

West Coast Is “On Track for Having the Worst Drought In 500 Years”

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Is the West Coast In the Middle of a “Mega Drought”?

The Los Angeles Times [reports](#):

“We are on track for having the worst drought in 500 years,” said B. Lynn Ingram, a professor of earth and planetary sciences at the University of California, Berkeley.

California droughts can last decades ... or even centuries. As the San Jose Mercury News [points out](#):

Through studies of tree rings, sediment and other natural evidence, researchers have documented multiple droughts in California that lasted **10 or 20 years** in a row during the past 1,000 years — compared to the mere three-year duration of the current dry spell. The two most severe megadroughts make the Dust Bowl of the 1930s look tame: a **240-year-long drought** that started in 850 and, 50 years after the conclusion of that one, another that stretched at least **180 years**.

“We continue to run California as if the longest drought we are ever going to encounter is about seven years,” said Scott Stine, a professor of geography and environmental studies at Cal State East Bay. “We’re living in a dream world.”

Some scientists believe we are already in a megadrought, although that view is not universally accepted.

Bill Patzert, a research scientist and oceanographer at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, says that the West is in a 20-year drought that began in 2000. He cites the fact that a phenomenon known as a “negative Pacific decadal oscillation” [[not](#) linked to climate change] is underway — and that historically has been linked to extreme high-pressure ridges that block storms.

We are not forecasting gloom and doom. Hopefully, the West Coast will soon get enough rain to end the drought.

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