

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES

WATER IN CALIFORNIA



[VISIT US](#)

California History Section

900 N Street Room 200

9:30-4 Monday-Friday

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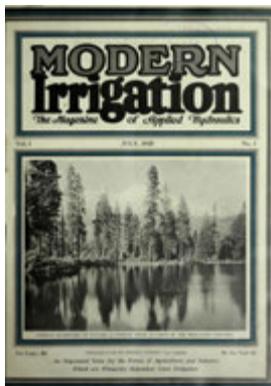
Are you a California resident? Have you eaten California produce? Then you are affected by California's history of water resources development. From dams, to canals to flumes and groundwater replenishment, water planning affects almost every aspect of California life and industry. Explore the vibrant political history of California's most precious resource via the [California History Section's](#) rich collections!

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ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

Can't come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to water in California!



[Digitized Publications](#)

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California's water. You can see them on Internet Archive!



URL: <https://archive.org/>

Type in Search Box: (water* OR irrigation)
AND collection:(californiastatelibrary)&sin=TXT

Select Option: "Search full text of books"



[Digitized Images](#)

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our image collection. Check them out and remember that we have a lot more in the library.

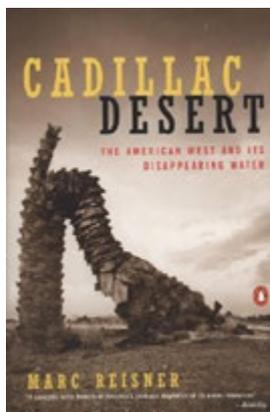


URL: <https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/>

Type in Search Box: ((water) OR (irrig*) OR (dams))

BOOKS

Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! If you are interested in the history of California's water resources, these items will point you in the right direction.

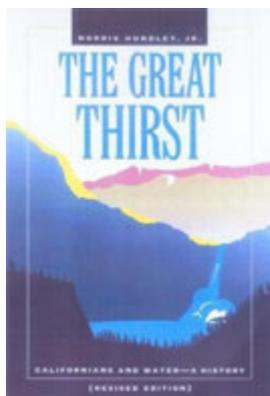


Reisner, M. (1993). [Cadillac desert : The American West and its disappearing water](#) (Rev. and updated. ed.). New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books.

This sweeping overview of western water history puts the California's complicated water politics in its larger context, by covering the water history of other states alongside that of California from its earliest days to the present.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001040916



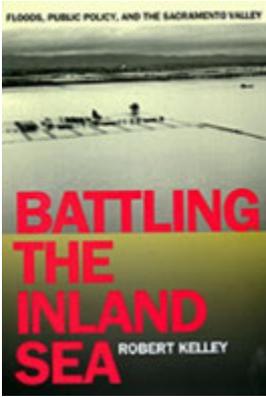
Hundley, N. (2001). [The great thirst : Californians and water, a history](#) (Rev. ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

A macro-history of California water resources development and policies, this book's detailed explanations of each generation's water usage goes a long way towards explaining the current complicated state of California water policy.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001112218

BOOKS

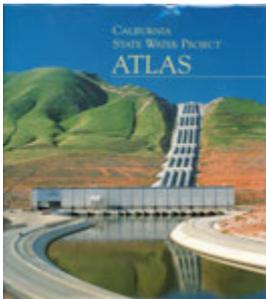


Kelley, R. (1997). [Battling the inland sea : Floods, public policy, and the Sacramento Valley, 1850-1986](#) (New ed.]. ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

A look at the history of a region particularly prone to one California water extreme, flood, this book details how Sacramento Valley residents and larger government entities have turned flood plains into metropolises and prime farmland.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001040807

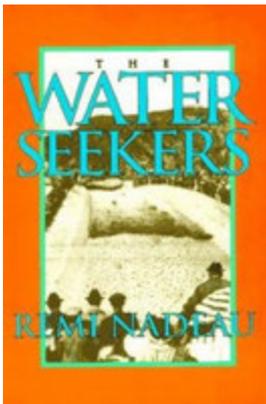


Tokita, J., & California. Dept. of Water Resources. (1999). [California State Water Project atlas](#). Sacramento: California Dept. of Water Resources.

This highly readable, visual and textual survey of California's dams and aqueducts provides a thorough introduction to California's complex water storage and supply system.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001085508



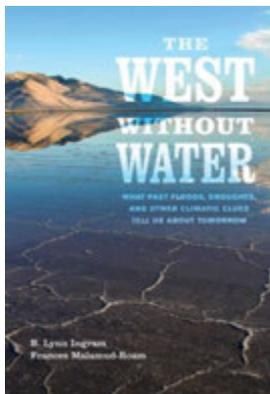
Nadeau, R. (1997). [The water seekers](#) (4th ed., 1997, rev.. ed.). Santa Barbara: Crest.

A history of Southern California's ongoing search for water resources, this book tracks the Owens Valley Water War from its inception to the 1990's as well as the conflict over Colorado River water rights.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001047739

BOOKS

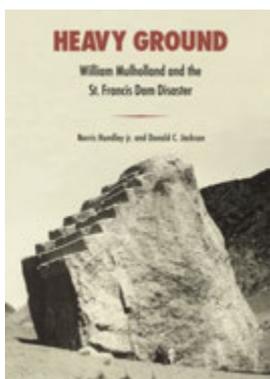


Ingram, B. Lynn & Malamud-Roam, Frances. (2013). [The West without water](#). Berkeley: University of California Press.

By examining the historic and archaeological record, the authors of this book provide a long-term perspective on western water trends as related to flood and drought and offer tentative forecasts of what the future might hold based on this evidence and on current climactic conditions.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001518070

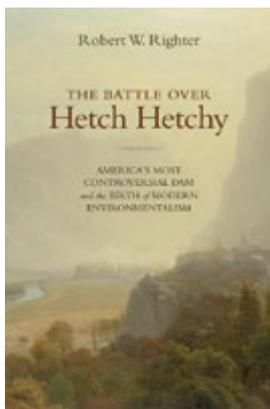


Hundley, N., & Jackson, D. (2015). [Heavy ground : William Mulholland and the St. Francis Dam disaster](#). Berkeley: University of California Press, Berkeley.

Both an engineering and a historical analysis, this carefully researched book outlines the political and social impact of the St. Francis Dam disaster as well as chronicling the actual event itself.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001601023



Righter, R. (2005). [The battle over Hetch Hetchy](#). New York: Oxford University Press.

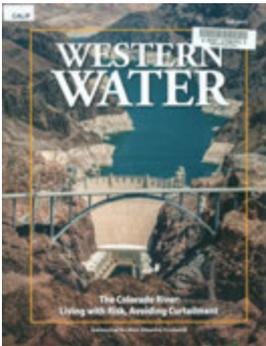
One of California's most controversial dams, this book explores the history of Hetch Hetchy, in particular it examines the two competing visions for this region at the turn of the century and the continued controversy surrounding the dam.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001246253

PERIODICALS

Don't want to read an entire book? Check these publications for real-time information on irrigation and water supply challenges and solutions.

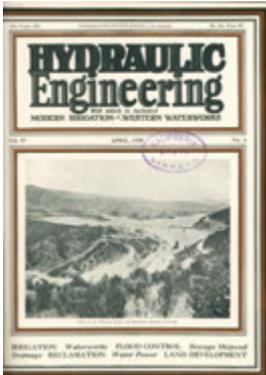


[Western Water](#)

Extending back to the late 1940's, this periodical offers real-time documentation of and opinions on dam, canal and water dispersal projects and policies in California.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000140032+OR+SYS%3D000140029



[Hydraulic Engineering](#)

Though the library only has about 5 years of this magazine, what we do have provides an excellent snapshot of Progressive Era canal and dam construction.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000140002+OR+SYS%3D000140000



[California Irrigationist](#)

Although the library only has 2 issues of this 1890's periodical, it still provides a useful look at state of California well and canal projects from prior to the turn of the 20th century.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000145055

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

In addition to books and periodicals, there are many archival resources that focus on California's complicated relationship with water. Here are some relevant collections at the State Library.



[Ernest Bulpitt Collection](#)

This collection and its partner correspondence file contains detailed information on the Owens Valley water diversion, including creek level measurements and more.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001306515+OR+SYS%3D001245585



[DeWitt Lee Collection.](#)

While it covers a broad area, this collection is particularly helpful in discussing WPA Projects like the Friant Dam and various canals and aqueducts.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000555432



[Richard Dolwig Collection.](#)

From the files of a former state senator who focused heavily on water-related issues, this collection looks at the legislative side of California's water history from the 1950's through the 1980's.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000557815

WATER MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS



[William Hammond Hall Collection.](#)

A 19th century California irrigation expert, this collection contains Hall's extensive working papers on canals, irrigation and water rights, as well as his field books and several maps.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000551965



[Santa Ana Valley Irrigation Company records.](#)

A look at the financial side of California water, this collection contains title abstracts, ledgers, payroll information, stock certificates and other water company financial information.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001306421



[San Juan Water District Records.](#)

A collection formed in 1994, this set of papers contains everything from financial records dating back to the North Fork Ditch company in the 1900's to company manager notebooks from the 1940's.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001232542

PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS

In addition to books and periodicals, we have many photograph albums that document historic riparian environments as well as dams, canals and flumes. Here are a few of them.



[Water resources development in California photograph album.](#) (c1910).

This photograph album documents aqueducts, Hetch Hetchy, Pit River, the Owens and Feather Rivers and more.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001213867



[Irrigation districts' projects photograph album.](#) (c1920-1923).

This album documents irrigation projects from the 1920's throughout California and part of the west including projects on the Colorado and Pit Rivers as well as the Warner Valley and Shasta Irrigation projects.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001589207



[Central Valley development in California](#) (1947). [California? : A.T. & S.F. Railway Co.](#)

Shows various projects from the State Water Project, including both images and maps. Some of the views include Shasta Dam, the Friant-Kern canal and the Delta cross-channel.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001085617

CATALOG GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on water.



Catalog

If you are looking for [images](#), [books](#) and [articles](#) on water, your best source is our [catalog](#).



URL: <http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-a-0>

Type in Subject Box: (water* OR irrigat* OR Dams OR Flood* OR canal* OR Groundwater OR Hydrology)

Limit: By desired material type



[California Information File II](#)

Sometimes the catalog doesn't provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find information about individual water-related articles and more!



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Subject Box: (water* OR irrigat* OR Dams OR Flood* OR canal* OR Groundwater OR Hydrology)

For a narrower search: Add a place to your keyword search

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

California's water resources and the management thereof has had far-ranging effects on everything from politics to agriculture to poetry! Explore some of our resources via these catalog links.



Type:

[Books](#)

[Images](#)

[Manuscript Collections](#)

[Maps](#)

[Periodicals](#)

[Statistics](#)

Subjects:

[Agriculture](#)

[Business](#)

[Environment](#)

[Fiction](#)

[Geology](#)

[Mining](#)

[Oil](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Politics](#)

[Shipping](#)

[Railroads](#)

[Transportation](#)

[Wildlife](#)

[Wine](#)

People:

[Vital Statistics](#)

[Chinese Americans](#)

[Italian Americans](#)

[Latin Americans](#)

[Native Americans](#)

COUNTY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

Curious about water resources and development in a specific county? While these catalog links don't list all of what the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.



ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.



California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of articles, books, and manuscript collections on California water and more.



Subject Headings:

1. Dams (various subdivisions)
2. Irrigation (Various subdivisions)
3. Lakes (various subdivisions)
4. Land: Reclamation (Various subdivisions)
5. Rivers (Various subdivisions)
6. Water (Various subdivisions)



Picture File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file.



Subject Headings:

1. Lakes (various subdivisions)
2. Rivers (Various subdivisions)
3. Water (Various subdivisions)

OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about water and water resources development information in the following files:



Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files cover a wide variety of topics including water. You can check them for information on organizations that protect and use water or sites famous for water resources.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians.



Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of water resources images. Most are not online.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians



Map Files

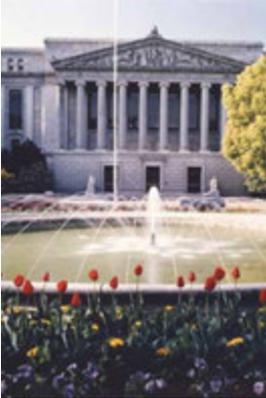
Our map files contain a number of maps referring to California waterways. Most are not online but are catalogued in our card file.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Of course the California History Section doesn't have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations



Other California State Library Sections

[Government Publications Section](#)

[Witkin Law Library](#)

[Sutro Library](#)

[General Information](#)



- <http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/law/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/services/>
-

Government Agencies

[California State Archives](#)

[California State Parks](#)

[Department of Water Resources](#)

[California Biodiversity Council](#)

[California Boating and Waterways](#)

[Commission](#)

[California Environmental Protection](#)

[Agency](#)

[California Natural Resources Agency](#)



- <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/>
 - <https://www.parks.ca.gov/>
 - <http://www.water.ca.gov/>
 - <http://biodiversity.ca.gov/>
 - http://www.dbw.ca.gov/?page_id=28835
 - <https://calepa.ca.gov/>
 - <http://resources.ca.gov/>
-

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

More Government Agencies

[California Water Commission](#)
[Central Valley Flood Protection Board](#)
[Delta Protection Commission](#)
[Delta Stewardship Commission](#)
[Department of Conservation](#)
[Sierra Nevada Conservancy](#)
[State Coastal Conservancy](#)
[State Lands Commission](#)
[State Water Resources Control Board](#)
[Wildlife Conservation Board](#)



Local California libraries or archives



- <https://cwc.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.cvipb.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.delta.ca.gov/>
- <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/>
- <http://scc.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.slc.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.wcb.ca.gov/>

Non-Profits and Stake-holders

[Association of California Water Agencies](#)
[Environmental Justice Coalition for Water](#)
[Water Education Foundation](#)
[Planning and Conservation League](#)
[Water Forum](#)



- <https://www.acwa.com/>
- <https://ejcw.org/>
- <https://www.water-ed.org/>
- <https://www.pcl.org/>
- <http://www.waterforum.org/>

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This guide is also available online at:
<http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/>