

Republican Perspective

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by Ed Manning

What Radical Extremism Has Wrought

"There are plenty of problems in the world, and doubtless climate change - or whatever the currently voguish phrase for it all is - certainly is one of them. But it's low on my list."
P. J. O'Rourke

This is not a column on the atrocities occurring in the Middle East but rather what has occurred here in the Golden State. Victor Davis Hanson, a professor of Classics Emeritus at California State University, Fresno has written much about California's water issues. Professor Hanson's Fresno family farm is over 100 years old and he has been dealing with radical environmentalists for years. His writings tell the story of survival as a Central Valley farmer.

It now appears that California will be facing a fourth year of drought, and farmers in the Central Valley will let thousands of acres of crop producing fields go fallow. Higher prices for California grown vegetables, fruits, nuts and dairy products will rain down. Farmers in Central America must be smiling at the foolishness of California's water policies.

The foresight of our forefathers, who were intelligent enough to see that if huge quantities of water were not transferred (redistributed) from the Sierras and the Colorado River, then San Francisco and Los Angeles would become arid coastal towns. For a half-century, the state transferred surface water from the north to the Central Valley through the California State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. This is a smartly engineered water system that brought canal water daily to the lower portions of the state.

One example is the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project on the San Joaquin River, high in the central Sierra Nevada Mountains. Today, the project's six man-made reservoirs, 27 dams, and nine powerhouses generate 1,000 megawatts of clean hydroelectric power for about 11 million southern Californians; provide late-summer irrigation to more than 1 million acres of farmland; and prevent the San Joaquin River from flooding northeast Fresno in the spring.

Environmental extremists decided the state's water system could not stand. Using the courts in the 1960's and early 1970's, they stopped most new dam construction ending a near century long commitment to water retention. Just like a militant army advancing for more territory, the radical extremists then successfully diverted water from

agriculture creating dust-bowl like conditions in many farming areas of California in order to place the needs of fish over the needs of people. Now they shout that climate change is the culprit and like Judas, they wash their hands of the effects of their own policies.

California's population has doubled in 40 years but thanks to the extremists our water storage resources are frozen at 1970's capacities. In addition to diverting contracted irrigation and municipal water from established reservoirs, the extremists were successful in diverting substantial amounts of stored water from mountain dams into the Pacific Ocean. Their utopian belief was that large amounts of freshwater inflow would help oxygenate the Delta thus enabling survival of the 3" Delta smelt, an endangered bait fish specie. How about the survival of growers and workers?

The November 2014 election saw Californians approve a \$7.5 billion water bond but only one-third of the money will go to build reservoirs cancelled in the 1970's. California has a \$30 billion agriculture export industry of dairy, fruits, nuts and vegetables that is in serious jeopardy if water does not flow. Thousands of jobs are at risk in an area where the unemployment rate exceeds 10%.

Climatologists have told state officials that their records only go back to the 1860's. Tree-ring evidence suggests that droughts have lasted as long as 50 years. Perhaps what we are experiencing is the norm and not the exception. Maybe Californians, especially Central Valley Latinos will awake to the agenda of the extreme coastal environmental elites. Their regulations are causing fewer jobs and higher food costs, electricity rates and gasoline prices. In the meantime, they sip expensive chardonnay and conjure up ways to tear down Yosemite Valley's water system marvels.