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Water and Power

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Your guide to the California drought from the Los Angeles Times.

NEWS AND POLICY

Drought report card: How well are you and your neighbors **saving water**? The [latest drought report cards](#) are out.

Water fines: You should be ashamed. That's the message from water regulators to the cities of **Beverly Hills, Indio** and **Redlands** and the **Coachella Valley Water District**. The four are facing financial penalties for [failing to meet the state's water conservation goals](#). "The fines send a message to all Californians that water conservation is a responsibility for each and every one of us," said Mark Gold, the associate vice chancellor of environment and sustainability at UCLA.

What it all means: It's easy to get **information overload** when it comes to the drought. Here's a breakdown on all sorts of issues from **almonds** to **water guzzlers** to plans for **desalination**. Perhaps most importantly: [What about El Niño?](#) "Because the state has suffered four years of crippling drought, its terrain is now in many places ill-equipped to absorb rainfall. And though there's little doubt that California is in dire need of rain, it's also true

that sudden surges can cause mudslides, sewage overflow and stronger fire seasons later on.”

ON THE GROUND

Danger ahead: The **Chinook salmon** are in danger of extinction. Last year, [virtually an entire generation of salmon died](#) due to warmer temperatures in the Sacramento River, and the numbers this year appear to be even worse. “If 2016 is another bust, the future of the once abundant winter-run Chinook will rest on a conservation hatchery that is raising a captive brood stock at the base of Shasta Dam.”

No resources: Indigenous migrant **farm workers** with the lowest-paying jobs in the field have been hardest hit by the drought. Farm workers will often spend the off-season [living off savings from the harvest](#), but this year there are no savings to rely upon. And for those who are undocumented, many drought-related retraining programs are beyond their reach.

Flock together: **Birds** are surviving the California drought thanks to the teamwork of those on the ground. “Land managers have learned to be more strategic by [flooding wetlands only when and where the birds need them](#). Their data-driven, coordinated approach allows them to get the biggest bang out of their paltry water budget.”

OFFBEAT

Creative solution: Are **beavers** the answers to L.A.’s prayers? One woman is hoping to win a \$100,000 grant to [introduce the North American beaver to Los Angeles County’s watersheds](#) so they can help mitigate the drought and erosion and prevent the flash floods that may come with El Niño. The plan has previously been tried in Canada and Nevada.

Spread of disease: So far this year, 28 people have died in California as a

result of the **West Nile virus**. Experts believe the spread of the virus is worse this year because [mosquitoes are coming into closer contact with humans](#) as they look for water. “Californians need to be vigilant in protecting themselves,” according to the state’s public health director.

BIG IDEAS

“A lot of hikers and explorers think that it is safe to climb through the creek and up the falls and end up slipping on the algae-infested rocks.”

–Tracey Martinez, a spokeswoman for the San Bernardino County Fire Department, [on the closure of Upper Big Falls](#).

DROUGHT SNAPSHOT



A helicopter drops water on the Gibraltar fire, which broke out in bone-dry chaparral in the Los Padres National Forest above Santa Barbara. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

DAILY TIP

Around the house: Remember to check for leaking faucets and toilets. Front-load washing machines use 40% less water than traditional machines. It's best to use a broom, rather than a hose, to clean up driveways and sidewalks, per the [Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership](#).

LOOKING AHEAD

Wednesday: The State Water Resources Control Board will meet in Sacramento; L.A. Department of Water and Power General Manager Marcie Edwards will speak on “Water and Power in L.A.: Investing in Infrastructure While Keeping Rates Low” at the City Club.

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