OMNI

UN AGAINST DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT #2, Sept. 13, 2015.


Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and ECOLOGY.

#1, June 17, 2012

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Newsletters


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For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

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Contents : UN International DAY to Combat Desertification and Drought Newsletter #1 at end

Contents: GLOBAL DESERTIFICATION AND UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Struggle against Desertification

The new UNCCD Publication: Climate change and land degradation: Bridging knowledge and stakeholders.

The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD (COP12) will be held in Ankara from 12-23 October 2015.

UNCCD Google Search 2015

DROUGHT in CALIFORNIA SPREADING EASTWARD

WILLIAM DEBUYS, Mega-droughts: How dry, how long, how much damage? LOS ANGELES TIMES

California in the Great Drought is a living diorama of how the future is going to look across much of the United States as climate change sets in. Like hippies and “dude,” wine bars and hot tubs, mega-churches and gay rights, what gets big in California goes national soon enough. Now, the large dark bruise spreading across the state on the U.S. Drought Monitor map is a preview of a bone-dry world to come.

Admittedly, recent summer rains have somewhat dulled the edge of this exceptional California
drought, now in its fourth year. Full recovery, however, would require about a foot of rain statewide between now and January, a veritable deluge for places like Fresno, which in good times get that much only in a full year.

To be clear, the current drought may not have been caused by climate change. After all, California has a long history of fierce droughts that arise from entirely natural causes, some of them lasting a decade or more.

Even so, climate change remains a potent factor in the present disaster. According to the state’s Climate Change Center, California is on average about 1.7 degrees hotter than a century ago, and its rate of warming is expected to triple in the century ahead. The kicker is that hotter means much drier because as temperature creeps up, evaporation gallops. As a result, the droughts of the future will be effectively more destructive than those of the past.

Throughout the state, draconian cutbacks in water use are in force. Some agricultural districts are receiving zero percent of the federally controlled irrigation water they received in past years, while state-controlled water deliveries are running about 15 percent of normal. A staggering 5,200 wildfires have burned across the state this year, and the fire season still has months to go.

**So how is this a harbinger for lands to the east? The long-term forecast for an immense portion of western North America, from California to Texas and north to South Dakota, is for a future of the same, only worse.**

Here is the unvarnished version as expressed in a paper that appeared in Science Advances in February: “The mean state of drought in the late 21st century over the Central Plains and Southwest will likely exceed even the most severe mega-drought periods of the Medieval era in both high and moderate emissions scenarios, representing an unprecedented fundamental shift with respect to the last millennium.”

Let’s unpack that. Principal author Benjamin Cook of NASA and his colleagues from Columbia and Cornell universities are saying that climate change will bring to the continent a “new normal” more brutally dry than even the multiple-decades-long droughts that caused the Native American societies of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico and Mesa Verde in Colorado to collapse. This, they add, will happen even if greenhouse gas emissions are significantly lowered soon.

**If California points the way to dry times ahead, it also gives us a glimpse of how a responsible society can adjust to a warmer future.** In general, the state’s individual consumers and water districts are meeting conservation goals, thanks to a range of
innovations and sacrifices.

Perhaps most impressively, the state has adopted its own pioneering cap-and-trade program aimed at rolling back greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels. Emissions are capped and emitters are assigned a certain number of carbon permits. If they emit less, they can sell their extra permits in a state auction, creating incentives to cut carbon pollution.

Will **cap and trade** enable the state to meet its greenhouse gas goal? That’s unknown, but there is no debating its positive effect on the state treasury. In fiscal year 2015-16, the permit auction will net about $2.2 billion for mass transit, affordable housing and a range of climate-adaptation programs. And by the way, the warnings of naysayers and climate deniers that cap and-trade would prove a drag on the economy have proved groundless.

If President Barack Obama’s just-announced **Clean Power Plan** withstands court challenges, it will prove a powerful spur to other states to “put a price on carbon.” The plan mandates state-by-state reductions in power plant carbon emissions that will drive them 32 percent below 2005 levels. Many states undoubtedly have to adopt cap-and-trade systems. Where will they look for a workable example? California, obviously.

And yet, only governors in Hawaii, Oregon and Washington on the West Coast, Minnesota in the Midwest, and a handful of Northeastern states will even acknowledge the importance of acting to curb climate change as well as adapt to it.

Even in states likely to face acute water shortages, governors have assumed the posture of startled ostriches. Doug Ducey, the Republican governor of Arizona, acknowledges that the climate may indeed be changing but doubts that humans play a causal role in it. Susana Martinez of New Mexico, also a Republican, continues to insist that climate science is inconclusive, while former governor of Texas and current presidential candidate Rick Perry adamantly remains “not a scientist,” although he knew enough to inform us in his 2012 campaign screed Fed Up that climate change science is “a contrived phony mess.”

This year, the troglodytic deniers may get a boost from an unlikely source. An El Nino event seems to be brewing in the Pacific Ocean, which may draw winter precipitation to Southern California and points eastward. If it happens, the Republican rain dancers will feel confirmed in their denialism, much as a broken clock is right at least twice a day.

One or even several El Ninos, however, will not avert the new normal for much of the American West. Adaptation could soften some of the blows, and possibly, if we act soon enough and strongly enough, we may manage to cap the overall changes at some still livable level.
Eventually, California’s message will be heeded. Get ready.

William deBuys is the author of A Great Aridness: Climate Change and the Future of the American Southwest and The Last Unicorn: A Search for One of Earth’s Rarest Creatures. A longer version of this essay appears at TomDispatch.com.

[I sent the above to the Fayetteville City Council and the Washington County Quorum Court 9-13-15, asking them they prepare at least for the refugees. –Dick]


Author is Pulitzer Prize finalist, Pushcart Prize recipient, and Guggenheim fellow.

Beautifully written naturalistic prose, in the tradition of Wallace Stegner and John McPhee

Compelling topic: the Southwest continues to be the fastest-growing and one of the most urban regions in the country--the book addresses whether or not its oasis-based culture will be able to continue.

American Southwest is a proxy for semiarid ecosystems (e.g., Australia, the Middle East)--the climate effects in this region will shed light on climate events worldwide

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REALITY: TREES DECREASING, DESERTS INCREASING

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NEW STUDY SHOWS HOW TREES ARE CLIMATE CHANGE IS DISAPPEARING FROM
Degradation of Soil and Deserts Google Search, Sept. 13, 2015

And UN Responses

Scholarly articles for degradation of soil and deserts

Vulnerability of desert biological soil crusts to wind … - Belnap - Cited by 353

Degradation of sandy arid shrubland environments: … - Okin - Cited by 140

…and grazing in degraded Alxa desert steppe of Inner … - Pei - Cited by 137

Images for degradation of soil and deserts

WHO | Land degradation and desertification

World Health Organization

Land degradation and desertification can affect human health through complex pathways. As land is degraded and in some places deserts expand, food ...

Trends in Land Use and Land Degradation in Deserts - UNEP

United Nations Environment Programme

Trends in Land Use and Land Degradation in Deserts. All deserts have evolved under water scarcity; drought does not destabilize them. But humaninduced ...

Soil Erosion and Degradation | Threats | WWF
Effects include land degradation, soil erosion and sterility, and a loss of biodiversity, with huge economic costs for nations where deserts are growing.

Background Information on Desertification and Land...


United Nations

Although desertification can include the encroachment of sand dunes on land, it doesn't refer to the advance of deserts. Rather, it is the persistent degradation of...

Desertification - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia


Wikipedia

Desertification is a type of land degradation in which a relatively dry land region ... During most of these times, deserts have grown and shrunk independent of...

A Crust of Dust: Degradation of Desert Topsoil by Human...

www.scientificamerican.com › ... › Web Exclusives  Scientific American

Jan 9, 2012 - Desert soil has a living crust that is essential for fixing nitrogen, a critical plant nutrient, and for avoiding erosion that produces a swirl of itinerant ...

Land Degradation

www.globalchange.umich.edu/.../land.../land_deg...

University of Michigan

The first global survey of soil degradation was carried out by the United .... at the southern edge of the Sahara, an area the size of Somalia has become desert.

Global Deserts Outlook - Page 123 - Google Books Result

https://books.google.com/books?isbn=9280727222

Exequiel Ezcurra  - 2006 - Nature

In addition to the limited quantity of water resources available in deserts, ... Deserts in the strict sense are less susceptible to land degradation than other...

Human Soil Interactions | Soils 4 Teachers

soils4teachers.org/human-soil-interactions

Soil degradation is a human-induced or natural process which impairs the ... As an example, in 3000 BC, the Sumerians built large cities in the deserts of...

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
The 3rd UNCCD scientific conference on “combating desertification, land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development” was held on 9-12 March 2015 in Cancún.

A change in our land use practices through smart agriculture and adaptation to changing climate, especially in the dry fragile parts of the world where food supply is at risk.


The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD (COP12) will be held in Ankara from 12-23 October 2015. The venue of the session will be as follows:

The conference - UNCCD 3rd scientific conference

UNCCD - WDCD 2015

UNCCD - Home

UNCCD - Events

UNCCD COP12 dates & venue announced
UNCCD - World Day to Combat Desertification


UNCCD - Sustainable Development Policy & Practice - 1

June 2015: The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have co-published a Q&A booklet

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END UN AGAINST DESERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER #2

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