potential surcharges that could be added during a serious drought.

While the proposed rate increases are steep and make comparable bills higher than ones in Petaluma and Cotati, rates would remain lower than those charged by the Valley of the Moon Water District and Marin Water.

The council's vote enables the city to mail notifications to customers, as required by state law. Officials plan to finalize and adopt the new rates following a public hearing scheduled for October.

<https://norcalpublicmedia.org/2023080790347/news-feed/big-jump-in-water-rates-likely-in-sonoma>

San Diego Union-Tribune

August 7, 2023

Opinion: Despite big rains this winter, Southern California must remain sensible on water use



People attend a news conference on Lake Mead at Hoover Dam, Tuesday, April 11, 2023, near Boulder City, Nev.
(John Locher / Associated Press)

Every San Diego household and business should be taking advantage of free programs that help conserve water while saving money.

Murtland is the board president of Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District and has served on the board for 12 years. He lives in Escondido.

A reflection on the very rainy past seasons may leave San Diego County residents optimistic about the water outlook for this summer. After all, we had record rainfall levels in the southern half of California and snow falling as low as 1,500 feet, generating a snowpack of [172 percent](#) of normal. It's very easy to think a 2023 drought has been averted.

Unfortunately, headlines don't always convey the full story. Despite the significant rain and snow that fell locally and in the northern Sierra Mountains, Southern California must continue to be judicious about continued water conservation and permanent water use efficiency.

Available water supplies are a complicated topic influenced by many factors, most under federal and state control. The source location, amount of rainfall and snowpack received at that source, climate change, water rights, fish and wildlife mitigation, water quality, energy generation, and water storage are some of the things affecting water availability. That is why, if you live in Southern California, the water from your tap is typically from multiple sources. In San Diego County, water sources include surface water from Northern California (State Water Project), surface water from the Colorado River, groundwater and surface water from local sources, desalinated water, and even purified recycled water.

While considering water sources for this year, rainfall was plentiful in Northern California, but much of this water flowed back to the ocean due to saturation and inadequate water storage facilities. The Colorado River Basin, however, was not as fortunate. The recent wet weather did little to replenish water in the Colorado River basin. This is significant for county residents since the Colorado River supplies [more than 40 percent](#) of our local water needs.

But there is good news. Our state government, along with counties and local utilities, has recently put in place programs and other measures to conserve and protect water supplies. Among other initiatives, the state has set aside [\\$8.6 billion](#) to increase water resiliency by collecting runoff, bolstering above and below-ground water storage.

Like available water supplies, water demands are also influenced by many factors. Ever-changing demographics, the efficiency of end users, landscape irrigation, climate, and even the efficiency of the customer and water retailer system impact the demands for water. These are the things that we can control through good conservation and water-saving practices.

Local utilities, including Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District, have resources to help customers with conservation and efficiency. Water conservation incentives for residential and commercial customers are available through the [SoCal Water\\$mart program](#). Residential incentives are available for turf removal, high-efficiency washing machines, premium high-efficiency toilets, rain barrels and cisterns, sprinkler nozzles, soil moisture sensors, flow monitoring devices and more.

One of the most effective ways to reduce waste is by maintaining efficient outdoor water usage. According to a Water Research Foundation study, outdoor use can account for a whopping [50 percent](#) of a household's total consumption — which includes irrigation, swimming pools and leaky faucets among other uses. For this reason, many water utilities continue to offer free water use surveys to customers. During a water survey, an expert will review your irrigation system and scheduling, and provide recommendations on how to reduce usage while improving plant health.

Of course, conservation efforts are also important for indoor water use. Simple actions such as fixing leaks and turning off the water while brushing your teeth can make a big difference in your overall water usage. And if you have not already done so, retrofitting with low-flow showerheads and high-efficiency toilets can also make meaningful reductions.

Every San Diego household and business should be taking advantage of free programs that help conserve water while saving money. Education is the key to water conservation, and I encourage everyone to learn about the importance of water conservation and take steps to reduce usage today.

There's no shortage of ideas that can have a positive impact on conserving our precious, finite water resources. Let's all work toward safeguarding our water. It's crucial for the future of San Diego and our entire state.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/story/2023-08-07/opinion-despite-big-rains-this-winter-southern-california-must-remain-sensible-on-water-use-conservation>

Associated Press

August 9, 2023

Scientists look beyond climate change and El Nino for other factors that heat up Earth

Scientists are wondering if [global warming](#) and El Nino have an accomplice in fueling this summer's record-shattering heat.

The European climate agency Copernicus reported that July was one-third of a degree Celsius (six-tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) [hotter than the old record](#). That's a bump in heat that is so recent and so big, especially in the oceans and even more so in the North Atlantic, that scientists are split on whether something else could be at work.

Scientists agree that by far the biggest cause of the recent extreme warming is climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas that has triggered a long upward trend in temperatures. A [natural El Nino](#), a temporary warming of parts of the Pacific that changes weather worldwide, adds a smaller boost. But some researchers say another factor must be present.

"What we are seeing is more than just El Nino on top of climate change," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said.

One surprising source of added warmth could be cleaner air resulting from new shipping rules. Another possible cause is 165 million tons (150 million metric tons) of water spewed into the atmosphere by a volcano. Both ideas are under investigation.

THE CLEANER AIR POSSIBILITY

Florida State University climate scientist Michael Diamond says shipping is "probably the prime suspect."

Maritime shipping has for decades used dirty fuel that gives off particles that reflect sunlight in a process that actually cools the climate and masks some of global warming.

In 2020, international shipping rules took effect that cut as much as 80% of those cooling particles, which was a “kind of shock to the system,” said atmospheric scientist Tianle Yuan of NASA and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

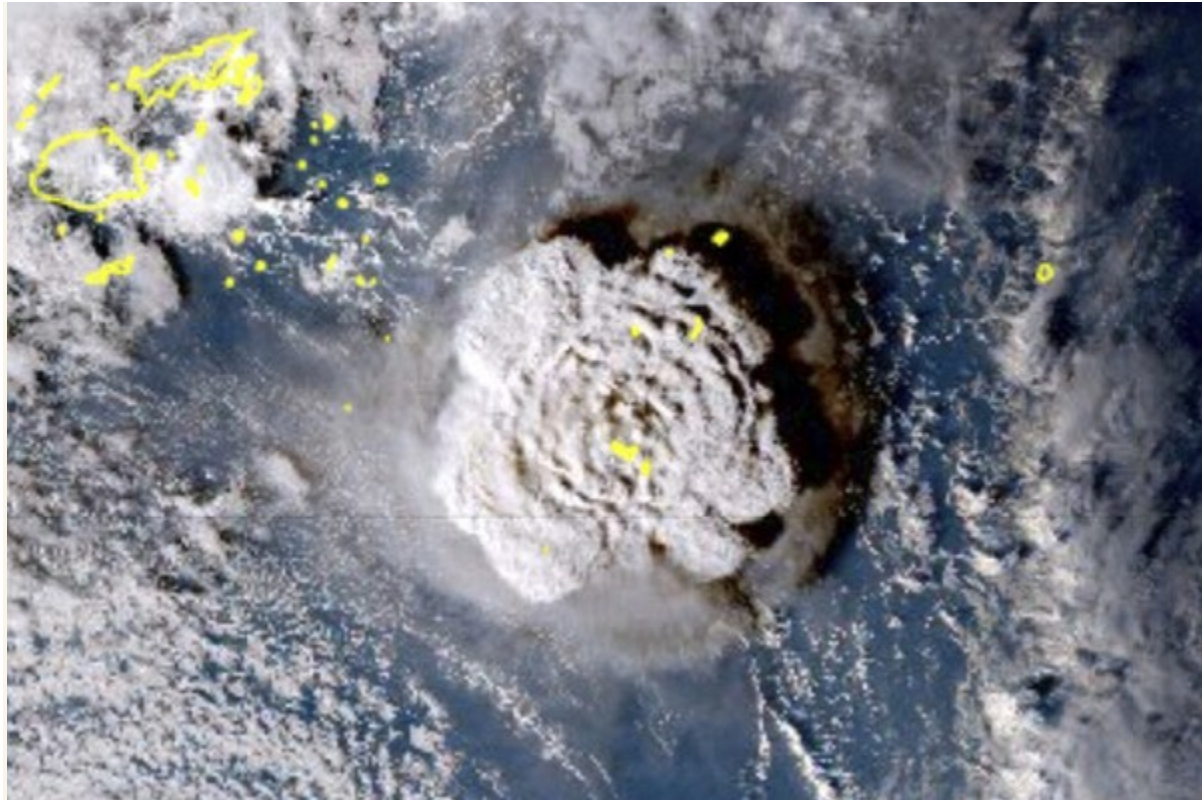
The sulfur pollution used to interact with low clouds, making them brighter and more reflective, but that’s not happening as much now, Yuan said. He [tracked changes in clouds](#) that were associated with shipping routes in the North Atlantic and North Pacific, both hot spots this summer.

In those spots, and to a lesser extent globally, Yuan’s studies show a possible warming from the loss of sulfur pollution. And the trend is in places where it really can’t be explained as easily by El Nino, he said.

“There was a cooling effect that was persistent year after year, and suddenly you remove that,” Yuan said.

Diamond [calculates a warming](#) of about 0.1 degrees Celsius (0.18 degrees Fahrenheit) by midcentury from shipping regulations. The level of warming could be five to 10 times stronger in high shipping areas such as the North Atlantic.

A [separate analysis](#) by climate scientists Zeke Hausfather of Berkeley Earth and Piers Forster of the University of Leeds projected half of Diamond’s estimate.



DID THE VOLCANO DO IT?

In January 2022, the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcano in the South Pacific blew, sending more than 165 million tons of water, which is a heat-trapping greenhouse gas as vapor, according to University of Colorado climate researcher Margot Clyne, who coordinates international computer simulations for climate impacts of the eruption.

The volcano also blasted 550,000 tons (500,000 metric tons) of sulfur dioxide into the upper atmosphere.

The amount of water “is so absolutely crazy, absolutely ginormous,” said Holger Vomel, a stratospheric water vapor scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research who published a study on the potential climate effects of the eruption.

Volmer said the water vapor went too high in the atmosphere to have a noticeable effect yet, but that effects could emerge later.

A [couple of studies](#) use computer models to show a warming effect from all that water vapor. [One study](#), which has not yet undergone the scientific gold standard of peer review, reported this week that the warming could range from as much as 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of added warming in some places to 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) of cooling elsewhere.

But NASA atmospheric scientist Paul Newman and former NASA atmospheric scientist Mark Schoeberl said those climate models are missing a key ingredient: the cooling effect of the sulfur.

Normally huge volcanic eruptions, like 1991's Mount Pinatubo, can cool Earth temporarily with sulfur and other particles reflecting sunlight. However, Hunga Tonga spouted an unusually high amount of water and low amount of cooling sulfur.

The studies that showed warming from Hunga Tonga didn't incorporate sulfur cooling, which is hard to do, Schoeberl and Newman said. Schoeberl, now chief scientist at Science and Technology Corp. of Maryland, [published a study](#) that calculated a slight overall cooling — 0.04 degrees Celsius (0.07 degrees Fahrenheit).

Just because different computer simulations conflict with each other “that doesn't mean science is wrong,” University of Colorado's Clyne said. “It just means that we haven't reached a consensus yet. We're still just figuring it out.”

LESSER SUSPECTS

Lesser suspects in the search include a dearth of African dust, which cools like sulfur pollution, as well as changes in the jet stream and a slowdown in ocean currents.

Some nonscientists have looked at recent solar storms and increased sunspot activity in the sun's 11-year cycle and speculated that Earth's nearest star may be a culprit. For decades, scientists have tracked sunspots and solar storms, and they don't match warming temperatures, Berkeley Earth chief scientist Robert Rohde said.

Solar storms were stronger 20 and 30 years ago, but there is more warming now, he said.

Still, other scientists said there's no need to look so hard. They say human-caused climate change, with an extra boost from El Nino, is enough to explain recent temperatures.

University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann estimates that about five-sixths of the recent warming is from human burning of fossil fuels, with about one-sixth due to a strong El Nino.

The fact that the world is coming out of a three-year La Nina, which suppressed global temperatures a bit, and going into a strong El Nino, which adds to them, makes the effect bigger, he said.

"Climate change and El Nino can explain it all," Imperial College of London climate scientist Friederike Otto said. "That doesn't mean other factors didn't play a role. But we should definitely expect to see this again without the other factors being present."

<https://apnews.com/article/hot-summer-climate-change-el-nino-9c5151f2fca2cd77d92a1c7bc61a0035>

Fox 5

August 10, 2023

Strong El Niño Odds Increasing, NOAA Latest Update Says

El Niño has an increasing chance of becoming strong, with potential influences on the weather we see through this winter, according to a just-released monthly update from NOAA.

Here are the main takeaways from the August update:

1. El Niño conditions remain in place after the event was officially deemed underway in June. It's 95% likely that El Niño will continue through winter.
2. El Niño is forecast to [grow in strength through fall or early winter](#). That peak timing is typical for El Niño and its counterpart La Niña before diminishing the following spring.
3. There is a [2-in-3 chance](#) this El Niño becomes "strong" by sometime in the fall or early winter, NOAA said. In general, the stronger El Niño becomes, the more influence it can potentially have on global weather patterns. But those stronger impacts aren't a guarantee, NOAA cautioned.

What is El Niño? An El Niño is a periodic warming of a strip of water straddling the equator in the Pacific Ocean, as shown in the general area highlighted in the map below.

NOAA declares an El Niño has developed when sea-surface temperatures in a [certain region](#) of the equatorial Pacific Ocean have reached at least 0.5 degrees Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit) above average for at least a month and are accompanied by changes in the atmosphere.

That warming is occurring both at the surface and [a few hundred meters below the surface](#), supporting the developing El Niño.

When was the last El Niño? This is the first El Niño in four years. This strip of water has actually been cooler than average over much of the past three years, which is known as a La Niña. But that [ended by March](#), and water temperatures in this area have now warmed above the El Niño criteria.

Potential Impacts

While not the only influence, an El Niño can eventually steer weather patterns in parts of the world, including the tropics and the U.S. The stronger it is, the more influence it could have.

Here are some possible impacts El Niño could have this hurricane season and in winter:

Hurricane Season

In El Niño hurricane seasons, stronger shearing winds often occur over at least the Caribbean Sea and some adjacent parts of the Atlantic Basin.

This tends to limit the number and intensity of storms and hurricanes, especially if the El Niño is stronger, as [we investigated in a March article](#). It can [squash storms in the southern Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea](#) due to El Niño-enhanced wind shear and sinking air, while more typical activity roams the rest of the Atlantic from off western Africa to the Bermuda Triangle.

However, [separate outlooks](#) from Colorado State University and The Weather Company noted a warmer Atlantic Ocean may work against the influence of El Niño in 2023.

And, at least so far this season, this increased wind shear in the Caribbean Sea typical of El Niños hasn't happened yet.

That has [forecasters at NOAA concerned](#) that El Niño's typical calming influence may not arrive in time for the hurricane season.

Winter 2023-24

Most El Niños hit their peak in late fall or winter and thus have their strongest influence on weather patterns in the colder months.

The classic El Niño winter is rather warm from Alaska into western and central Canada and then into the northern tier of states from the Pacific Northwest to the western Great Lakes.

It tends to be colder and wetter than average through much of the southern U.S., particularly from Texas to the Carolinas. [We found that](#) some cities in the Southwest, Southern Plains and mid-Atlantic have their snowiest winters during El Niño.

Other factors can and do influence winter weather patterns, including the polar vortex. But if this El Niño becomes strong, this may be the general picture to expect next winter.

Global Temperatures

[NOAA's ENSO blog](#) noted the warmest year of any decade tends to occur during an El Niño.

But the planet's warming now means that even recent La Niña years have become warmer than El Niño years in past decades, as the graph below illustrates.

NOAA's calculations as of their June report give [about a 20% chance](#) that this will be the warmest year on record and a 90% chance it will rank at least in the top five.

https://fox5sandiego.com/news/national-news/odds-of-a-strong-el-nino-grow-again-will-you-feel-it-locally/?mc_cid=9e66d91da1&mc_eid=9b7b868339

Sacramento Bee

August 11, 2023

‘Forever chemicals’ are in our bodies and drinking water. We must stop using them | Opinion

OPINION AND COMMENTARY

Editorials and other Opinion content offer perspectives on issues important to our community and are independent from the work of our newsroom reporters.

Viewpoints

By Phil Ting and

Andria Ventura Special to The Sacramento Bee

Updated August 11, 2023 6:18 PM

Have you gotten food in a to-go container? Worn waterproof outdoor gear? Sat on a sofa made with stain-resistant fabric? Then you’ve likely been exposed to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, harmful substances commonly referred to as PFAS.

Another popular name for PFAS is “forever chemicals” [because, according to Harvard](#), “they don’t break down in the environment or in our bodies.”

With so many of these chemicals in our everyday lives, PFAS have been leaching into our drinking water.

Finally, though, there’s something being done about this. For the first time in more than a quarter century, the federal government is [proposing strong, enforceable drinking water standards for previously unregulated](#)

[chemicals](#). The Environmental Protection Agency is taking this extraordinary action because these forever chemicals are spreading through the environment like wildfire, making them also “everywhere chemicals.” New studies consistently find that PFAS are more dangerous than previously thought, causing a [range of health problems](#) from cancer to developmental delays in children as well as a reduced ability to fight infections.

Opinion

Because of the seriousness of PFAS contamination in California, legislators and advocates have joined forces to take actions that significantly reduce the use of PFAS in product categories such as textiles, food packaging and compostable materials. We teamed up on Assembly Bill 1817 last year — phasing out the use of PFAS in fabrics to make them water- or stain-resistant — which became law on January 1.

But we can’t rely on a piecemeal approach for a class of 14,000 chemicals found in everything from dental floss to raincoats, carpets and medicine.

Advocates have been sounding the alarm about California’s PFAS crisis for years, but the pace of progress does not yet match the urgency of this growing problem. We don’t manufacture PFAS products in California, but they are nonetheless found everywhere, from [rivers](#) and [groundwater](#) to [our own bodies](#).

So far, officials have only tested about 3% of California’s public water systems, but two out of three ([146 water systems serving 16 million people](#)) were found to contain PFAS. And it’s not just people that are exposed to PFAS through the water. PFAS pollution has made certain fish from the [San Francisco Bay](#) unsafe to eat, posing a particular risk for people that rely on fish for food, including Tribal communities.

Studies also suggest that annual health-related costs of PFAS are already [in the billions](#). But widespread contamination is also making it more expensive to deliver safe drinking water at a time when many families are struggling to make ends meet. In Orange County, for example, residents [could see bills go up \\$20 per month](#) to cover close to \$1 billion in PFAS treatment.

While PFAS are everywhere, some of the state's highest levels have been found in [disadvantaged communities](#) that already bear the brunt of other pollution problems, and may lack resources for clean-up.

The only way to deliver on California's promise of safe and affordable drinking water for all is to stop pollution at the source and replace PFAS with safer alternatives. California also needs a comprehensive water testing program as soon as possible.

All of this is, of course, costly, and we can't saddle consumers and ratepayers with the cost of these fixes, including the EPA's proposal to treat drinking water that exceeds its PFAS limits. Corporate polluters that have profited from the sale of PFAS must be held responsible for the harm they have caused and pay for testing and treatment.

3M [recently agreed to pay more than \\$10 Billion](#) to help clean up drinking water contaminated with PFAS, but this is just a drop in the bucket compared to the astronomical costs facing communities across the state and country.

With new PFAS sources coming to light every day and a seemingly endless stream of products containing these chemicals, the only way to truly protect Californians is to stop using PFAS.

Phil Ting represents the 19th Assembly District, which includes the west side of San Francisco. Andria Ventura is legislative and policy director for Clean Water Action California, and has worked on water safety for more than 25 years.

<https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/article277833458.html>