

Geography lesson helps clarify drought

By George Skelton, Los Angeles Times

Many of us could use a refresher course in California geography as we debate how to manage the drought and prepare for an uncertain water future.

For starters, calling the hardest-hit farm region the Central Valley is much too simplistic.

Second, agriculture per se is not the issue – not the culprit guzzler. Rather, it's the location of the agriculture, which gulps 80% of California's developed water. Almonds, for example, make a lot of sense in some areas; a lot less in others.

Too often we try to wrap it all into convenient, simple packages – Central Valley and nut orchards – when more specificity is required to grasp the nub of the problem.

What part of the vast Central Valley? How dry is it and what's being grown there?

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