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
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!
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 Resources**

**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))

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author
Books


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

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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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

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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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author
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.


**Search by:** Title

**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.


**Search by:** Title

**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.


**Search by:** Title
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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

**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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

**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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

**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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?
vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

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

**Limit:** By desired material type

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**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.

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<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Native Americans</td>
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Subject

- Agriculture
- Art
- Birds
- Business
- Environment
- Festivals
- Fiction
- Fish
- Geology
- Highways
- Land
- Legislature
- Migration
- Mining
- Music
- Oil
- Poetry
- Politics
- Shipping
- Railroads
- Railroads
- Wildlife
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.

Alameda  Colusa  Fresno
Amador  Contra Costa  Glenn
Butte  Del Norte  Humboldt
Calaveras  El Dorado  Imperial

Inyo  Kern  Kings
Humboldt  Lassen  Los Angeles

Madera  Marin  Mariposa
Mono  Mendocino  Merced

Monterey  Santa Barbara  Trinity
Nevada  Santa Clara  Tulare
Orange  Santa Cruz  Tuolumne
Placer  Shasta  Ventura
Plumas  Sierra  Yolo
Riverside  Solano  Yuba
Sacramento  Sonoma
San Bernardino  Stanislaus
San Diego  Sutter
San Francisco  Tehama
San Joaquin  Trinity
San Luis Obispo  Tulare
San Mateo  Tuolumne
Santa Barbara  Ventura
Santa Clara  Yolo
Santa Cruz  Yuba
Shasta  Yuba
Sierra  Yuba
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
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 Council
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.cvfpb.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.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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