

Eight-Year Drought in Southwest Plains States May Have Ended

Washington—(U.P.)—Officials of three government agencies have expressed cautious hope that the parching, costly eight-year drought in the nation's western and southwestern plains has been broken.

Their views were given to the United Press in response to questions about effects of the recent severe storms and floods in the drought states.

Experts of the Weather Bureau, the U.S. Geological Survey and Agriculture Department agreed the worst of the drought is over—for the moment at least. But they also agreed there is no clear-cut or simple answer to the question of future prospects for drought areas.

Rain May Stop

"In some areas, yes, the drought is over," a Weather Bureau

official said. "In other areas, no. For some crops it is over. For others it is not over."

"I just don't know," a Geological Survey official said. "I would hesitate to say the drought is over even with a lot of rain. The water may run off rapidly, the rain may stop, and in a few weeks we could be back where we were before. Would the drought we've had for eight years be over and a new one started?"

"It seems to be over in a substantial part of the area," reported an Agriculture Department expert. "But we will need a great deal more moisture in the subsoil for the drought really to be over."

These agencies have dealt with drought problems since great arid areas began forming in the

southern great plains in early 1950. The drought first appeared in Southwest Texas and southeastern New Mexico. It spread north and east through what in normal times was known as a "sea of grass."

Crops Wouldn't Grow

At the height of the drought the area was literally "the great American desert." Crops did not grow. Pastures withered. Live-stock had to be taken off many ranges.

During the past winter severe storms bringing oceans of rain and snow swept the arid Southwest. The rainstorms are continuing over a large section. Rivers which for years were dry now are over their banks. Reservoirs are filled or filling. What was dust for years is now mud.

On April 12, the Weather Bureau in a special report said "recent upper air circulation patterns are changing sufficiently to give farmers hope that the severe drought may not return in the coming growing season."

"In southeastern Nebraska, the western two-thirds of Kansas, the Oklahoma and Texas Panhandles, the new weather regime has provided more than twice the normal precipitation during March," it said.

Close Watch Kept

The bureau's long-range weather forecast, issued today, predicted "above normal" rains in the Northeast and far Southwest during the next 30 days. It also foresaw a tapering off of rain in central and eastern Texas which has been "abnormally heavy."

Kenneth L. Scott, head of Agricultural Credit Services for the Agriculture Department, said the drought appears to be broken in most of the area. He said sections now lacking rainfall are West Texas, southeast Colorado and New Mexico.

"It looks like there is enough moisture so that we can discontinue the emergency feed programs for livestock," Scott said. He emphasized, however, that when such programs are discontinued the department will keep close watch for resumption of the dry spell.

He said federal relief programs will swing back into full operation at the first sign of new drought difficulties.

Survival Problem Of 'Key Deer' May Go Before Congress

Miami—(U.P.)—The survival problems of the diminutive deer which prance and swim in the Florida Keys may cause a tussle in Congress.

The deer, which some say are only a fancy of newspaper pages, are the tiny "Key deer" which roam the Keys as a herd of about 125 and live on palm berries. They are believed to be a unique specimen of deer—perhaps the last of their kind in the world.

Florida congressmen are being caught in a squeeze between Keys property owners and residents strongly favoring a government refuge to insure survival of these creatures.

A bill currently pending in Congress would make a small area in the Keys a refuge for them. The measure was sponsored by Rep. Charles Bennett of Jacksonville.

But it has already touched off a fight in the Keys. Landowners say the federal government has taken over enough land in Monroe county.

They Are Real

"We have already lost over 65 per cent of our land in Monroe county to the Everglades National Park," said Joe Russell, president of the Lower Keys Property Owners Association. "With population growth, land is going to be scarce."

Another Keys resident said the little deer "exist only in the fantastic news printed by someone who has never seen the Key deer."

Naturalists and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service workers know, however, that the deer are real. They are leading the drive for a refuge for the deer, which are between 22 and 25 inches high and weigh from 40 to 60 pounds, compared with 100 pounds for Florida mainland deer and the 300-pound bucks of the North.

The tiny herd roams over a small area on the Torch Keys and Big Pine Keys. They swim together from island to island in search of food.

Tokyo—(U.P.)—Communist China said Tuesday its shore batteries repulsed a Nationalist Chinese warship Sunday off the Hwangchi peninsula on the Fukien coast.

Two Bodies Found In Clatsop County

Astoria—(U.P.)—William E. Christensen, about 40, and his wife, Wilma, 42, were found dead at their home Tuesday in what Clatsop county authorities described as an apparent murder-suicide.

The two bodies were found by a neighbor who lives across the street from the Christensens in the Oklahoma hill section near Wauna, Ore., 25 miles southeast of here.

T. C. Porter, the neighbor, told Sheriff Paul Kearney he heard muffled shots between 9:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Monday but did not investigate. This morning, he reported, he saw Mrs. Christensen's body lying on the front porch of her home.

California Drying Up Fast; Immediate Project Needs Told

San Francisco—(U.P.)—California is drying up so fast that only immediate construction of huge conservation projects will keep the state water-solvent, an expert has warned.

The warning came from Harvey O. Banks, California director of water resources, in a speech to the opening session of the Inter-society Conference on Irrigation and Drainage.

Banks noted that California's population has doubled since 1940 and is continuing to grow.

Californians are now over-drawing on their water supply at the rate of more than five million acre feet each year, Banks said. This amount of water would cover five million acres one foot deep.

By 1965, he said, "It is indicated that the net shortage of developed water supply could amount to more than 10 million acre feet per season."

Banks said if the proposed \$1,500,000,000 Feather River Project were in operation today, "it would barely overcome the

deficiencies of the present." The project is now held up in the Legislature because of the rights dispute between counties of origin and counties of need.

Banks said California needs the immediate construction of "one or more additional projects of comparable size" to the Feather River Project.

Most of California's water over-draft has to be made up from underground water basins, with the consequent lowering of the water table, Banks said. This means Californians must sink their wells ever deeper.

Banks said the need for huge water projects is "acute" because of the lag between planning and actual construction of any project.

Some 300 American engineers and water engineers attended the two-day meeting.

Also sitting in are some of the 300 delegates from 44 nations who will attend the third World Congress of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, which opens today.

Former Albany Attorney Gets 60 Days in Jail

Portland—(U.P.)—Robert McKechie, 35, former Albany city attorney, has been sentenced to 60 days in jail by U.S. Judge William East for failure to file federal income tax returns for 1953 and 1954.

McKechie was the first of some 20 persons convicted in Oregon Federal Court of the misdemeanor offense to draw a jail sentence. Other violators had been given probation.

Protection Racket Leads Nine To Trial

Braunschweig, Germany—(U.P.)—Nine ex-convicts were on trial today on charges of operating a protection racket for prostitutes. They were accused of collecting money from women in three cities for "protection" and as commission for finding customers. The prosecution charged a bowling club was a front for the convicts' activities.

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Quotes From the News

By UNITED PRESS

Beirut, Lebanon—Lebanese Foreign Minister Charles Malik, on American determination to oppose Communist penetration of the Near East:

"One can only hope that this determination will persist and will bear fruit in the near future."

Miami Beach, Fla.—Lester Lee, 55, on hearing over the telephone the voice of his mother, whom he had thought died 32 years ago:

"It was like a voice from the dead."

Chicago—Vice President Richard M. Nixon, on President Eisenhower's vacations:

"He owes it to himself and the nation to take time off to keep himself in the best mental and physical condition."

Washington—Mrs. Jean McCarthy, wife of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) on the condition of her husband, who is seriously ill with hepatitis:

"Everything seems to be going along quite well now."

New York—Protestant evangelist Billy Graham on the Rev. John E. Kelly's advice to Catholics to stay away from Graham's meetings:

"The Catholic church has always been as friendly and as tolerant as their church law will allow them. . . . We welcome Catholic leaders and people to our meetings even though it is impossible for them to give official sanction."



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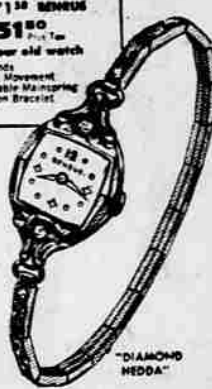
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