

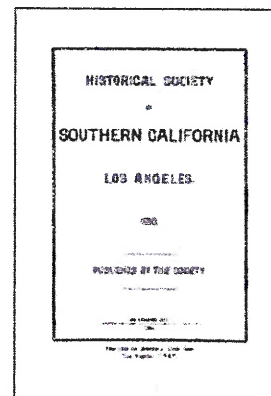
Table 2.1: Dry Periods in Combined Reconstructed and Instrumental Periods

Klamath River at Keno		Sacramento River Runoff		San Joaquin River Runoff	
Years	Length, years	Years	Length, years	Years	Length, years
1515-1522	8	921-924	4	946-950	5
1540-1543	4	945-950	6	977-981	5
1547-1552	6	975-981	7	1072-1075	4
1578-1582	5	1072-1075	4	1143-1148	6
1592-1597	6	1130-1136	7	1155-1158	4
1642-1646	5	1143-1148	6	1172-1177	6
1648-1668	21	1150-1158	9	1210-1213	4
1738-1744	7	1170-1177	8	1233-1239	7
1756-1761	6	1233-1239	7	1294-1301	8
1764-1767	4	1292-1301	10	1395-1402	8
1775-1779	5	1390-1393	4	1407-1410	4
1783-1787	5	1395-1400	6	1425-1428	4
1792-1798	7	1407-1410	4	1450-1461	12
1843-1846	4	1425-1432	8	1463-1466	4
1848-1852	5	1451-1457	7	1471-1483	13
1873-1876	4	1475-1483	9	1505-1508	4
1880-1884	5	1515-1521	7	1518-1523	6
1912-1915	4	1540-1543	4	1540-1545	6
1917-1920	4	1569-1572	4	1569-1572	4
1924-1935	12	1578-1582	5	1578-1582	5
1987-1992	6	1592-1595	4	1592-1595	4
		1636-1639	4	1629-1632	4
		1645-1648	4	1645-1648	4
		1652-1655	4	1652-1655	4
		1753-1760	8	1688-1691	4
		1780-1783	4	1753-1757	5
		1783-1846	4	1780-1783	4
		1856-1859	4	1793-1796	4
		1917-1922	6	1843-1846	4
		1926-1935	10	1855-1859	5
		1946-1951	6	1928-1931	4
		1959-1962	4	1946-1950	5
		1987-1992	6	1959-1962	4
				1987-1992	6
				2000-2004	5

Data courtesy of Dave Meko, University of Arizona

The Medieval Climate Anomaly

The Medieval Climate Anomaly in North America (sometimes called the medieval warm period or medieval climate optimum) is considered to span from as early as about 800 AD to as late as 1300 AD depending on the specific location. The warmer (and in some places, drier, climate) has been linked with historical events such as Norse settlement of Greenland and Iceland and changing settlement patterns in some Southwestern ancestral Pueblo communities whose agricultural production may have been affected by drought conditions. This time period is associated with severe droughts in the Southwest and California. Paleoclimate data and climate modeling suggest that this period was characterized by cool surface waters in the eastern Pacific Ocean, or La Niña-like conditions (e.g., Seager et al. 2007).



The Great Drought of 1863-64

An excerpt from *Exceptional Years: A History of California Floods and Droughts* J.M. Guinn, 1890

1862-63 did not exceed four inches, and that of 1863-64 was even less. In

the fall of 1863 a few showers fell, but not enough to start the grass. No more fell until March. The cattle were dying of starvation. ... The loss of cattle was fearful. The plains were strewn with their carcasses. In marshy places and around the cienegas, where there was a vestige of green, the ground was covered with their skeletons, and the traveler for years afterward was often startled by coming suddenly on a veritable Golgotha – a place of skulls – the long horns standing out in defiant attitude, as if protecting the fleshless bones.