



California's drought is intensifying, turning more farms to dust, fanning fires, draining fountains and driving “unbelievable” prices at water auctions.

A map released by the US Drought Monitor on Thursday classified nearly 80% of California as in “extreme” drought, the second highest of five categories. Within that area an estimated 36% is “exceptional” drought, the highest category.

After another week of “little if any precipitation” exceptional dryness spread south to afflict Ventura, Los Angeles and Orange counties, according to the monitor report.

The entire state has been deemed in “severe” drought since April, the first time this has happened in 15 years.

More than 1,000 firefighters continued on Friday to battle a 4,300 acre wildfire in Napa county. Vineyards and homes have so far largely escaped but about 500 people have been evacuated.

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