

# California drought drove up energy costs

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Drought One of the biggest costs of California's recent drought went largely unnoticed, according to a report that estimates state ratepayers paid \$1.7 billion to replace lost hydropower with natural gas generation that also pumped millions of tons of pollutants into the atmosphere.

"Some of the drought's most direct and costly impacts were to air quality and California electricity ratepayers," concludes an analysis of the drought's impacts by the Pacific Institute, a Northern California think tank that focuses on water issues.

In an average year, about 15 percent of the electricity produced in-state comes from hydropower. Citing data from the California Energy Commission, the authors found that figure dropped to 8 percent to 10 percent with falling runoff levels during the 2007-09 drought. Utilities made up for the loss by burning more natural gas and buying more power from out of state, driving up production costs as well as greenhouse gas emissions. The authors calculated that the switch to other power sources resulted in an additional 13 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

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