

Drought Crisis Cuts Water, Food Supply

by Marcia Merry Baker and Cynthia Rush

March 23—The disaster of the current dryness and water scarcity in the Great American Desert region of North America, is no mere “bad cycle” of weather events, which can be expected to right itself. What is playing out, is a catastrophe for water supplies, agriculture (your food supply), and bare existence in Northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, due to the combined impact of decades of not building infrastructure, free-trade looting of the limited water resource base, and lack of defense against the current pattern of extreme weather events associated with solar and galactic activation.

What is required is a break with the evil policies which created this vulnerability, and with the thinking behind it. Had the projects of the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) been undertaken 50 years ago, none of the apparent “natural” disasters—wildfires, dead cattle, empty reservoirs, cancelled irrigation water, etc.—would be occurring today.

In addition to those who wrongly said such NAWAPA-scale projects were too costly, the green outlook asserts that man stands “outside nature” and must not interfere. The destructive result and intent of this imperialist ideology is now manifest in the disaster unfolding in the region shown in the “North American Drought Monitor” (**Figure 1**). The following report provides updates on features of the disaster.

Even at this late moment, the destructive process can be reversed, if a policy-shift to credit for nation-building projects and science is effected. Concretely, that means forcing Obama out of office, and forcing the re-instatement of the Glass-Steagall law and related credit-generating measures. That is the only practical anti-drought approach.

Drought of ‘Historic Magnitude’

On March 15, the National Oceanographic and Aeronautic Administration (NOAA) gave its annual “Spring Outlook” for 2012 expected weather patterns.

Drought of “historic magnitude” was the description offered for West Texas and New Mexico, now in their 51st consecutive week of what is categorized as “severe, extreme or exceptional” aridity. The same situation prevails across the border in Northern Mexico.

Last year was the worst one-year drought in Texas’s history. In New Mexico, 66% of the state is in extreme water shortage. Arizona likewise. The reservoir levels are below the danger level.

In some of the Southeast states, there are also severe regions of drought, as shown in Figure 1. Three-quarters of the state of Georgia is hit. Lake Linnear, Atlanta’s water supply, is five feet below its full pool level. The Appalachian-Chatahoochee-Flint Basins are in extreme drought.

What this drastic situation points up, is the need for full-scale funding and action by NOAA and sister agencies at NASA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Geological Survey—to have the means to carry out tasks of satellite and other monitoring, and protective action. Just the opposite is happening, while Obama remains in office.

Under the Obama/Republican reign, the National Weather Service is slated to have a 6.2% budget cut for FY 2013, down to \$872 million; NOAA is to have a 1.31% increase to \$5.18 billion, but not enough to maintain weather satellite programs as required; and the Army Corps of Engineers (which works with the National Weather Service) is cut down to \$4.73 billion for FY 2013, down from the paltry \$5.002 billion in 2012.

Southwestern States

In the Southwest, the drought is playing out in the form of dramatic water cut-offs, trade-offs, and hopeless political fights.

In Texas, for the first time ever, a cut-off order on irrigation water was issued March 2 against the rice-growers in the Lower Colorado River Basin by the River Authority, because the volume of water in the storage lakes in the basin is so low. The impounded water was down to 42% of capacity on March 2.

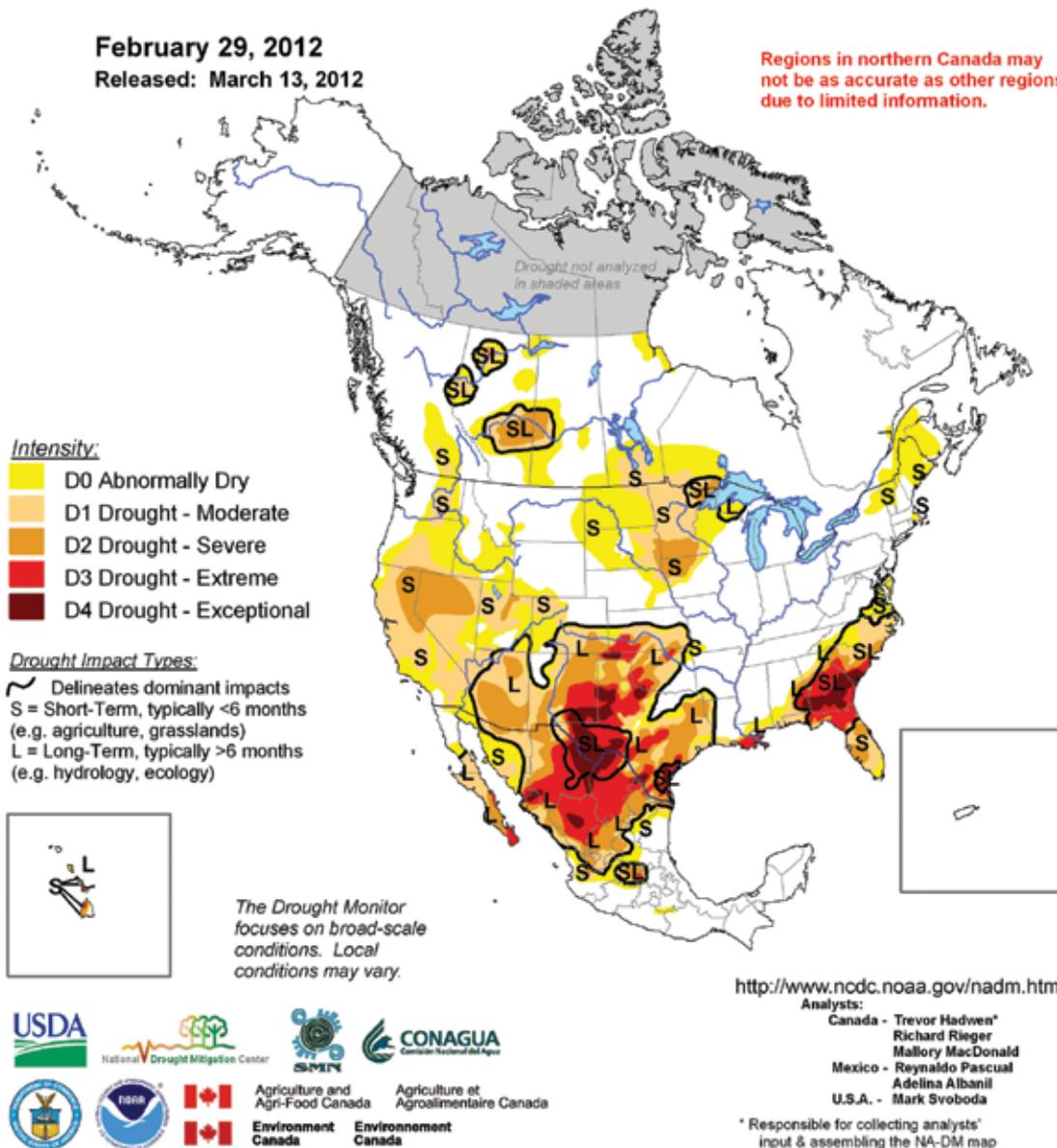
The rice growers in two counties of Colorado, Wharton, and Matagorda—which account for 5% of the national U.S. crop—will drastically restrict planted acreage, down to what they might be able to manage from pumped water alone. This rice region has been active for over a century. The recent rains have so far been insufficient to replenish the storage lake water,

FIGURE 1

North American Drought Monitor

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Regions in northern Canada may not be as accurate as other regions due to limited information.



and get the cut-off rescinded on irrigation water use.

In West Texas, new restrictions on pumping of the Ogallala Aquifer were put into place in January, and are now dividing farmers and others into camps of hopeless contention over scarce water. In this region of cotton, wheat, and cattle, pumping from the Ogallala groundwater has dropped its level by about 9 inches per year over many years.

In January, the High Plains Underground Water District, comprising 16 western counties (south of Lub-

bock up into the Panhandle), mandated that new wells must have meters installed, and pumping limits will be set by 2014, in order to “stretch out” the diminished water for a few more decades. Then, in February, the state Supreme Court ruled that landowners have absolute rights over water under their property, just like oil and gas, and they can pump what they want to.

Now a battle royale is raging, among farmers against any pumping restrictions, against city water guzzlers, against farmers who are pro-water rationing, etc. There

is no possible resolution of the conflict outside of reorientation to NAWAPA and the scientific economics perspective embodied in it.

In New Mexico, the water supply situation is dire. Most of the state relies on groundwater, whose supplies have diminished dramatically over time. The impoundments of the very limited surface water running through the desert state, are all but disappearing. A marker of the severe aridity is the wildfire threat. In February, state, local, and Federal authorities met in New Mexico to brace for another horror season of wildfires. FY 2011 was one of the worst ever, with 1,861 fires, burning 596,856 acres of state and private lands. This year has at least the same potential.

North-Central Mexico

In northern Mexico, many communities have seen their local water sources completely dry up in recent months. Fleets of water tankers are now racing to distant towns, just to provide minimal supplies. In January, Emilio Romero Polanco, of the Economic Research Institute (IIEc) at Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM), warned that more than 2.5 million

Mexicans are threatened with starvation, unless immediate steps are taken to address the devastating drought now afflicting 50% of the country's municipalities.

The crisis is so severe, that in the states of Chihuahua, Zacatecas, and Durango, 25,000 children have stopped attending school, according to the National Federation of Associations of Heads of Households. Families that depend on agriculture have no money to buy food and other necessities, or make the monetary contributions to allow children to go to school. Fr. Ignacio Becerra, in the state of Chihuahua, spoke to Reuters in March, of the fear and deprivation: "Watering holes that never ran dry, are empty." He said of the town of Carichi, "There was talk of drought when I got here 16 years ago. This year, not even corn or beans came up."

According to Durango Gov. Jorge Herrera Caldera, who is also the coordinator of the National Governors' Conference Water Commission, there are 1,500 communities in northern Mexico that have no water.

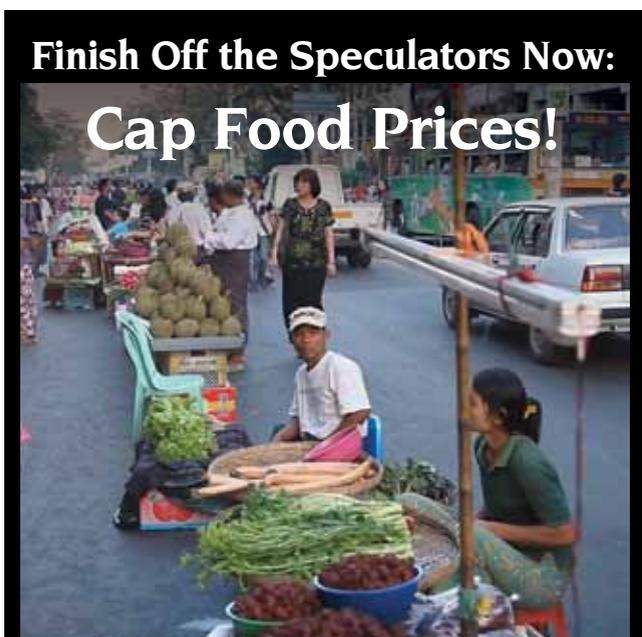
The crop and livestock devastation is a national emergency. In 2011, an area of 7.5 million acres (3 million hectares) of cultivatable land, was ruined for crops, according to AMSDA, the agriculture association of Mexico. This is an area nearly the size of the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut combined.

Production of corn and beans fell drastically last year. In the state of Zacatecas, for example, the center of bean farming, the 2011 crop was down to only 25% its usual size. In Tamaulipas, 70% of the grain harvest was lost, and farmers have been forced to cut back on cattle herds. An estimated 100,000 animals perished in the parched conditions over the last year. In the state of Coahuila alone, drought has forced the slaughter of 18,000 dairy cows.

In response, Mexico has been forced to seek imports of corn, beans, and other basics, at a time when world corn supplies are scarce and soaring in price. All the while, Mexican food exports have been increasing—amounting to huge outflows of "virtual" water, in the form of melons, avocados, onions, limes, and other types of high-value produce—produce now going into world trade, under the domination of the mega-agro-cartels working in league with the WTO/globalist monetary system.

Emilio Romero Polanco of UNAM pointed out that last year that Mexico exported \$10 billion worth of agricultural products, yet imported \$21 billion worth of food to meet domestic need.

marciabaker@larouchepub.com



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