

Wow, things really have changed in Washington: a Cabinet official speaks about climate change's impacts on California | 1

The Los Angeles Times has a [story](#) today in its ([venerable but soon-to-be-axed](#)) California section discussing new Energy Secretary Steven Chu's public statements on the dramatic challenges California will face as a result of climate change. From the story:

Chu warned of water shortages plaguing the West and Upper Midwest and particularly dire consequences for California, his home state, the nation's leading agricultural producer.

In a worst case, Chu said, up to 90% of the Sierra snowpack could disappear, all but eliminating a natural storage system for water vital to agriculture.

"I don't think the American public has gripped in its gut what could happen," he said. "We're looking at a scenario where there's no more agriculture in California." And, he added, "I don't actually see how they can keep their cities going" either.

None of this is news to those of us who have been following the issue (see [this recent state-commissioned report](#) for one recent analysis). Nonetheless, Dr. Chu's remarks bode well for the new administration's awareness of the urgency of addressing climate change as well as the new administration's commitment to incorporating science into its decisionmaking.

UPDATE: Jonathan Adler and Roger Pielke Jr. have criticized Dr. Chu's quoted remarks, on the [Vlokh Conspiracy](#) and [Prometheus](#) blogs, respectively. I have posted a comment on this thread responding to Jonathan's criticisms.