

NOAA: Climate change didn't cause drought

By Tim McDonnell, Mother Jones

California is in the middle of a really bad three-year drought that stretches across nearly the entire state. The drought has already wreaked havoc with the state's agricultural sector, is expected to take a \$2.2 billion bite out of the state's economy this year alone, and shows no sign of relenting anytime soon.

Climate scientists have warned for years that rising greenhouse gas concentrations will lead to more frequent and severe droughts in many parts of the world. Although it's generally difficult to attribute any one weather event to the broader global warming trend, over the last couple of years a body of research has emerged to assess the link between man-made climate change and the current California drought. There are signs that rising temperatures (so far, 2014 is the hottest year on record both for California and globally) and long-term declines in soil moisture, both linked to greenhouse gas emissions, may have made the impact of the drought worse.

But according to research by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, California's drought was primarily produced by a lack of precipitation driven by natural atmospheric cycles that are unrelated to man-made climate change. In other words, climate change may have worsened the impacts of the drought, but it isn't the underlying cause.

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