

# THIS WORLD

## Calif- Water Crisis the drought

# A \$4 Billion State Loss?

**T**HE MOST novel request for water last week came from Representative John Burton (Dem-S.F.-Marin), in a letter to President Carter.

Despite the 57 per cent reduction of water use imposed on Marin county residents by the Marin Municipal Water District, Burton noted, the parched area north of San Francisco "will be totally out of water by the first of next year if the drought continues."

Therefore, he asked, let the Navy anchor some of its huge ships in San Francisco Bay and use their desalinization plants to purify Bay water for Marin residents' use.

Pointing out that Navy vessels are capable of supplying between 40,000 and 450,000 gallons of water daily — one modern aircraft carrier, he said, could fill 4.5 per cent of the present daily needs of Marin — he asked that the President have the Navy conduct a feasibility study of the idea.

Other suggestions on dealing with one of the century's worst droughts clustered about less exotic alternatives.

In Sacramento, state water department officials met with various concerned representatives of thirsty districts throughout the state, and arranged an "exchange" program under which emergency water was allocated for Northern California areas from supplies that would have been pumped over the Tehachapi mountains to Southern California.

The Metropolitan Water District (MWD), based in Los Angeles, agreed to give up an extra 80,000 acre feet of water (one acre foot is enough to flood one acre to a depth of one foot — approximately 326,000 gallons). The newly negotiated amount was to be added to supplies allocated in an earlier agreement, in the amount of 320,000 acre feet also controlled by the State Water Project.

The prime beneficiary of the entire amount would be the state's largest agricultural user, the Kern county Water Agency; it was assigned 199,766

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acre-feet. But Marin county also was given a "rescue supply" of 10,800 acre-feet, allegedly enough to bring the county through the rest of the drought year without drawing on reserves already lying in county reservoirs. The new supply would run to about 10 million gallons a day for Marinites, surpassing the current, rationed supplies.

For the Bay Area as a whole, the emergency rations would amount to about 28,800 acre-feet. That included 3000 acre-



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feet to help repel salt water invasion of the Alameda county Water District's fresh ground-water supply.

Rationing plans were put into effect for Santa Rosa, Cotati, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Sonoma, the Forestville and Valley of the Moon water districts, and the Novato area of Marin — none of which previously had been subject to mandatory plans. The rationing had been set up early last month, when it had become apparent that the Russian River probably would dry up this summer if the drought continued.

Meanwhile, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. attended a meeting in Washington of Western state governors who, before he arrived, chose him to brief President Carter (at a later meeting) on the effects of the drought in the West. Brown had brought along a position paper, prepared by his executive assistant, Gray Davis, with which he had figured to enlighten Mr. Carter as to the situation. According to the report, the estimated economic loss for the whole state of California would run to a minimum of \$2 billion, could go as high as \$6 billion, "most likely" would come in at about \$4 billion.

Agricultural losses would figure at \$790 million to \$2 billion, with "the most realistic forecast being losses of \$862 million for crops and \$500 million for livestock." The report also estimated another \$500 million in drought-generated expenses, because of extra use of fossil fuels in substituting for lost hydroelectric generation.

The report was submitted in a 90-minute private session among Brown and his aides, and the newly named federal drought coordinator, Jack Watson, the President's special assistant and cabinet secretary. Before meeting with Watson, Brown had told his fellow Western governors he intended to change the President's mind about not including the proposed Auburn Dam in the upcoming federal budget. Although the Auburn project had been dropped by Mr. Carter from budget considerations, Brown had said: "Based on soundings from Congress, I am confident we'll be put back into the budget."

The Auburn Dam had been one of 19 dropped from the budget. Brown emerged from the meeting with Watson and reported: "The President made it very clear that the projects were taken out of the budget after careful study, and it will take a lot of persuasion to get them put back."

There was evidence at mid-week that the Warm Springs Dam project in Sonoma county might also be axed.