

# Opinion: Calif. has one year of water left

By Jay Famiglietti, Los Angeles Times

Given the historic low temperatures and snowfalls that pummeled the eastern U.S. this winter, it might be easy to overlook how devastating California's winter was as well.

As our "wet" season draws to a close, it is clear that the paltry rain and snowfall have done almost nothing to alleviate epic drought conditions. January was the driest in California since record-keeping began in 1895. Groundwater and snowpack levels are at all-time lows. We're not just up a creek without a paddle in California, we're losing the creek too.

Data from NASA satellites show that the total amount of water stored in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river basins – that is, all of the snow, river and reservoir water, water in soils and groundwater combined – was 34 million acre-feet below normal in 2014. That loss is nearly 1.5 times the capacity of Lake Mead, America's largest reservoir.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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# Opinion: Imperative to fight AIS at Tahoe

By Casey Beyer

A newly released scientific study highlights the importance of collaborative work to prevent the introduction of aquatic

invasive species at Lake Tahoe, and confirms what many public and private stakeholders have feared: That the invasive quagga mussel, if introduced, could establish in our mountain lake's clear, iconic waters.

The study by UNR and Desert Research Institute found quagga mussels could survive in Lake Tahoe, particularly in areas with elevated calcium levels from already-established Asian clam populations and in areas of higher algae growth, as found in some near shore parts of the lake.



Casey Beyer

There was hope that quagga mussels, which are native to Ukraine, would struggle to survive in Lake Tahoe's low-calcium waters. However, given the importance of Lake Tahoe's natural environment and recreational opportunities, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and its many partners decided early on to take a conservative approach and proactive steps to keep them and many other aquatic invaders out of the lake's waters.

The study found that about 80 percent or more of adult quaggas could survive over a 90-day period in Lake Tahoe's low-calcium waters. Survival increased to more than 90 percent for adult quaggas and 60 percent for juvenile quaggas in water with the increased calcium concentrations found near Asian clam beds in Lake Tahoe's nearshore – long enough for adults to start reproductive cycles and for juveniles to grow into reproducing adults.

Why are quagga mussels a concern? They are known as prolific breeders and can form sprawling colonies that carpet rocks,

lake bottoms, boats, and other structures, littering beaches with shells and causing major environmental, economic, scenic, and recreation impacts.

In 2009, TRPA and 40 public and private stakeholders launched the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Program and mandatory boat inspections to help prevent the introduction of quagga and other aquatic invasive species at Lake Tahoe. Now recognized as a model for the country, the inspection program has overseen the certification and safe launch of nearly 200,000 boats at Lake Tahoe.

Federal funding that has paid for about half of the boat inspection program's \$1.5 million annual cost is running out. TRPA is working to secure state funding from California and Nevada to ensure that this vital program continues, and that inspection fees remain affordable for the thousands of recreational boaters who visit Lake Tahoe each year.

Boat inspections have successfully kept quagga mussels out of Lake Tahoe and remain a top priority for TRPA and its many partners. This new study reemphasizes their value in protecting our lake from aquatic invaders that, if introduced, could potentially spread out of control and forever alter the Jewel of the Sierra.

This study also emphasizes the importance of continued control projects to manage harmful aquatic invasive species in Lake Tahoe, including aquatic weeds such as curlyleaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil, invertebrates such as Asian clams, and warm water game fishes.

The Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Program recently completed a pilot research project that used rubber mats to treat five acres of an Asian clam infestation at Emerald Bay. The goal of the project was two-fold: To evaluate the rubber mats' effectiveness as a way to reduce populations of Asian clams and other aquatic invasive species on a large scale at

Lake Tahoe, and to reduce an Asian clam infestation at an iconic and heavily-visited recreation site.

A major priority for TRPA this year is completing a comprehensive control strategy for aquatic invasive species at Lake Tahoe. The goal is to prioritize control projects and guide our future efforts to best use limited funding for maximum possible effect. The strategy will look at what invasive species are the most harmful at Lake Tahoe and where, when, and how they should be treated.

Combatting aquatic invasive species at Lake Tahoe is one of the top priorities for TRPA. The fight will be long and difficult, requiring constant reevaluation to ensure that projects are as effective as possible. Fortunately, many public and private partners are engaged in this fight, and there are many ways people can help.

Boaters can show up to Lake Tahoe with their watercraft "Cleaned, Drained, and Dry," to expedite the mandatory boat inspection process and help stop the spread of aquatic invaders. People with non-motorized watercraft can become Tahoe Keepers and complete that self-inspection training program to help ensure they are not spreading invasive species. People can also become part of Eyes on the Lake, a volunteer program the League to Save Lake Tahoe launched last year to train people to identify and report any aquatic invasive species they see while they are out recreating to help improve monitoring and control efforts.

Please join us in the fight against aquatic invasive species. Working together we can protect our beloved Lake Tahoe, a national treasure, from the introduction and spread of non-native species that could have devastating impacts.

*Casey Beyer is chair of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board.*

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# Letter: STPUD explains rate structure

To the community,

In response to the letter from Mr. (Mark) Allione, the district would like to offer some information.

Based upon the Proposition 218 notice last year, the maximum rate increase over the three-year period shown in the graph that a typical single family residence may experience (6.5 percent for water, 6 percent for sewer), is 20 percent for the combined quarterly bill. This is assuming a three sewer unit home (two bathrooms). Of course, metered customers could see a somewhat higher increase if they increase their consumption.

As part of the district's annual budget preparation, staff verifies water and sewer rates with other public agencies around the lake and on the West Slope of El Dorado County. This ensures that our comparison figures are accurate. The district continues to be the lowest cost water and sewer service provider in the area.

One issue that was raised repeatedly was second homeowner rates. Under the district's unmetered, flat rate system, second homeowners were charged the same for water and sewer as a full-time resident. This was based upon the requirement to build the systems with enough capacity to serve the demand when every residence was occupied. In addition, the maximum capacity for the water system was always dictated by fire flow requirements, so fire protection could be in place whether structures were occupied or not. District boards also chose to make needed improvements to the firefighting infrastructure a higher priority than installing water meters due to the threat

of forest fires in the basin, and the basin not being in a critically short water area. Now that the state is requiring water meters, the district is installing them on every residence over the next five years.

With meters being installed, the board needed to choose a service charge rate including a base charge and consumptive charge for metered customers. The board chose an 80-20 service charge rate, meaning 80 percent from the base charge covers the fixed costs required to provide the water service before any usage and 20 percent from the consumptive charge covers the costs that vary with the amount of water produced and delivered.

Fixed costs include:

- Capital infrastructure programs of the meters themselves
- All of the firefighting infrastructure
- Replacement of pipe and equipment that degrade based upon the effects of age (corrosion from both the outside and inside)
- Replacement of equipment to meet new regulations such as air quality standards
- Functions of staff for customer service system operation and maintenance.

Varying costs include:

- Chemicals
- Power
- Wearing out of rotating mechanic and electrical equipment.

Although the 80-20 rate structure accurately reflects the fixed and variable cost structure of the district, this split means that as a customer reduces their water consumption, it

will only impact up to a maximum reduction of 20 percent compared to the district's flat rate charge.

Several affects result from this:

- It does not send as strong a water conservation message as a higher percentage on the usage would
- It does not end up costing high users as much as a more even split
- It means that if customers accomplish the 20 percent reduction in water consumed as the state of California has required, the district will not have to impose an additional increase in rates as many other agencies in California are having to do since expenses will decrease equally compared to revenue.

Additional information can be found on our website. A public meeting to discuss the budget and proposed rate increases is also scheduled for May 7 at 6pm at the district headquarters at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive in South Lake Tahoe.

**Richard Solbrig, South Tahoe PUD general manager**

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## **Letter: Soroptimist take turn at Bread & Broth**

To the community,

Once again sponsoring an Adopt A Day of Nourishment, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe helped ease

hunger by hosting the March 9 evening Bread & Broth dinner. For the Soroptimist volunteer crew, it was a “first time” experience at a B&B dinner for Niki Congero, Sonia Quillian, Mary Lou Whitcomb and Kris Keesling. They were a great, enthusiastic group and excited about their experience helping others.

“So rewarding to have this opportunity to help the people of our community in need,” said Congero. “It reminds me how blessed I am.”

“What an amazing group of dedicated volunteers creating a successful home cooked, tasty meal,” added Keesling. “I was so surprised this caring group also creates healthy food bags for take home. Being a volunteer truly warms my heart.”

B&B really encourages all of our AAD sponsors to send a crew to be able to experience the great meals, the thankfulness of our dinner guests and their sponsor group’s impact upon the community that their \$250 donation generates.

According to one very happy dinner guest, the Soroptimist served the “best” salmon cakes served with a lemon caper sauce lovingly prepared by the B&B volunteer cooks.

Thanks to the Soroptimists’ generosity and concern for the hungry of our community, B&B was able to provide a healthy, tasty meal for the 90 plus dinner guests. For more B&B information, go online or find us on Facebook.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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# **Letter: Meyers deserves elected representation**

**Publisher's note: *The following letter was sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on March 16, 2015.***

**Dear El Dorado County Board of Supervisors,**

We are a concerned group of local Meyers area residents and stakeholders in need of assistance. The letter below was submitted to our elected supervisor, Sue Novasel, earlier this year. Unfortunately, before we could meet with her to discuss our concerns, the county's legal counsel determined she cannot participate in the Meyers Area Plan process, and we were directed by her assistant to coordinate with the same county staff we have been dealing with for over a year. Not only does this create concerns regarding the same process issues which have thus far, failed to support a true, transparent community or area plan update process, but it also leaves our community without an elected representative who will work on our behalf, first and foremost, regarding planning for the future of the Meyers area.

We therefore request you add an agenda item to the next possible Board of Supervisors meeting to discuss how our community can be adequately represented by an elected official. Further, we request the Meyers Area Plan update process – which notably will guide the future of our community for the next twenty years – be delayed until we have elected representation for our community.

Sincerely,

**Joe Cardinale, Angie Olson, Jennifer Quashnick, Moya Sanders, Rebecca Schwartz and Diane Verwoest**

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# Letter: Tribe should rethink gun range

To the community,

A 29-lane outdoor commercial gun range and tactical live-fire shoot house is being built by the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians on recently-acquired off-reservation trust land located at the southeast corner of Highway 50 and Shingle Springs Drive. The proposed range will be within 1,000 yards of two public elementary schools and a church, and within 100 yards of thousands of drivers on Highway 50, and backing directly to dozens of private residences. This is the wrong location for an outdoor commercial gun range. Neighbors directly downrange from the site have said that they will need to leave their homes once the range is operational due to safety and sound impact concerns.

The issue is not one of gun rights, but one of safety and choice of location.

If allowed to proceed as proposed, this project sets a dangerous precedent for the use of off-reservation trust land in California.

If anyone other than the tribe were to propose this project at this location, it would not be approved according to El Dorado County's zoning laws and noise and safety ordinances. However, due to its sovereign nation status, the tribe does not need to receive review, approval, or permitting as required of all other commercial projects proposed in the county.

This is not your standard gun range. The tribe is accountable to no one other than the Tribal Council for the planning,

building, or operation of the range. The gun range is a part of the overall marketing plan to bring business to the Red Hawk Casino. A casino-fed gun range business run by the tribe with zero county oversight is not a recipe for a safe gun range.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors has essentially stated that they don't believe they have jurisdiction to stop the project from proceeding. The tribe is moving forward with construction, with a proposed completion date of summer 2015.

We fully acknowledge and recognize the sovereignty of the tribe, but are asking them to be good neighbors and consider building an indoor range, choose a more appropriate location, or consider an alternate proposal that would preserve the quality of life and safety for all concerned. The surrounding community has voiced its concerns, but has been met with little cooperation, and to date has received no modifications to the proposal from the tribe.

Go online for more detail on the issue.

**Damon Tribble, El Dorado Hills**

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## **Editorial: Calif. urban water users must get serious about conservation**

**Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 9, 2015, San Jose Mercury News.***

California is in the midst of its fourth consecutive drought year, and based on a new study by Stanford scientists, it

appears to be a long-time weather pattern. The December downpours were just a nice distraction.

The state has to get serious about conserving water. Suggestions are not enough.

Emergency regulations proposed earlier this month by the State Water Resources Board staff would be a start, but permanent regulations are needed, and communities, at least region by region, need to be on the same page as to how to accomplish goals. Regulation by the state can help enormously by shoring up local programs like the one the Santa Clara Valley Water District is discussing this month.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: What happens if a school abolishes homework?**

**By Karin Klein, Los Angeles Times**

Citing the lack of evidence that homework does much if anything to improve academic performance in elementary grades, a principal in Manhattan notified parents that there would be no more after-school assignments for the public school's students.

And then came the rebellion – not from teachers, but from parents, according to the website DNAinfo. They threatened to transfer their children to another school. Some said they were finding online sources of homework for their children.

They were not convinced by the explanation from Principal Jane Hsu at P.S. 116 about the negative effects of homework on

young children, including “children’s frustration and exhaustion, lack of time for other activities and family time and, sadly, for many, loss of interest in learning.” Instead of doing homework, she suggested, children should spend their time on activities that had been found to do more for their academic and social and emotional development. Not television (to which I’d add—not computer face time). But free play (if there are many around who remember what that is). Reading stories or books of their choice.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: Williams strikes right note in time of turmoil**

**By William C. Rhoden, New York Times**

INDIAN WELLS — Serena Williams officially ended her 14-year boycott of the annual tennis tournament held here when she addressed members of the news media Thursday to explain why she returned.

“I just felt like it was time,” she said.

At the same time, Williams said there was a time when she felt this day might never come: “I didn’t think I would come back, to be honest.”

In March 2001, Williams, then 19, was booed without mercy as she played a championship match here. Fans were angry that the much-anticipated semifinal between her and her sister Venus never materialized after Venus pulled out with an injury. Their father, Richard Williams, was accused of orchestrating

the outcome.

Many say they are not clear about what happened over that weekend, but Richard Williams is very clear about what happened. In his autobiography, which was published last year, Williams described the events in detail.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Letter: Shooting range near school is bad idea**

**To the community,**

Usually once or twice a week I have the privilege of driving my children to their elementary school. A very special school nestled in rolling green hills and under the shadows of century-old oak trees. Sometimes it feels a bit like driving back in time. Shingle Springs is a uniquely beautiful place to raise a family.

However, it appears this utopic environment of ours is about to change. The Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians is planning to build a 29-lane outdoor commercial gun range with a tactical shoot house. The gun range would be 1,000 yards from Buckeye Elementary School, California Montessori Project Elementary, and Discovery Hills Church. It borders countless family residences and runs along Highway 50. The El Dorado Community Trail is directly adjacent to the proposed gun range. This trail is used for horseback riding, biking and nature walks.

This issue is complex and sensitive. Tribal land is sovereign.

Safety and noise ordinances do not apply to Indian sovereign land. The gun range is not subject to approval, review or oversight. The tribe sets its own rules and can change them at will.

I believe I'm a reasonable person. I'm a veteran, a gun owner and a taxpayer. Most important, I'm a husband and a dad. I don't think a gun range at this location is right for our children or community. Is it unreasonable to be concerned about the sound of gunfire on my children's playground? Is it unreasonable to be concerned about a stray bullet zipping through residential property or our highway?

Is it unreasonable to ask the Miwok tribe to consider the community's safety and well-being and move the gun range to a more appropriate location?

More information, go online.

**Alex Sheridan, Pollock Pines**