

California & Water Chronology of Major Events

Suggested sources

Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert* (1993 revised)

Norris Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst* (Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s, 1992).

Kevin Starr, 7-volume series on California history (very readable!).

Owens Valley

1904-1905: Owens River targeted by L.A.'s water czar William Mulholland; purchases in Owens Valley by ex-L.A. mayor Fred Eaton; authorized by L.A. Board of Water Commissioners; first bond issue passed by L.A. (14:1 ratio)

1906-1907: Lobbying of federal government for right-of-way; second bond issue passed (10:1)

1908-1913: Construction of aqueduct, pumping stations, etc.

By 1933: L.A. Dept Water & Power owns all private land in Owens Valley (& Inyo County)

1983: Public trust doctrine invoked by court regarding Mono Lake

1991: Settlement regarding water levels in Mono Lake

Colorado River

1905: Diversion canals flood, form the Salton Sea

1922: Boulder Canyon bill (Arizona's long-term mistrust of California)

1928: Six-state compact signed (Arizona refuses)

1929-35: Hoover Dam construction

1933-41: Parker Dam construction -- diversion for LADWP's Colorado River Aqueduct (including interruption in 1935 when Arizona threatened military action!)

Hetch Hetchy

from 1862: Near-monopoly of S.F. water sources by Spring Valley Water Works company

1901: S.F. mayor Phelan files for water right to Tuolumne River in Sierra Nevada (federal land)

1902-1908: Plans postponed (political reasons)

1908: President T. Roosevelt approves S.F. request

1908-1913: Battles w/SVWW, local ag concerns, John Muir & nascent environmental movement

Dec 1913: Project approved, signed by President Wilson

1934: First water deliveries (delays because of incremental bond issues, power delivery issues)

EBMUD Mokelumne

1923: Construction starts (few problems compared to Hetch Hetchy project)

1929: First deliveries

Central Valley Project

late 1800s: Floods continually threaten and affect agricultural land in the Central Valley

1920s: Failed “Marshall Plan” to provide huge dam in northern Sacto Valley + 2 long aqueducts

1931-33: Slightly scaled-down version proposed as state-funded project; bond issues approved

1934-35: CA runs to feds for help; FDR authorizes emergency funds; CVP become funded fully by the federal government (a big deal for future actions; state doesn’t have autonomy; U.S. reclamation law required 160-acre max; PG&E vs. Reclamation Bureau for power rights)

1937: Construction begins

1944: First hydropower available for sale

early 1950s: Numerous dams (Shasta, Keswick, Folsom, New Melones, Friant) and canals (Tehama-Colusa, Delta Cross Channel, Contra Costa, Delta-Mendota, Friant-Kern, Madera).

State Water Project

State-wide stimulus: Burgeoning population (500,000 increase/yr in 1940s and 1950s).

Agribusiness goal: Escape 160-acre restriction; provides leverage to counter/prevent

Reclamation Bureau actions regarding CVP water. Major funding and political support came from companies with huge holdings in the arid San Joaquin Valley (not “family farmers”).

1951: SWP precursor proposed

1956: Massive flood (100,000 sq mi, 64 dead, \$200M property damage)

1959-60: \$2.5B bond act proposed; unprecedented political maneuvering by Gov. Pat Brown finally resulted in passage -- by 0.3% (174,000 out of 5.8 million); open-ended wording

1961: Construction starts

1962-1973: “First Phase” of SWP completed (San Luis Reservoir, Castaic Lake, Lake Perris)

Peripheral Canal (technically part of SWP)

Trouble: Saltwater intrusion that increasingly affected the Delta (and occasionally got sucked into CVP and SWP systems). Also (secondary concern), severe wildlife (fish, birds) impacts.

1965-66: Plans released for Peripheral Canal (diagram) which also would send more water to San Joaquin Valley and southern California users. [Technically, part of “Second Phase” SWP.]

1966-1982: Bitter political battles pitting (usually) agribusiness & soCal vs. noCal, delta residents (no rights spelled out), and environmentalists. However, many surprising turnabouts.

1982: Peripheral Canal legislation repealed, and has stayed that way.

CALFED

1994: Cooperation formalized in June 1994 by state and federal agencies with management and regulatory responsibility in the Bay-Delta Estuary. The Framework Agreement pledged that the state and federal agencies would work together in three areas of Bay-Delta management:

- * Water quality standards formulation
- * Coordination of SWP and CVP operations with regulatory requirements; and
- * Long-term solutions to problems in the Bay-Delta Estuary.