



CALIFORNIA'S Central Valley, where citrus, above, and other crops are grown, is rapidly losing groundwater. TOMAS OVALLE For The Times

Fresh water is disappearing and much of the world is getting drier

BY IAN JAMES
AND SEAN GREENE

For more than two decades, satellites have tracked the total amounts of water held in glaciers, ice sheets, lakes, rivers, soil and the world's vast natural reservoirs underground — aquifers. An extensive global analysis of that data now reveals fresh water is rapidly disappearing beneath much of humanity's feet, and large swaths of the Earth are drying out.

Scientists are seeing “mega-drying” regions that are immense and expanding — one stretching from the western United States through Mexico to Central America, and another from Morocco to France, across the entire Middle East to northern China.

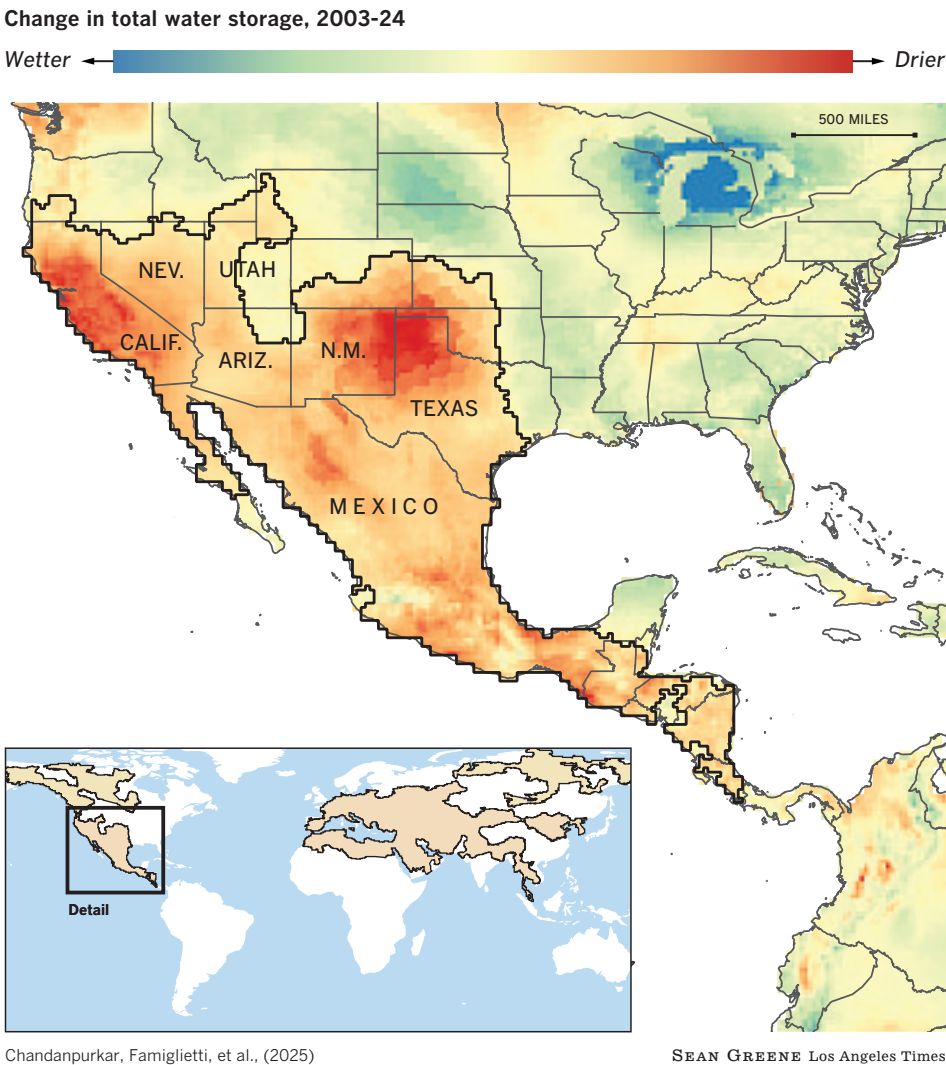
There are two primary causes of the desiccation: rising temperatures unleashed by using oil and gas, and widespread overpumping of water that took millennia to accumulate underground.

“These findings send perhaps the most alarming message yet about the impact of climate change on our water resources,” said Jay Famiglietti, a hydrologist and professor at Arizona State University who co-authored the study. “The rapid water cycle change that the planet has experienced over the last decade has unleashed a wave of rapid drying.”

[See [Water](#), A10]

Researchers identify western U.S. and Central America as one of four ‘mega-drying’ regions

The ‘mega-drying’ regions include large parts of Canada and Russia, southwestern North America, Central America, the Middle East to northern China and Southeast Asia, as well as a giant interconnected drying region that spans from North Africa to Europe.



Bank lines stretch as cash crisis hits Syria

BY NABIH BULOS

DAMASCUS, Syria — Standing in the dilapidated ATM hall of his bank, Maher Elias huffed a sigh equal parts exasperation and exhaustion. Around him were lines dozens of people deep, all of them, like the 59-year-old Elias, waiting in the sweltering heat to withdraw cash.

Ahead of him was a wait

of at least three hours — assuming the ATM didn't shut down from electricity cuts or run out of bills. On one of the hottest days in the Damascus summer, his words interrupted by the occasional argument between other vexed patrons, Elias spoke while his eyes remained fixated on the front of the slow-moving queue.

“All this waiting, and for what?” he said, wiping the

[See [Syria](#), A4]



A CROWD gathers at the Foreign Exchange Center in Damascus during the country's liquidity shortage. AYMAN OGHANNA For The Times

A staged wrestling match ends with real blows

BY SALVADOR HERNANDEZ

It was supposed to be a scripted fight between a professional wrestler and a mixed martial arts fighter — a crowd-pleasing crossover performance intended to draw maximum online fans with a dramatic storyline.

But the battle quickly

turned ugly and violent as shocked spectators watched MMA fighter Raja Jackson slam opponent Stuart “Syko Stu” Smith to the mat and unleash a torrent of blows to the motionless wrestler's head.

As multiple wrestlers rushed to subdue Jackson, Smith lay bleeding and convulsing on the canvas.

Now, as the Los Angeles

Police Department investigates the Aug. 23 incident as a case of suspected felony battery, detectives and event organizers are trying to determine how a routine wrestling match could go so horribly wrong.

In a sport that derives its popularity by blurring the line between fiction and reality, professional wrestlers are encouraged to stay in

character whenever they are in the public eye — an ethos known as “kayfabe.” But recorded images of the incident and interviews with witnesses suggest this tacit agreement between competitors was tragically absent during the Sun Valley bout.

Some suggest the bloody scene at KnokX Pro

[See [Wrestling](#), A9]

Use of force abroad, threat of force at home

After militarizing U.S. cities, Trump turns guns on overseas drug gangs

BY MICHAEL WILNER

WASHINGTON — The F-35 is the most advanced fighter jet on the planet, capable of waging electronic warfare, of dropping nuclear weapons, of evading the surveillance and missile defenses of America's most fearsome enemies at supersonic speeds.

Ten of them are being deployed by a newly branded War Department to Puerto Rico to combat drug traffickers in dinghies.

It is the latest example of the Trump administration using disproportionate military force to supplement, or substitute for, traditional law enforcement operations — first at home on the streets of U.S. cities and now overseas, where the presi-

dent has labeled multiple drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations and has vowed a “tough” response.

On Tuesday, that response began with an inaugural “kinetic strike” targeting a small vessel in the Caribbean allegedly carrying narcotics and 11 members of Tren de Aragua, one of the Venezuelan gangs President Trump has designated a terrorist group. Legally designating a gang or cartel as a terrorist entity ostensibly gives the president greater legal cover to conduct lethal strikes on targets.

The operation follows Trump's deployment of U.S. forces to Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., for operations with dubious justifications, as well as threats of similar actions in San Fran-

[See [Force](#), A11]

Immigrants can be denied bond

Court upholds Trump policy, potentially expanding mandatory detention to millions.

BY RACHEL URANGA

A Trump administration policy to deny bond hearings to immigrants who entered the country without authorization was upheld by an immigration appellate board Friday, expanding mandatory detention to thousands of people already behind bars and potentially millions more nationwide.

Although the policy is being challenged in federal court, the ruling by the Board of Immigration Ap-

peals is likely to send an immediate chill through immigration courts where judges for decades have released individuals on bond whom they did not deem a flight risk or danger.

Those judges are now bound by the board's decision. Immigration courts are not part of the judicial branch but fall under the Department of Justice.

Immigrant rights attorneys say holding immigrants throughout their cases — a process that can take years — is intended to break the spirit of many and force them to sign their own deportation orders.

“This is an effort to increase the number of people in detention significantly.”

[See [Immigrants](#), A9]

COLUMN ONE

I lost me': How dementia changed a mind and a marriage

BY CORINNE PURTILL

I lost me.
You lost yourself?
Yeah.
Where did you go?
I don't know. I don't have a sense of who I am.

Marc Pierrat's mind once ran as smoothly as the gears on his endurance bike. He was a mechanical engineer by training and a marathoner for fun, a guy who maintained complicated systems at work and a meticulously organized garage at his Westlake Village home.

Three years after his diagnosis of frontotemporal dementia, Marc's thoughts are a jumble he can't sort out alone. Once-routine tasks are now incomprehensible; memories swirl and slip away. His wife, Julia Pierrat, 58, shepherds Marc, 59, through meals and naptime, ensures he is clean and comfortable, gently offers names and words he can't find himself.

[See [Dementia](#), A12]

LAPD ends protection for Harris

Department was criticized for helping after Trump revoked her Secret Service detail. CALIFORNIA, B1

Postal traffic to U.S. is down 80%

Shipping is upended as Trump halts tariff exemption on low-cost imports. NATION, A6

Weather
Sunny, dry, warm.
L.A. Basin: 91/66. B9

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Fond farewell to 'Downton Abbey'

Stars Michelle Dockery, Hugh Bonneville return for “The Grand Finale.” ENTERTAINMENT, E2

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