

Editorial

Trump lives in fact-free world on our drought

Thanks to a Fresno campaign stop late last month, Californians now know how a President Donald Trump would research and execute water policy.

And Americans, to the extent that they're paying attention, can see how he'll generally approach other matters — regional, national and international — that are important to them.

It's pretty scary.

Talking and pandering to a group of Central Valley farmers, who never saw someone else's water they didn't like, Trump declared: 1) "There is no drought," and 2) "Even the environmentalists don't know why" a minimum amount of water has to flow into the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta to protect the health of the waterway.

These are fact-free declarations.

"There is no drought" is just goofy. A drought is a period of drier-than-normal conditions, and California recently completed a four-year cycle that was its driest in history. In 2013, California got less rain than in any year since it became a state in 1850; 2014 was its third driest year on record, and 2014 and 2015 were the warmest in California history. Northern California finally had a wetter-than-normal season this year thanks to El Nino, but the substandard totals continue in Fresno and everywhere else south of the delta.

This is what the English language calls a "drought." It is why, for example, wildfires

have been epidemic in California the past couple of summers. It's why reservoirs were almost running on empty, and still are in the bottom half of the state.

But Trump must know we haven't gotten much rain.

What he really means is that California has plenty of water for farmers — if it just drains its rivers dry, and stops worrying about the wildlife and ecosystem of the delta. Who cares if it turns into a salt-water inlet? Who cares if you sacrifice fisheries in favor of people who farm in a seasonal desert?

Environmentalists (and lots of business leaders and, oh, most educated Californians in general) know precisely why that's not a good idea.

All of the reputable scientific studies of the delta have the same conclusion: The estuary needs more water, not less, to stay healthy. And if it turns into a dying waterway, it will no longer be a good source of water for places like the Bay Area, which would put more stress on the overtaxed water delivery system.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, an ally of the farmers, was exasperated with environmental doomsayers and requested a National Academy of Sciences report on the delta, praising the academy's professionalism and credibility. But guess what: The peer-reviewed study concluded, like the others, that continued unsustainable water diversions are a major factor driving salmon and other native fish in the delta to extinction.

And as rivers upstream are sucked dry and no rain replenishes them — what happens then?

Stewardship is not a concept in the Trump lexicon. But really — is a dead delta what will make America great?

Trump ended his water rant by saying, "We're going to get it done, and we're going to get it done quick."

"Don't even think about it." Obviously, he hasn't.

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