



Los Angeles Times

Water and Power

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

NEWS AND POLICY

Power structure: If a Los Angeles city councilman gets his way, the governance structure of the **Department of Water and Power** could be in for a major change. Councilman Felipe Fuentes wants to [replace the commission that oversees the utility with a group of paid professionals](#). The proposal would also take away the mayor and City Council's ability to select and approve the DWP's general manager. The changes could lead to "a focused, professional management system in place," Fuentes said.

Taxable income: Southern California property owners who received **rebates** to help offset the cost of replacing their grass lawns can [expect to receive a 1099 tax form in the mail](#). It's unclear if the rebates are taxable income so officials with the **Metropolitan Water District** are sending out the forms and leaving it up to customers and accountants to figure out the tax code. "As of this point, it's kind of an unfortunate gray area in terms of tax code," said one MWD manager.

Happy dance: The recent **rains**, particularly in Northern California, [have](#)

been good for the state. “It remains to be seen if we’re going to be end-of-the-drought happy or better-than-last-year happy,” said Doug Carlson, a spokesman with the California Department of Water Resources.

ON THE GROUND

Emergency declared: The city of **Pacifica** [has declared a state of emergency](#). There are fears that storms from El Niño could damage the coastal bluffs. Already two homes have been evacuated because of erosion in the area. “El Niño is hitting the city’s coastline very hard and creating almost daily reports of impacts to both public and private property,” according to the city manager.

OFFBEAT

New kind of fertilizer: San Diego high school students are researching whether **excrement from fish** [could fertilize vegetable gardens as a way to save water](#). The aquaponics system can save 90% of the water the garden would typically require. “I 100% think that it could save California,” said ECO-LIFE Conservation spokeswoman Kaitlyn Cole.

Fewer germs: California is experiencing fewer cases of the **flu**, and [doctors think the weather may have something to do with that](#). The flu spreads most easily in cold, dry conditions, but this winter has been warmer than usual and wet thanks to El Niño. “We’re really seeing very little uptick so far, so mostly more common colds and those sorts of things. Definitely slower than in prior years,” said Helen Macfie, who monitors emergency room visits at Southern California’s six MemorialCare hospitals.

BIG IDEAS

“That’s a tough task to do in one winter, filling up the reservoirs. More realistically, we’re looking at — hey, if we can get somewhere in this above-average

snowpack, and above-average rain, that goes a long way in digging ourselves out of the four-year effect of the drought.”

– State snow survey chief David Rizzardo [on refilling California’s reservoirs](#)

“It’s a series of issues, none of which is truly catastrophic, but when you take them together, they are clearly outpacing what the city can do to respond, which is why I declared a state of emergency. We still have a month or so of weather, and we can’t predict what can happen looking ahead.”

– Pacifica City Manager Lorie Tinfow, [whose city’s coast has been ravaged by El Niño waves](#)

DROUGHT SNAPSHOT



The water is rising at Lake Oroville on Jan. 21. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

DAILY TIP

The El Niño rains may be frightening to Fluffy or Fido. Here are [some ways to keep your pet calm and safe during the storms](#):

- Speak to your pet in a soothing voice.
- Create a safe space, like a crate or closet, and include food, water and blankets or toys.
- Consider purchasing an anti-anxiety vest.
- If you leave the home, give your pet a piece of clothing or a blanket that smells like a member of the family.

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